THE INTERFAITH CENTER:
THE CONSTRUCTION AND CONSEQUENCE OF INTERFAITH SPACE

by

CRISTINA L. NOTARO

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Earth and Environmental Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York
2011

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Earth and Environmental Sciences in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Date	Marianna Pavlovskya, PhD. Chair of Examining Committee
Date	Yehuda Klein, PhD. Executive Officer

Charles Heatwole, PhD.

Kenneth Gould, PhD.

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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by
Cristina Notaro

Advisor: Professor Marianna Pavlovskaya

This project examines the social and cultural phenomenon of the interfaith center as an intentional response to religious diversity in the United States. The interfaith center is an effort of multiple religious and secular organizations and individuals with missions of social action, education, dialogue and relationship building. Centers are formed within the context of a local community, but include interactions on a regional, national or international scale and intersections into public, private, civic and religious spheres of influence. The interfaith center is a growing force in religious pluralism, playing a constructive role in the social and cultural processes of a community, the attitudes and perceptions of religious groups and the production of interfaith space. The interfaith center is producing physical and social space to act as a mechanism for social cohesion and a focal point for addressing social issues and building community relationships. This research is an examination of both the construction and the consequence of this place.

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Chapter 1: Placing Interfaith Centers within a New Geography of Religion

The religious constituency of the United States has been changing from predominantly Christian adherents to one that is being infused and influenced by a variety of faith and belief systems. This subject can be approached by geographers through in many ways, including issues of distribution of adherents, diffusion of religious systems, places of worship and even conflict between religious groups. This research focused on a phenomenon known as the interfaith center, which can be categorized as a component of the interfaith movement. By examining the origination and operations of this interfaith place and space, one may gain insight into its larger social role.

Interfaith (or multifaith) organizations and centers are generally comprised of members of varied faith groups who have formed a structure, the purpose of which can range from community service or advocacy to religious education or dialogue. They can exist within a large metropolitan area or smaller population cluster, or be a component of an institution such as a university or a network configured from other organizations as members. Interfaith centers are nonprofit and formed with a local, regional or even global agenda that can focus on relationships between faiths, or a particular issue utilizing the power of unified faiths, such as peace, hunger or violence. Beyond involvement in community action or policy, education, or special events, they can engage in religious activities and can perform interfaith services for which a sacred or worship space may be constructed.

This research examined the social and material construction of interfaith centers and explored the consequences of their construction to the local community and the human landscape. The researcher focused on three primary areas or research themes: (i) Formation, development and distribution within the local, national and global context; (ii) Role including

types of focus and participants and areas of potential influence; and (iii) Production of interfaith space. Within the first theme, the researcher examined the origin and evolution of the interfaith center within the context of the religious diversity and social priorities and influences of its local community, including agents of support or opposition. The center's connection to issues and networks of a national or global scale were also included. The second theme concentrated on the role the interfaith center has in the community and any discernable influence it has, not only on the attitudes and actions towards and perceptions of religious groups, but also the impact it has on the social issues it engages. Finally, the third theme investigated the production of a new form of space, that being interfaith space. The social spaces and physical places that are constructed vary by site, but contain common and negotiated ideals, elements and structures.

The researcher's argument is organized into seven chapters. The current chapter introduces the research on interfaith centers and locates it within the geography of religion, a field that has experienced a revival in the last two decades. Chapter Two explains the theoretical approach, drawing on the literature that is foundational to this research. This section also discusses relevant literature in sociology, including the 2002-2003 Religion and Diversity Survey that was utilized as a comparison to a survey produced as prt of this research. Throughout this section, the researcher indicates how the research is drawn from and adds to the existing body of work. Chapter Three is the section on methodology that details the mixed methods approach followed in compiling and analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data for this study. The quantitative portion of the research is a national database of interfaith centers and an Interfaith Center Survey distributed to that database. The qualitative data consisted of archival research, participant observations, and interviews conducted in three interfaith centers. Chapter Four discusses the development and growth of interfaith centers illustrated by a series of maps

compiled from the database of interfaith centers. Chapter Five contrasts and compares the three interfaith centers that were qualitatively examined. Chapter Six discusses the impact of the centers on their participants, based upon the results of a survey conducted. The actual survey results and database are attached as appendices. The final section, Chapter Seven, summarizes the research findings and their significance. Following these chapters are the appendices and the bibliography.

