

RESEARCH NOTES

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RELIGION AND SOCIAL WELFARE IN 20TH CENTURY INDIANAPOLIS

by Mary Mapes

In 1938, a young girl pregnant with her first child arrived at Indianapolis's Suemma Coleman Home for unmarried mothers. When the women running Suemma Coleman learned

that the girl was Catholic, they quickly contacted St. Elizabeth's Home, the city's Catholic Home for unwed mothers. Although the Suemma Coleman Home was not an official Protestant institution, the city's social workers had long accepted the practice that Coleman Home would serve the city's Protestant girls, St. Elizabeth's its Catholic girls, and the Jewish Family Service Society its Jewish girls. Care for unwed mothers in particular strictly followed religious lines. This religious division of labor was found not only in Indianapolis's private maternity homes in the 1930s. Many of the city's public welfare agencies, including the Juvenile Court and the Marion County Department of Public Welfare, cooperated with faith-based institutions in providing assistance, care, and guidance for needy children.

In the early decades of the 20th century the connections between religion and the city's larger social welfare matrix were complex, involving at one end of the spectrum social services defined by religious boundaries and on the other end cooperative public-private endeavors. Religion fit squarely within Indianapolis's larger social welfare matrix. Although the decades following the 1930s saw many of these religious boundaries disappear, and not a small number of these cooperative ventures end, faith-based organizations nevertheless continued to thrive, often in cooperation with public bodies. This history calls into question the once widely held belief that the voluntary sector must necessarily contract in size as the welfare state expands.

To assess accurately the voluntary sector's contribution to social welfare, we must focus on the faith-based organizations that dominated the voluntary sector. Historians of social welfare have paid little attention to the story of religion's role in social service provision since the 1930s. They usually describe religion's role in social services in terms of a decline, from dominating social welfare at the beginning of the 20th century to becoming only one part of a much larger matrix at the end of the century.

To understand religion's impact on social welfare since the 1930s, we must be wary of the theme of decline because it encourages us to pay more attention to what religion used to do rather than to what it is doing. Declension as a starting point

limits the questions we ask and the answers we receive. As policy studies scholar Lester Salamon has noted, much of the current social welfare literature implies that "the nonpublic sector had ceased to exist sometime during the New Deal era of the 1930s, when federal involvement in social welfare began to grow."¹ But this was not and is not an accurate picture.

THE CASE OF INDIANAPOLIS

Throughout its past, Indianapolis's public and private organizations have worked together, referring cases to one another and engaging in cooperative endeavors. Seeking the most effective way to offer services, public agencies instituted policies and programs that helped reinforce the voluntary sector. Government often turned to faith-based neighborhood organizations to house and co-sponsor their programs. Eager to serve the needs of the city's poor, faith-based organizations embraced these public-private ventures.

Indianapolis provides a good place to examine the changes in faith-based social welfare since the 1930s. Like most of the nation's cities, Indianapolis confronted the Great Depression by calling on a mix of local governmental and private social welfare organizations. At the center of this mix were the city's civic leaders who initially believed that private social welfare organizations could deal with the rising tide of hardship and deprivation. In 1931, private relief expenditures outpaced public spending by approximately 25 percent. Only four years later, however, federal, state, and local government spent twenty times more money on relief than did private agencies. As was true elsewhere, Indianapolis saw its social welfare network transformed by the public spending programs of the New Deal.



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We bring things into perspectiveSM

The growth in public expenditures notwithstanding, public agencies did not completely displace voluntary social welfare activity. In the years following the New Deal, the number of faith-based organizations involved in social welfare actually grew in Indianapolis. For example, between 1929 and 1946, the number of faith-based social service organizations that were members of the Community Fund rose from 15 to 22. All but one of the original fifteen operated continuously in this period. These numbers alone suggest that the welfare state created by Roosevelt's New Deal did not eliminate faith-based social welfare, even as it enlarged the federal government's share of the burden.

