

## Florida International University, Immigration and Ethnicity Institute

### Field-Initiated Research

#### Type of Applicant

State controlled institution of higher learning

#### Project Title

"Immigrants, Their Faith, and Those who Serve Their Material and Spiritual Needs: Researching Faith-Based Organizations in Miami"

#### Project Period

October 2002 to December 2003

#### Focus of Research

This research will focus on FBOs that provide services for immigrant populations in Miami (primarily Hispanics, Haitians, and English-speaking West Indians). The study will focus particularly on at-risk youth intervention programs and intensive drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs.

#### Description of Project

This research is not on one particular program, but rather on a sampling of various types of youth programs and rehabilitation programs selected based on being faith-based and immigrant-serving.

#### Research Project

Overarching questions:

1. What are the "best practices" of FBOs that make them be evaluated by clients and other FBOs/CBOs as successful in serving the needs of at-risk immigrant youth and immigrant drug or alcohol addicts?
2. How might FBO programs be affected if they received government aid?

#### Goals of the Research

This study will gather data through three main sources: interviews with FBO/CBO leaders, observation of FBO organizational operations, and interviews with FBO clients. Next, the study will identify the "best-practices" within FBOs. Part of the project will be to determine a nuanced definition of what "faith-based" means and how it works.

Benefits of study:

1. Identify what FBO/CBOs in these service areas (youth and rehabilitation) consider to be their and other agencies' "best practices."
2. identify and study those FBO/CBOs who employ the "best practices" from (1), particularly looking at organizations serving different immigrant populations.
3. Identify a typology of FBO "best practices," particularly geared toward immigrants.
4. Enrich the debate over operationalizing "faith" and religion.

#### Research Questions

N/A

#### Sub-Research Questions and Hypotheses

1. What is definition of "faith" in a faith-based program?  
*Hypothesis:* Programs with more "faith" will be more successful, but providers and researchers are likely to disagree on definition of faith.
2. Do immigrants have a special relationship to faith; are they more likely to seek services from a FBO?  
*Hypothesis:* Because immigrants are more suspicious of government and more religious, they are likely to prefer FB services. Because of immigrant affinity for shared background and faith, they will prefer a FBO staffed with co-ethnics.
3. Does government funding affect FBO credibility with immigrants; does the bureaucratic demands of funding divert resources?  
*Hypothesis:* FBO leaders serving immigrants will be reluctant to seek government assistance due to:
  - a) tradition of independence and distrust of government,
  - b) lack of government knowledge and English skills, and
  - c) perception of too few staff resources.
4. If an FBO receives funding, will that create conflict or cohesion within the organization and between FBO/CBOs?  
*Hypothesis:* Because of competition for funds, immigrant-serving CBOs may feel they should get the funds over FBOs.

#### Methodology

*Phase 1: Develop two Research Instruments*

1. Interview guide for FBO/CBO leaders.
2. Interview guide for FBO client interviews.

FIU has already started developing measures for faith and religion during a past study. Interview questions will involve identifying "best practices" and feelings/ experience with government and public funding. Sampling is problematic because many small grassroots FBO/CBOs are not officially listed/organized. However, FIU has done some neighborhood mapping for a Pew funded project and can draw a sample from there. The sample will include organizations that represent each of the ethnic/immigrant groups, Protestant and Catholic organizations, and the 2 services (youth and recovery programs).

*Phase II: Employ medium-term (4-6 weeks) intensive field observation in a sample of FBOs during which time current and past clients will be interviewed and their experiences chronicled.*

#### PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

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*Phase III: quantitative and qualitative data coding and analysis of interview and observation data. Final report will include identified "best practices" and recommendations for implementing best practices.*

#### Limitations

Not able to do a random assignment of immigrant clients to FBO versus CBOs, in order to compare the services/attitudes between them. Given time constraints, study will only be able to gather CBO comparison data through interviews with CBO leaders, but this will lay a foundation for future comparison. Also, study anticipates having a harder time accessing CBOs, whereas the FBOs are very willing to participate in studies.

#### Background

Past studies have indicated that religion/faith are associated with lower instances of risk-taking behaviors as well as recovery. However, religion/faith is very difficult to operationalize and measure for meaningful study. Also, there has been almost no study of the religion and health relationship broken down by immigrant and minority groups.

#### Additional Pertinent Background Information

This is expected to be the first in-depth study of FBOs serving immigrant populations in the US. Researchers have done several past research projects on immigrant populations, including a study of the role of faith and religion in the lives of immigrants.

#### Geographic Location

Miami-Dade County, FL

#### Grant Award Amount

\$210,622