The New Geography of Religion

Religion engages scholars from a variety of disciplines - sociology, anthropology, philosophy and geography. While it is logical to inquire about the contribution of the geographer (Kong 1990), the relationship between geography and religion is not immediately evident. Literature regarding geography and religion offers different assessments about the pairing: an odd match, a potentially fruitful match or an underdeveloped match (Park 1994, Kong 1990, Levine 1986). Yet, it recognizes the importance of the influence that ideologies such as religion can have on the creation of the cultural landscape, a core element in geography (Levine 1986). While human geography has incorporated religion into areas from education to politics (Pacione 1999) there still exists much for the geographer to explore. The challenge is translating that recognition into future areas of study. This chapter reviews how geography of religion is defined and viewed as a discipline, a brief history of its development, the major texts and surveys of the field, as well as current articles. It also incorporates the proposed research on the construction and consequence of the interfaith center in the United States as a valuable addition to the existing literature.

Viewing religion from a spatial perspective can achieve more than the construction of distribution patterns of different faiths or the examination of worship sites. These are important

and necessary foundations, but greater depths can and should be sought to extract and interpret the underlying social processes of religion's impact on the cultural landscape. Geography of religion can explore how the changing contexts of a religiously pluralistic society and the interaction between religions can yield new constructions of space and place. This body of research will focus on a particular outcome of these interfaith relationships, in the form of the interfaith center. These centers are (local, regional, national and international) organizations representing diverse religious groups and secular interests with a variety of missions, goals and strategies – from community projects, education and reconciliation to dialogue. They are created in the midst of a variety of religions in a complex social, cultural, economic and political environment and, through attention to religion, influence that environment.

There is space being produced by the relationships between religion and religion; between religion and society; and between interfaith (more than one religion) and society, and these represent potential areas of investigation. What social processes are involved in that interaction and how is that interaction manifested on the cultural landscape? Religion and spirituality "form an important context through which the majority of the world's population live their lives, forge a sense (indeed an ethics) of self, and make and perform their different geographies" (Holloway and Valins 2002). This research considers the following: In a society where multiple faiths coexist, how are those experiences altered? What geographical identities are forged as religions intersect in the same society? Are original identities mutated or discarded? Does an exposure to a broader, interacting set of beliefs, values and practices stimulate, advance or require a broader sense of identity, captured in the places we produce and spaces we construct?

Attempts to Define Geography of Religion

Geographers, while acknowledging progress, depict the field as struggling for definition and coherence and consequently, still striving for maturity. The history, evolution and scope of the field of the geography of religion has been documented by Isaac (1965), Fickeler (1962), Buttner (1974), Sopher (1981), Levine (1986), Kong (1990, 2001a), Park (2004), and Henkel (2005). According to Isaac, "The geography of religion cannot be understood simply as an outgrowth of ecclesiastical, religious or biblical geography…Culture, history, comparative religion, and cultural geography have given form to contemporary geography of religion" (Isaac 1965: 11-13). The first of Kong's overview of trends in geography and religion recognizes religion's role in landscape because it is "a traditional culture geographic interest", yet ponders the loss of "fruitful spheres" if this remains the focus of inquiry (Kong 1990). Even as different places are created on landscape, geography needs to recognize religion's role in social space and its importance as a component or force of social processes. In *Fundamental questions in the geography of religions*, Fickeler (1962) reviewed a variety of potential areas for geographic study under the definition that "investigation and exposition of the relations between religion and geography is the scientific task of the geographer of religions…" (Fickeler 1962: 94). He also suggested determining the impact of the environment on religion is the role of the science of religion, and that geography of religion should focus on how humans and landscape are impacted by religion.

In a piece that introduced a theme issue for the Journal of Cultural Geography, Stump (1986: 2) reflected on Sopher's (1981) groupings by saying, "even these clusters contain considerable substantive and methodological diversity" and concluded that "the study of religion remains a diverse and fragmented endeavor within geography." Tuan viewed the field "in

disarray for lack of a coherent definition of the phenomenon it seeks to understand…lacking in focus and so arbitrary in its selection of themes (it) cannot hope to achieve intellectual maturity" (1976: 271). Sopher, in his 1981 review, had a similar position that, despite an increase in the volume of geographic writing on religion, there had not been accord regarding either the nature of the field nor even the existence of the field. In stating "studies in the geography of religion have often been mere catalogues of artifacts and mentifacts," Levine blamed an error in the established focal point: "It is essential to go beyond this kind of narrow empiricism and try to appreciate religion as a profoundly social force…to go beyond an idealism which sees religion as motivator in landscape change but fails to appreciate the social nature of religion" (Levine 1986: 437). This social nature of religion greatly expanded the subject matter of geography of religion.