Throughout the 1930s and continuing at least into the 1960s, religion was one of the key forces helping shape social services in the city. Most of the city's private and public social service organizations accepted the notion that Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish organizations should be able to claim responsibility for "their own," and that the system must respect and help reinforce these religious boundaries. Into the 1960s social workers in public and private agencies

The role of faith-based institutions in social welfare has been largely ignored.

recognized religious affiliation as a key consideration when deciding where to refer clients, both children and adults.

Catholic Charities claimed jurisdiction over all kinds of children's welfare services. Committed to the belief that the religious heritage of the city's Catholic children "must be guarded," Catholic Charities worked out arrangements with many of the city's other private and public agencies to refer dependent Catholic children to it. The leaders of Catholic Charities were confident that they could provide "a suitable atmosphere for the religious welfare of these children" and that "the private agency and an enlightened laity are most essential as cooperating bodies to the public agency."²

Through the 1950s, the Juvenile Court respected this claim to children's welfare services, assigning custody of almost all the city's dependent Catholic children to Catholic Charities. For the most part, the Marion County Department of Public Welfare (MCDPW) also accepted this relationship. MCDPW also provided Catholic Charities with financial support for its institutional and foster home care programs. By accepting religious boundaries, the emerging public welfare agencies in fact reinforced the boundaries claimed by the city's faith traditions.

Such endeavors were not limited to Catholics, and they did not always or even usually involve the exchange of funds. During the middle decades of the 20th century, the Juvenile Aid Division of the Police Department cooperated on a regular basis with the Church Federation in dealing with troubled youth. In a seven-month period during 1948, the Police Department referred 876 children to the Church Federation, which in turn referred the children to 217 different churches located throughout the city. The

Church Federation celebrated this program's success in fostering "a closer relationship between probation officers and ministers." Significantly, this alliance bolstered the organization's vision of itself as the city's moral center for both religious and civic life. By encouraging the city's churches to provide guidance to the city's wayward children, the Church Federation believed it was successfully "bringing home to churchmen the needs of the city and channeling into the community the important services which churches can offer."³

Public health was another realm in which public-private endeavors abounded. Since the late 19th century, privately sponsored public health programs, including the Public Health Nurses Association, had reached the city's poorest by working through neighborhood-based institutions. When the Department of Public Health sought to increase its role, it too established clinics in neighborhood-based centers, often in partnership with private neighborhood centers that had long-established reputations. Methodist-affiliated Fletcher Place Community Center was one such institution. Since before the turn of the century, it had provided extensive social, recreational, and welfare services to its largely poor constituents. Beginning in the 1930s and continuing intermittently through the 1960s, Fletcher Place maintained this tradition by co-sponsoring well-baby, prenatal, and dental clinics with the Department of Public Health.

These stories highlight the spaces in which private faith-based and public agencies overlapped. Obviously, there are other examples where faith-based organizations or public social welfare agencies worked alone. But what is significant is that so many of the city's public agencies established working relationships with faith-based organizations, suggesting both that they respected religious affiliations and that they recognized such cooperative endeavors as a way to achieve their own goals. As public agencies sought to extend their reach, they often did so by acknowledging the city's religious landscape.

ABANDONING DECLENSION

With Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish organizations often claiming responsibility for "their own," it is clear that religious boundaries helped define the city's social welfare matrix. However these boundaries did not lead to isolation, for faith-based organizations actively participated in the city's larger social welfare community, often initiating cooperative ventures with the city's public agencies. That the city's public agencies were eager to embark on these partnerships suggests that these religious boundaries were widely accepted.

What is most striking about faith-based social welfare in the 20th century is not its decline but its continued presence. Despite widespread fears that an expanded welfare state would result in a less vibrant civil society, the policies initiated by the public welfare sector often had the effect of helping buttress the voluntary sector even as they guaranteed a dominant role for the public sector. In Indianapolis, public agencies frequently enlarged their responsibility for social welfare by cooperating with faith-based agencies. The history of the relationship between public social welfare agencies and private voluntary organizations reveals that, in Indianapolis at least, the voluntary or independent sector has never been completely independent; neither has the welfare state overtaken the voluntary sector.