Not every evaluation of the field is pessimistic. According to Buttner,

> The geography of religion is a scientific discipline which, like all others, is continually changing, whose nature, aims and tasks were seen in a different way in every epoch and which was or is correspondingly conducted by researchers of widely varying backgrounds (Buttner 1980: 86).

Park suggested that this variety offers "strength and flexibility to respond to new challenges…some of the most inviting prospects appear at points of interface between disciplines" (Park 1994: 25). As geography intersects with sociology, anthropology and religion instead of separate insights into humanity, these combined perspectives are able to create greater breadth and depth of understanding. According to Kong the "reluctance to venture into what are considered tangential areas and the tendency to stop short at perceived boundaries may have unnecessarily limited the type of questions that geographers could be asking" (Kong 1990: 367). How much religion and understanding of religion is required, had also been drawn into the debate. Kong was proponent of geographers applying themselves to the purely geographical side of the subject, and was supported in that majority by Cooper (1992) and Gay (1971), and

contrasted by a minority which included Isaac (1962), who believed the study of religion should be included as an integral element. Both factions were in agreement with Gay's (1971) assessment that geography of religions is not a call for evaluation or a test of validity of religion by the geographer. Yet, it would seem unlikely that the field could produce the depth that is apparently being sought, without significant understanding of the nature of its components, both religious and geographic.

Kong's 2001 survey evaluated the field as "distinguished by rich diversity, yet simultaneously significant coherence, albeit a theoretical coherence that I read into the range of empirical work from a posteriori position" (Kong 2001a: 212). Kong further addressed the importance of religion in geography by noting:

> …religion deserves to be acknowledged fully and in like manner alongside race, class and gender in geographical analysis. Most significantly, I underline the geographic significance of examining religion, not least in the intersection of sacred and secular forces in the making of place (Kong 2001a: 212).

Peach agreed with this assessment, "religion seems destined to become the new area for social geographical research in the first decade of the twenty-first century" (Peach 2002: 255). The Kong 2001 review also summarized research in the 1990s and discussed the emergence of "several key themes, particularly, the politics and poetics of religious place, identity and community" (Kong 2001a: 211). Kong went further by stating:

> 'new' geographies of religion must take on board more actively: 1) different sites of religious practice beyond the 'officially sacred'; 2) different sensuous sacred geographies; 3) different religions in different historical and place-specific contexts; 4) different geographical scales of analysis; 5) different constitutions of population; 6) different dialectics; and 7) different moralities…In the same way that race, class and gender have become primary axes of analyses in geography and other social science disciplines, religion must not be a residual category; one test of this will be the place accorded to religion in future cultural geography books. This is perhaps an appropriate challenge to end with (Kong 2001a: 228).

The themes of "new geographies" are relevant within the study of interfaith places and spaces. As religion is of as comparable importance to geography as race or class or gender, the study of the geography of religion should not be bounded by traditional courses of study and should be allowed the freedom to explore all possibilities within cultural geography. An interfaith center is a place created by a community to permit a better understanding of the diversity of the community. It is that different "site of religious practice" where the practice is not a new religion but a defining of relationships between religious institutions. Society is determining a course of social action within which public and private space is designed. It is more than acknowledging diversity, it is more than accepting diversity, it is directing it, steering present and future relationships. That directive integrates not only different religious groups, but a broad range of demographics – economic, social, and ethnic – of an area. The generic form of 'interfaith center' is ultimately constructed by and within place specific contexts. These centers, often designed to interact at the local, national and international levels, are also influenced by those scales.

Moving beyond cataloguing to analysis and to view religion as not only motivator but as a social force is the next stage of research for the geography of religion (Levine 1986). There is much to discover and uncover, "…spatial understanding of difference, Otherness, identity, hybridity, representation or embodiment, geographers of religion can help unlock the processes that shape, and have shaped, contemporary and historical societies" (Holloway & Valins 2002: 6). American contemporary society is characterized by its religious pluralism (among other forms of pluralism.) Many identities, many "others", many beliefs occupy the same regional space. They may be separated by neighborhood, economics or even language, but in our globalized society of mass transportation, mobile workforce, hubs of commerce, entertainment,

healthcare, public education and wireless communication, isolation would be a challenge. Whether with intent or no intent, interaction among religious identities is inevitable.

The analysis of this complex interaction can benefit from the utilization of related disciplines, such as the sociology of religion and religious science within the geography of religion (Henkel 2005). Sociological studies of secularization and desecularization are relevant in the theoretical explanations for the changing form and importance of religion, as well as the nature of the influences acting upon it and its subsequent expression on the landscape (Cox 1995, 1999, Berger 1967, 1999, Luckmann 1967). The 1960s began this process of integrating theories of secularization into the geography of religion (Buttner 1980, Kong 1990) and its attempt to maintain pace with theory in related disciplines. Henkel also identified two current paths for the geography of religion. One "considers social geographical problems and methods" and is evident in Peach (2000), Ley and Martin (1993), Livingstone (1998), and Pacione (1990, 1999). The second "has been influenced by the new cultural geography approach" (Henkel 2005: 5). This direction applies to numerous studies by Kong (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 2001b, 2002), Graham (1998), Macdonald (2002), Valins (2000, 2003), Naylor and Ryan (2002). Neither approach should "lose track of its main goal: it always has to point to the fact that all religious processes take place in space and have a spatial dimension" (Henkel 2005:5). Henkel cited a current trend of research as placing emphasis on the context of the particular object or subject of study:

> Research here focuses on religious communities and congregations in one particular city, a certain urban or rural district. Each congregation is registered and described with special emphasis on its history and its significance for that particular city. The term "mapping" which usually is used in this context comprises far more than just a cartographic mapping and description. It implies "placing in a particular spatial as well as historical/social context" (Henkel 2005: 11).

The formation of an interfaith center would also have been the result of historical and social forces and its operation would take place in that historical and social context. Henkel reiterated one of Kong's (2001a: 211) themes regarding place specific context. Interfaith centers can be inserted as the particular object or subject of study and examined as a congregation would be within an urban or rural setting. The center is a product of its setting – urban setting, religious setting, or both. Between settings, there would be similarities and differences, as there would be between centers. In examining independent sites, generalities can be found. In this body of research, the settings, contexts, resulting centers and forming profiles that describe and analyze the elements and processes involved will be examined.

The Relationship between Geography and Religion

One continuing challenge for the field of geography of religion is defining the nature of the relationship between geography and religion. Initially, the primary determinant underlying geography of religion was a geographer's personal interest in religion and not necessarily a scholarly one (Buttner 1974). This was more of an observation than an academic interpretation of the field and attempts were subsequently made to define and clarify. A direct but limited interpretation, the view of a church historian, defined the geography of religions as "the description and analysis of religious phenomena in terms of the science of geography" (Barrett 1982: 828). One definition has yet to be universally applied and geographers contributing to the field often begin by producing a directive.

David Sopher had characterized the geography of religion as an investigation focusing on the religious component of culture within the relationship of culture to the environment and to the spatial interaction with other cultures - not the personal experience of religion but the organized, institutionalized behavior (Sopher 1967). In a religiously diverse society, there

would be a need to account for “religious components” because each religion varies in ideology, practice, and consequently, influence. Additionally, in a diverse and open civic environment, these different types of “religious components” (religions) are interacting with each other and with other elements in the society’s culture and with society as a whole. Even the deletion of personal experience from the equation may be premature. Sopher’s description can be broadened to encompass concepts of multiple faiths, interfaith and individual spirituality. Personal experience of religion shapes personal outlook and actions; shapes views of other religions; and shapes the sense of responsibility of the individual to the society. Even if considering only personal rituals or practices, individuals construct space for religion. These individuals interact and shape landscape on a different scale than religious institutions – yet influences are evident. Individuals comprise the institution, and these now global religious institutions once consisted of only a few individuals.