The experience of Indianapolis challenges many assumptions historians hold about the development of social welfare. Political scientist Theda Skocpol contends that scholars too often describe the relationship between the voluntary sector and government as a zero-sum game, with the one expanding only at the expense of the other. Lester Salamon argues that the voluntary sector is poorly understood because “political ideologies” have led observers to overlook this sector or downplay its role. Liberals, he says, fear undermining the role of the state in welfare provision. Conservatives fear that an expansionist government will squelch private efforts to help the poor.⁴ As we seek a better understanding of privately sponsored social welfare, we must look closely at faith-based institutions, in particular because their role has been largely ignored.

For most of the 20th century, religious organizations have dominated the voluntary sector. Though their share of responsibility for social welfare has declined during the passing decades, while public responsibility has grown, the faith-based community has nevertheless maintained a strong presence. Not only have many faith-based institutions operated continuously throughout the 20th century, including, among others, Catholic Charities and Fletcher Place Community Center, but new organizations are continually emerging. The stories told here suggest that we will not understand the changing form of social welfare in Indianapolis until religion is part of our narrative. Equally significant, we will understand the role of religion in social welfare in the city only when we abandon declension as our primary frame of reference.

ROUNDTABLE

On May 19, Research Notes hosted a roundtable discussion held at the Indianapolis Center for Congregations. Participants had been provided beforehand with the text of this issue of RN, and were invited to respond to the issues raised in the paper. Olgen Williams is executive director of Christamore House, a community center of Indianapolis. Tom Gaybrick is director, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Jan Shipps is professor emeritus of history and religious studies at IUPUI. Mary Mapes, a historian at The Polis Center, wrote the paper under discussion. Kevin Armstrong is senior public teacher at The Polis Center. The following is an edited version of their discussion, which was moderated by Armstrong.

ARMSTRONG: The collaboration among faith-based institutions, social service agencies and government is enjoying national attention these days. Charitable Choice¹ is a topic of wide interest. And we can point to religious and social service collaborations here in this city such as the Front Porch Alliance, and Faith and Families. These new partnerships are exciting to some, troubling to others, but what may be significant is Mary's assertion that these new partnerships aren't really that new. We have with us today two historians and also two practitioners deeply involved in the work of social service and social ministry. Olgen, how did Christamore House start and what was its mission?

WILLIAMS: Christamore House was started in 1905 on the eastside of Indianapolis as a residential Christian mission to help the immigrant population and blue collar workers. Over the years it got away from its Christian mission and became a social mission. In the 1920s Christamore House moved to the westside where there were sixteen different European ethnic groups who had come to work in the ironworks and factories there. What's interesting is that some of the supporters of Christamore House didn't want to serve the African-American community, so the move from the eastside was also motivated by the desire to get away from blacks.

ARMSTRONG: Tom, give us a brief synopsis of Catholic Charities and its mission.

GAYBRICK: As an organization, it began around 1919, although components of Catholic Charities were formed prior to that. In this diocese today we consist of eight social service agencies serving 39 counties. Three of the eight social service agencies are located within the city of Indianapolis: St. Elizabeth's Home, Catholic Social Services and St. Mary's Child Center. We're quite decentralized – each of the eight agencies has certain responsibili-

¹ Lester Salamon, *Partners in Public Service: Government-Nonprofit Relations in the Modern Welfare State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press): 1.

² Catholic Charities, Annual Report, 1939.

³ Federation News, An Annual Report, May 1949.

⁴ Lester Salamon, “The Civil Society Sector,” *Society*, 34: 2 (January–February 1997): 60.

ties and authorities that they carry out under the general oversight of Catholic Charities.