Isaac (1965) had differentiated geography of religion between two courses of study, each with its own definition. The first is religious geography, "in which what is basic to religion and the land is thought or made to conform to it," and contrasts with geography of religion, "in which what is studied is the impact of religion upon the landscape or the land upon the religion" (with the movement of study emphasis moving from the former to the latter) (Isaac I965). Early geography's contact with religion (Issac 1965), would be presently categorized under religious geography. These classifications were further elaborated on by Stump, who suggested that:

> Religious Geography "focuses on religion's role in shaping human perceptions of the world and of humanity's place within it; its primary concerns are the role of theology and cosmology in the interpretation of the universe" (Stump 1986:1)
>
> Geography of Religions is "concerned less with religion per se than with its social, cultural and environmental associations and effects. This approach views

> religion as a human institution, explores its relationships with various elements of its human and physical settings" (Stump 1986:1)

Chris Park (1994) used the phrase “geography and religion” which allows for a broader interpretation of the field, as there can be themes introduced that may not readily be designated as either geography of religion or religious geography (Park 1994). The relationship between geography and religion has focused on the distribution of religion, and the spread of religion and religious ideas. Sacred places and spaces (which embody an unusual connection to a perception of divine power) exist and are revered among religious traditions. These represent another substantial category of geography and religion. Religious icons, pilgrimages, houses of worship and burial grounds represent other examples of religion’s manifestation on the landscape. Religious conflict and cooperation, whether global or regional, are also viable categories of study.

A poetic definition of the geography of religion for this research can be offered as the meeting of God, Humanity, Place and Space. More plainly, it can be defined is a subset of geography that explores religion in the context of human and physical spatiality and explores that same spatiality in the context of religion. While religion itself is often difficult to define, crucial here is interpreting religion in its broadest sense and scope to include not only traditional, organized religion, but all forms of human spirituality and belief systems and the interaction between systems. Geography includes its broad human and physical components; the social, cultural, economic and political settings; the material and abstract production of space and identities; the processes of social relations and structures and institutional and individual action; and the multiple spatial arenas available on local and global levels.

Geography of Religion from the 16th to 18th Centuries

Mapping the world was based on interpretative cosmology of the religious mind until the 16th and 17th centuries, when maps of the world depicted the spatial diffusion of different faiths (Kong 1990). This "ecclesiastical geography" (Isaac 1965) began by mapping the spread of the Christian faith and then later expanded to include other faiths, although the preoccupation with Christianity continued. In the 16th and 17th centuries "biblical geography" (Isaac 1965:8) emerged in an attempt to locate the places referred to in the bible. Interest in mapping of religion has not faded. The availability of geographic information systems has made more detailed displays of regional religions possible, as well as statistical analysis of the religion to the demographics of the area. In this research, maps will display the growth of interfaith organizations across the United States.

Buttner viewed the 16th century and the Reformation as the beginnings of geography of religion and a theological direction in the discipline (Buttner 1974). Many geography texts of the 16th century were written by theologians and included themes of creation and the spread of Christianity. Ecclesiastical geography began to broaden its perspective with Varenius's 1649 *Descriptio Regni Iaponia*, which included within its framework religions other than Christianity. Although its aim was to provide a progress report of Christian missionary, it did offer a mapping of the distribution of other faiths (Buttner 1974). Natural theology is an additional tie between religion and geography that surfaced within the 17th and continued through the 18th and 19th centuries. Evidence of God is thought to be found in all creation on Earth and "scholars adopted a physiotheological stance to defend the idea" (Kong 1990: 357) and geographic manifestations were theologically explained (Buttner 1976). A popular title of the time by naturalist John Ray

(1691) exemplifies this outlook, *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation* (Park 1994).

During this same period, many other important works were produced by the German school of geographic thought (Buttner 1974, 1979, 1980) and studied Europe in terms of religious places and movements. Books include *De dimensione terrae* (Caspar Peucer 1556) and *Orbis terrae partium succincta explicatio* (Neander 1583), and were important for bringing science (as geography) together with divinity (Buttner 1980). Similarly, work in England furthered geography's relationship with religion (Gilbert 1962) with the publication of *A Briefe Description of the Whole Worlde* (George Abbot 1599) and *Microcosmus: Or a little description of the great world* (Peter Heyln 1599) and *Cosmographie* (Peter Heyln 1652). Another, *Geography Delinated Forth* (Nathanael Carpenter 1625) also presented geography within a theological context (Livingstone 1984).

The term 'geography of religion' is thought to have originated in the 1795 book *Ideas about Religious Geography* by Gottlieb Kasche, and illustrated the view of ecclesiastical geography in support of Christian missionary:

> The geography of religion convincingly teaches the advantages of Christianity as compared to any other positive religion. In the same way as the geographer of religion is compelled to describe the doctrines of each faith in an unbiased way, it is the duty of the Christian observer to delight in the brighter light which illuminates the way for him ahead of so many of his fellow-men. All this can only be achieved if geography of religion presents the existing types of faith in their perfection and their coarseness side by side, thus facilitating comparisons for the philosopher. (This is quoted in Buttner 1987: 223)

The beginning of the nineteenth century continued the emphasis on Christianity, and many geographic texts in the United States were written by Christians and slanted toward that belief system. Other religions were portrayed unfavorably because they were presented without

appropriate explanation and as a consequence made to appear 'strange' (Vining 1982). Texts include those written by congregational minister Jedidiah Morse, *Geography Made Easy* (1784) and *Elements of Geography* (1801), and by J.A. Cummings, *An Introduction to Ancient and Modern Geography* (1817). This is noteworthy owing to the influential nature of a textbook: "because virtually all pre-college students studied geography, and at almost every grade level, it is reasonable to assume that the writings of the early geographers contributed to religious intolerance, suspicion, and perhaps even hatred" (Vining 1982: 24).

In examining places where multiple faiths are represented, each must be considered with equal or appropriate weight to validate the entire study. As the study of geography of religion continues to evolve, the focus of the field widens. The next chapter contains my theoretical framework concerning pluralism, the production of space and interfaith as a social movement.

Chapter 2: Theorizing the Production of Space in Interfaith Centers

The Geography of Religion into the 19th Century to the Present

As the 19th century progressed, there was a shift in the placement of people within nature (Park 1994) and this translated into a new mission for the field. The connection of the environment and religion was explored through a deterministic approach, as geographers attempted to explain the nature of religion in terms of or a condition of geography (Kong 1990). Environmental determinism brought new explanations of humans and their society, including religion. Classic examples are Semple's *Influences of the Geographical Environment* (1911), which cited environmental causes for a society's view of hell and Huntington's *Mainsprings of Civilization* (1945), which applied the same source for a society's creation of a deity. This began to change with the work of Max Weber in the early 20th century, as the emerging focus became the influence of religion on economic and social structures (Kong 1990). Although the influence on geographic research was not immediate, some called for a new direction for the geography of religion within the context of Max Weber's work. This is frequently pointed to as a pivotal point in the discipline (Buttner 1980, Kong 1990, Park 1994).

Park described the German school as "progressive and innovative" and the French school, even in the 1940's and 1950's as having a "largely descriptive and deterministic style imported from the nineteenth century" and listed Delaruelle and Le Bras (1943, 1945 respectively) as publishing reviews of geography of religion, but not obtaining the influence of Deffontaines (Park 1994: 17). The themes in *Geographie et religions* (Deffontaines 1948) were broad and descriptive in nature. It was the first of three texts dedicated to the discipline with Sopher's *Geography of Religion* (1967) and Parks' *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and*

Religion (1994) following. Each of these texts, produced decades apart, represented a survey of the topics thought most relevant and significant at the time.

A summary of the contents of *Geographie et religions* (1948) indicated a focus on tangible expressions and patterns of religion on the landscape:

i) Religion and the geography of residence (includes chapters on the influence of religion on human residence, dwelling place of the dead and dwelling places of gods)
ii) Religion and people (with chapters on settlement evolution, types of settlement, towns, demography, and the dead population)
iii) Religion and exploitation (with chapters on the agriculture life, pastoral geography, industrialization, and consumption)
iv) Geography and circulation (with chapters on religious journeys and migrations, journeys of the deceased, the geography of pilgrimage, commerce generated by religion, and the impact of religion on transport)
v) Geography and lifestyle (with chapters on food, work, and the calendar, influence of the dead, and the religious way of life)

(Outline produced by Park 1994:17)

This work offers more of a "catalogue rather than a thoughtful insight into the interaction of religion and landscape" (Levine 1986: 430). This is not to say it does not offer a reference for religious forms on the landscape and a foundation for further study as to their evolution. In later writings, Deffontaines expresses the idea of the complexity that exists underneath the manifestations of religion on the earth's surface:

> The great task ahead consists in exploring, with minute care, with wisdom, and with affection the motive powers which have driven the human species to this point of industry and creativeness in fashioning geographic landscapes. (Deffontaines 1953:37)