ARMSTRONG: Mary and Jan, why historically did public organizations turn to faith-based groups to house and cosponsor some of their programs?

MAPES: One of the key reasons is that respecting the religious heritage of children was a principle accepted by both the faith-based community and the public agencies. With many of the services directed towards children, it helped solidify not only the importance of the faith-based organizations, but the importance of religion as a principle by which the social service matrix would operate. So I think it's both the organizational vitality of the faith-based groups and a general acceptance of religion as an organizing principle of life.

SHIPPS: For so long, the notion of who you were, your identity as a person, was tied to your religious identity. I find the Christamore House story interesting from this standpoint. It starts on the eastside as a Protestant institution, and then moves to the westside to serve immigrants whose main identity was not only European but Catholic. At that point, race trumped religion – or vice versa. Christamore House moved away from race, to serving Catholics, whereas had they stayed on the eastside they would have been serving black Protestants. It's a fascinating insight into the attitudes of people in Indianapolis.

MAPES: In the work I did on city missions in Chicago I found the same issue being raised. When a primarily Catholic immigrant population turns into a primarily black population it poses a problem to these organizations that often see themselves in evangelical terms. The racism feeds into that. It's easy to say, we don't want to serve this black population because we're evangelical, they're already Protestant, so what's the point?

ARMSTRONG: So, it would seem then as the city's population has changed, we no longer see ourselves as primarily as Catholics or Protestants or evangelicals – or at least a shrinking percentage of the population sees itself that way. What should follow then is a decrease in the relationship between social service and religious institutions, is that true?

SHIPPS: But something else was happening. When my husband was teaching at Wayne State in the '50s, we worked in an Episcopal home for teenage girls. Nine-tenths of the girls in that home were juvenile court placements, so the government was in fact making deals with faith-based institutions long before the current notion of using the church to do counseling or social services. And most of these placements were Protestant. The juvenile court in Detroit placed Catholic kids in a similar home for Catholic teenagers.

GAYBRICK: I was most taken in the essay in reading of the St. Elizabeth's Home and how they took care of the Catholic kids and the Catholic mothers. The Catholic population then was mostly poor immigrants. Over a few generations many became upwardly mobile, but there was a time when the church felt, "We have to take care of our own. Only we can take care of our own and do it very well." The relevancy of that today has lessened considerably. Today we embrace the population as a whole regardless of religious tradition. What's being taught in the church is that we have a responsibility for all people. Maybe that's true in other denominations as well.

ARMSTRONG: What do you see, Olgen? Are congregations connecting with Christamore House in a way that says, "The world is my parish"?

WILLIAMS: I see a coming together. When I was younger I thought that only the Catholic church did anything for the poor. That's all I ever saw in movies and on TV. The Catholics say, "we take care of our own." You've got hundreds of Protestant denominations, Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostal, so who are their own? But now I see people are realizing that they all belong to us. We're not fighting for membership any more; we're fighting for the social and spiritual change that people need.

SHIPPS: If you had a child who came from an Islamic home, you wouldn't turn him away?

WILLIAMS: No, we don't turn anybody away, but it's hard for Muslims to work with us, and for us to work with them. Christamore being a social agency, if the Islamic Temple wants to send me a check, I'm going to accept it. The Nation of Islam minister, Damon Muhammed, is sending some of his people to do some training for me and help me set up an emergency shelter. So Christamore has those partnerships. But my church probably wouldn't have come up with that partnership, because there would be some conflict there.

ARMSTRONG: What kind of pressures does this put on the religious community when internally there is a growth in the understanding that we're here to serve more than just the people in our house, and the public understanding is that these congregations are supposed to serve others in the community? There seems to be this growing sense that the world is our parish and not just those in our home constituency.