David Sopher's 1967 *Geography of Religion* "remains a masterly overview of an emerging field…it has been cited extensively…offers an important baseline against which to measure subsequent developments" (Park 1994: 19). Sopher introduced the connection between geography and religion, not as one that convenes on personal experience, but as a study of a system. Since religion can be classified as "a system of faith and worship…a body of institutionalized sacred beliefs, observances, and social practices, geography can study organized religious systems and culturally molded and institutionalized religious behavior" (Sopher 1967: 1). Included is not only "distribution", but "structure in space, the machinery whereby a religious system organizes all its adherents" as "geographic characteristics of religious systems" (Sopher 1967: 4). Examined are the "positive" and "negative expressions" on the landscape, not only sacred places and the patterns they exhibit, but uses of plants and animals, food restrictions, as well as nomenclature (Sopher 1967: 24). Sopher also offered guides to both a descriptive study of the geography of religion with such spatial expressions, as well as an opportunity to address the underlying social nature and consequent social expression (Levine 1986). The text proposed and elaborated on four core ideas:

i) The significance of the environmental setting for the evolution of religious systems and particular religious institutions.
ii) The way religious systems and institutions modify their environment.
iii) The different ways whereby religious systems occupy and organize segments of earth space.
iv) The geographic distribution of religions and the way religious systems spread and interact with each other.

(Sopher 1967)

The framework for the geography of religion as outlined by Sopher is integral to this research. The four core ideas can be applied to the context in which the modern interfaith centers have emerged. The importance of setting for a religious system can be expanded to the

significance of setting for the evolution of interreligious systems. The manner in which the interaction and cooperation (specific joint efforts) between religions modify (positively, negatively) the environment could be an addition to Sopher's second core idea. How does interfaith occupy and organize space? If a model were constructed to represent this occupation or organization, is it a compilation of fragments (from each faith) or does it have its own signature? If various interfaith sites are studied, how does their organization of space compare and contrast? The three centers that have been examined provided insight into the interfaith structure, as well as how participants (as opposed to adherents) are organized.

Finally, how are interfaith places distributed and what is their interaction? These interfaith systems can be another new subset examined within Sopher's framework. Because the interfaith center may be defined more as a system of religions that a religious system, this adds further complexity to distribution and interaction, as there may be different definition of interfaith from place to place. This research will begin to address these issues and examine the patterns that have emerged. For example, the map of distribution of interfaith centers across the United States can be examined, based on the database produced by the Harvard Pluralism Project. Although this is not a religion that is being distributed, it is an idea regarding the outlook on the relationships between religions, and would therefore have impact on the same religious adherents. There are national and international associations for these centers, as well as support from local connections. There are, therefore, different geographic scales involved, all operating independently, while also being potentially connected.

In contrast to Sopher, the influence of the individual or of individuality will be considered as comparable to that of the institution in this research. A person's religious nature influences their actions, perspectives and their interaction with others. Being religious or

spiritual can involve the institutional traditions, practices or ideologies, or it can mean an interpretation of them or something entirely new. The validity of this personal truth is not the purview of the geographer, but the impact of that 'truth' on the cultural landscape. If religious pluralism is influencing a society, it is not enough to focus on a single group when studying the cultural landscape. We must now look at the Catholic influenced by the Muslim; the Jew influenced by the Buddhist; the spiritual movement that incorporates many ideologies. This is not a complete differentiation of themes presented in Sopher's work, as it is an addition of an entire new subset and a new depth of investigation on social production of space as motivated by religiosity or spirituality, not only at the institutional level. While the future of the interfaith movement, organization or center may be difficult to predict, there is reason to begin study early. There is sufficient social consequence to amicable relationships between faiths, and this project allows us to begin studying a phenomenon in its early development. As Sopher noted, "The great religions of revelation" have all started as idiosyncratic religions, confined at first to a handful of faithful (Sopher 1967:12).

Even if the interfaith centers are considered a phenomenon in its infancy, we can still examine how they emerge and diffuse. What is universalizing the interfaith center? "It was the political and economic organization of the Roman Empire that made possible the universalizing of monotheism through the medium of Christianity" (Sopher 1967:16). What political, economic, social or civic forces are influencing or being influenced by interfaith? Is the spread of interfaith based on growth from limited sources, or is it an independent process with similar conditions nationwide, or even worldwide that are producing a similar phenomenon? Is it globalization or is it the Internet? Sopher also questioned the social order, spatial organization and technical skills that have been required of societies to build such things as sacred monuments

or buildings (Sopher 1967). How do the form, density and space requirements of such structures develop, according to the religious system and its ideological and organizational specifications (Sopher 1967)? Similar questions could be asked of those societies producing interfaith structures. What social and spatial foundations are required of a society to develop an interfaith center, to divert community resources and leadership into such a project? Is the existence of diversity alone enough? What forms of interfaith centers are being produced and what is the quantity of production within a region?