WILLIAMS: I get calls quite often from churches who want to help in some way – suburban churches, not just churches right under my roof. I think a lot of the pressure for congregations to



Mary Mapes



Jan Shipp



Olgen Williams



Kevin Armstrong



Tom Gaybrick

do that comes from the nonbeliever, especially young people. They're telling the believer, "What are you doing? You proclaim this message, but you're not feeding the poor, I don't see you out here with me." And the congregations are saying, "You know, we better do more for the neighborhood."

MAPES: You raise an important point there. It is oftentimes through social services or social welfare that an internally-focused congregational community reaches into the larger community. And that larger community has certain expectations of what that relationship should be like – expectations which are based on the assumption of what it means to be a religious person.

SHIPPS: I want to change the direction a little bit. For a long time the way in which the various religious organizations served everybody was that they established hospitals and denomination-connected health clinics. Now what does it do to perceptions when hospitals are called Methodist Hospital or St. Vincent's Hospital but the name has become all that's left of the connection. Does it undercut perceptions of religion doing something different?

GAYBRICK: With the two Catholic hospitals in Indianapolis, St. Vincent's and St. Francis, it has created a considerable tension because in essence both are still controlled by religious orders of nuns. They require adherence to the general teachings of the church, while these hospitals operate in an environment where there are tremendous pressures to offer a full array of services and to compete in the marketplace. Both are really making the effort to honor their religious heritage and they're struggling to find a way to reconcile these tensions.

ARMSTRONG: I visit more Methodists at St. Vincent's than I do at Methodist, and my Catholic priest friend visits more Catholics at Methodist than he does at St. Vincent's. It clearly makes no difference to our parishioners any longer that one institution is historically Methodist and the other institution is historically Catholic. And if that is true, how will the institutions respond if they are no longer drawing upon or being directed by a particular constituency?

GAYBRICK: We talked about how for denominations the mission has been broadened from taking care of one's own to a general responsibility for the well-being of all people. Could not a similar dynamic be taking place within the health care system, where they're fulfilling their larger mission to deliver quality health care to persons who need it. Missions have evolved. Maybe market forces enter into that, but there has been an evolution.

SHIPPS: Do we have anything called an orphanage anymore in Indianapolis?

GAYBRICK: Not by that title...foster care.

SHIPPS: No, you call it Children's Home, Children's Center, foster care, that sort of thing. But in the first half of the century, we had orphanages, we had settlement houses, we had hospitals. What else in the area of social services was there that could be called faith-based?

MAPES: Plenty of the community centers stemmed out of churches, Fletcher Place Community Center being a prime example.

SHIPPS: And homes for unwed mothers, have they virtually disappeared?

GAYBRICK: They're there, but again it's called by another name.

MAPES: Part of this is somewhat inevitable because the population they were supposed to serve changed, and their objectives had to alter as the problems and perceptions in society changed. Foster care grows into a bigger program because of the assumption that orphanages aren't good for children. Then an institution like Catholic Charities will redefine its goals and its mission to serve in a new way, and at times that can alter other aspects of the institution as well.

WILLIAMS: Lots of those changes came because of money. The government would fund certain things so people changed their missions to chase dollars. Orphanages are not profitable; foster care is profitable.

MAPES: In some ways the federal dollars can be a positive thing. You see that with Catholic Charities expanding its scope in the late '60s and '70s to the black population, in part as a result of federal dollars for new programs. You can see the mission being redefined to incorporate a larger population and that's not strictly a result of federal dollars but of these organizations redefining their mission to reflect a larger cultural focus. I think the war on poverty is one of the critical things that pushed faith-based organizations to redefine what the community meant.

WILLIAMS: I think the war on poverty pushed religious institutions out of the social arena because politicians made those laws saying you can't mix church and state. Then they realize it's not working and they begin saying, "The church has got to help us. Let's go back to where we used to be."

GAYBRICK: Interesting.

SHIPPS: The way history can be helpful is in saying to people in the public arena, "This is not new, folks. This has been around for a very long time and the effort to have the rigid separation of church and state was a historical accident. It was essentially a part of the '60s and the '70s. But by the middle of the '80s you're laying the groundwork for the reintegration of religion into the larger culture. It seems to me that this is becoming more and more acceptable as people realize that we need connection to something larger than ourselves.

GAYBRICK: There is an awakening to the fact that with so many needs out there that government alone can't be the solution, the church alone can't be the solution, and that if we really want to address those needs we have to work in partnership. Mary said that the growth in government support for social services in the '60s allowed private agencies to enter program areas that they weren't able to go into before. But an interesting side note is that it caused some tensions when people began to ask, "So what's Catholic about the Catholic church? We're just an extension of government." And so you shift from looking at things from one perspective and fighting one set of battles to having to redefine yourself another way to satisfy an important part of your constituency.

WILLIAMS: I think as we trained professionals in social work, we didn't allow the faith message or any spirituality to come into their training. And so these social workers in the field had no clue that churches and government had worked together for years, and when it came up they would say, "Oh, you can't do that."

MAPES: In the very early years of the professionalization of social work, in the teens and '20s when schools of social work first developed, many of the students were precisely people working in faith-based organizations, who saw this as an opportunity to acquire new skills. As social work started to gain a greater sense of being a profession, it saw divorcing itself from religion as a

critical aspect of defining itself. So it's not as though there were two different movements evolving at once; they were intermingled and then had to be separated out, and it was a very big struggle. There were people who had both as part of who they were, who were going to the professional social work schools and wanting that training, but seeing it as compatible with their faith perspective. Then the profession itself changed and left little space for them.

SHIPPS: There was a perception that to be a professional you had to draw on a body of professional information. A whole body of professional information developed out of sociology and psychology and divorced itself from theological training in very interesting ways. Mary Richmond was essentially the founder of social work, and she carried a very strong religious faith into it, but came to realize that it undercut what people perceived as professional.

ARMSTRONG: Does this explain why public institutions open their doors much wider to religious organizations to come in and partner, whereas religious organizations tend to be reluctant to open up to public and government agencies?

SHIPPS: There is a perception that to open the doors of the church to social workers is to bring in the person who keeps religion at a distance.

GAYBRICK: A person who is operating from humanistic values as opposed to religious values...

ARMSTRONG: Is that only a concern of religious individuals rather than religious organizations?

MAPES: I think the history of this is a little more varied. You see pastoral counseling develop and religious groups grab onto these seemingly "secular" developments in psychology and bring them within the church. So I think it's moving back and forth all the time.

SHIPPS: In the '50s, '60s and '70s, people were peeling off, especially from the Protestant ministry, and going into counseling. People who used to be ministers are now marriage counselors or getting a degree in social work.

WILLIAMS: When churches saw this happening, saw people become pure professional social workers and divorce themselves from any God-called ministry, religious denominations began to say, "Wait a minute, this takes away the spirituality of the congregation." I think now it's going the other way in this city. There are more people like myself. I'm more of a preacher than I am a

social worker. I'm not even a social worker. I'm a preacher ordained to serve communities. I'm in a social field now but the ministry leads to social work. But there's still a lot of resistance because they feel like it's going to contaminate the congregation if you bring in a basketball program.

GAYBRICK: This resistance is experienced more on the congregational level than it is on the denominational level, is what you're saying.

SHIPPS: Oh, I think that's a critical point.

ARMSTRONG: Say some more about that from the perspective of Catholic Charities.

GAYBRICK: Well, it has not been my experience that there's a resistance to partnering with government. If anything, the perception of Catholic Charities is that government is not willing enough to partner. But if I'm a parishioner in a Catholic parish and I have this soup kitchen, do I want government involved in my soup kitchen? That's where I can see that there has not been an openness to government involvement. But I think many congregations are coming to realize that congregations can't do it all alone. There needs to be some partnership there working together.

MAPES: What you are both pointing to is the diversity of the religious community itself. There's a huge diversity theologically, and among social objectives, that will inform different positions. Well, my piece often talked about the faith community as being one, but it's not one.

GAYBRICK: It's not one, that's right.

ARMSTRONG: What do you make of the fact that while more mainline liberals are jumping on the bandwagon of Charitable Choice, at the same time others aligned with the so-called Christian right or evangelical movement are stepping back and saying, "We're no longer going to be involved in that way."

SHIPPS: In the last twenty years, as a neo-evangelical movement has come into existence, they have begun taking care of their own. As always when a new religious community comes into existence, it turns inward before it can turn outward. You look at Willow Creek², it has the most incredible programs for people who go to Willow Creek, but it's not social service because it's not open to everybody.

GAYBRICK: Conservative Catholics will look at Catholic Charities with disapproval because we have partnered with government. Then there are those who believe that we are addressing the social teachings of the church by partnering with others. You know, trying to deal with the variations within the denomination, and among other denominations, and with the community as a

whole is a pretty challenging and interesting task. You must continually find different ways to define yourself.

ARMSTRONG: And what about race? A recent study which asked if religious leaders would be willing to apply for money through Charitable Choice found that black religious leaders were five times more likely to say yes than their white counterparts. What's the history that drives that?

WILLIAMS: Well, traditionally whites have had more money than black churches. The smaller congregations look at this as an opportunity to do a child care or computer program which in turn will make them money to build a wing. A lot of this is motivated by the desire for money and they are missing the point. You'd be surprised the number of questions I get about how to write proposals. Not how to save a soul, not how to preach, but how to write a grant proposal.

SHIPPS: But this is not new. People used to seek money not from the government but from the wealthy – from Carnegie or Pierpont Morgan. But there's another factor why black churches might be more comfortable going with the government and that is the civil rights movement. Black people looked to the government for protection of their rights and so they see the government not as dangerous but as helpful.

MAPES: Different assumptions of citizenship feed into different relationships to the government. I think it's critical in terms of explaining these racial differences.

SHIPPS: There is a perception among academics that Americans have become more and more self-centered and have moved away from seeing community as critical to who they are. I'm wondering if the passage of Charitable Choice, and the willingness of religious organizations to partner with government, might be a reaction against the super-individualism that was so rampant in the '60s and '70s.

WILLIAMS: I'm a product of the '60s. I guess I was an individual. I'm more involved in the whole of society now than I ever was in my life. Working together works. Everybody has stopped saying 'I'. We are working for the 'us'.

SHIPPS: For those of us who think that community is terribly important, this might be a hopeful sign.

WILLIAMS: It's very important. America is changing its views on the subject because our problems have grown faster than our solutions. I've heard more about prayer in school in the last

month or two because of the Colorado incident. People are saying, "We have to do something." They go back and look for the missing link, and it is the faith-based community.

MAPES: But I see individualism operating today too, with welfare devolution, with Charitable Choice. The assumption is that you don't attack structural inequalities so much as reform the individual. Individualism is working in a very strong way today with these changes.

ARMSTRONG: Any other critical questions or lessons that you want to bring out?

MAPES: I come out of the academic tradition focusing on social welfare history, where faith-based organizations don't receive much attention. Practitioners and people who have been involved in the field have such a great knowledge to draw on, and operate from different assumptions than social welfare historians who focus almost exclusively on the development of the state. So I've found this a very fruitful conversation and I'm pleased we had it.

- 1 Charitable Choice, a provision in the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, allows faith-based organizations to compete for government funds made available to private providers of social welfare services. A significant change, compared to earlier law, is that faith-based providers can remain explicitly faith-based; that is, they may discriminate in hiring (hire only religious believers, for example), have prayer and religious symbolism, and have goals shaped by their faith convictions. They cannot proselytize with public money, and clients may refuse a faith-based provider and insist on a secular one.
- 2 Willow Creek Community Church is a nondenominational, evangelical mega-church in suburban Chicago.

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from the Project on Religion and Urban Culture



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