Sopher also discussed sacred places and religious centers, the evolution of the sacred place into the religious center and the role of religious centers in urban life (Sopher 1967). The religious centers were sites of religious and political gatherings with "the role of the earliest religious centers in the evolution of urban life…not clear and… probably not the same everywhere" (Sopher 1967: 50). The urban setting as a religious focal point is another concept that can be applied in this research, as the interfaith center can be considered a religious center of a different form. The center is not dominant in actual size or extent of influence within the urban area, but instead offers a depth in religious diversity and relationships. The religious center in Sopher's context also provided a site for pilgrimage or migration. "This religious circulation promotes secondary flows of trade, cultural exchange, social mixing, and political integration….the diffusion of ideas within a religious realm…" (Sopher 1967:52). Included in this research is a comparable movement of people, exchange and diffusion of information into the community. Interfaith centers can also be examined for their role in educational and experiential contact with different religious cultures.

In addressing interaction between religions, Sopher considered three general categories - (1) peaceful coexistence (2) instability and competition (3) intolerance and exclusion – with the

footnote that "the behavior patterns exhibited are not necessarily a consequence of religious concepts…they may be the product of a long historic experience which lives on in the tradition of the communities involved…" (Sopher 1967:94). The interfaith center represents an expansion on the idea of interaction, based on "peaceful coexistence" defined as "equilibrium, accompanied by mutual feelings of respect, indifference, or antipathy" (Sopher 1967:94). This equilibrium within interfaith relationships can now include cooperation, acceptance, affiliation, shared goals and even worship. With the evolving sense of coexistence being more productive and proactive, how is the cultural landscape being altered and how are the nonreligious components (such as community history) adding to this new transformation? Specifically Sopher addressed American pluralism as "another form of tolerant coexistence" (Sopher 1967: 96). Diverse church membership, lack of a state church, the mobility of the population and immigration are elements producing "distinctive spatial relationships…in the American situation" (Sopher, 1967:97). This reference to American pluralism foreshadows this research, as does Sopher's mention of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and the initiative toward the formation of associations derived from various traditional faith groups (Sopher, 1967). Not dominating but increasing in presence, the interfaith movement in the United States had been gaining momentum since 1893. This research into interfaith centers is a new application and expansion of Sopher's concepts and topics.

The third and most recent text is Chris Park's *Sacred Worlds* (1994). It explored the field of geography and religion, and offered a status report for the future of the field. Chapters included spatial patterns and diffusion (and hearths) of religious organizations and ideas; sacred places and pilgrimages; religion and population (demography, development, politics); changes in diffusion and adherence; cultural regions; and the dynamic nature of religion in itself. Park

concluded that most of the work in the field could be placed in one of Sopher's (1981) categories: "denominational geography, the landscapes and spatial organization of particular religious groups, the development of sacred centers, and pilgrimage" (Park 1994: 20). Park's final analysis is that "the field is littered with topics left untouched, questions left unanswered…approaches left undeveloped and directions left unexplored" (Park 1994: 30).

In addition to texts and individual articles, the geography of religion has also been explored by theme issues published in journals such as Journal of Cultural Geography (1986, Vol. 7) and National Geographical Journal of India (1987, Vol. 33). More recently, the Annals of the Association of American Geographers (2006, Vol. 96) presented a collection of articles which focused on "conceptually retheorizing and empirically studying religion" (Proctor 2006: 167).

> Though religion appears to play a prominent role in the contemporary political and cultural landscape of the United States and elsewhere, relatively few geographers are contributing toward a better appreciation of this phenomenon…Our broad intent is to reinvigorate discourse among geographers on religion, and suggest the important contribution geographers can make to a vibrant and important scholarly conversation (Proctor 2006: 165).

These articles explored diverse topics: religion, the sacred and significance across geographic space (Ivakhiv 2006); critical realism and questions of insider and outsider in the study of religion (Ferber 2006); understanding the spaces where the religious, spiritual and sacred are performed (Holloway 2006); and institutional religion with nature, science and state (Proctor 2006). The significance of religion and the consequence of expanding the scope and essence of the field are reiterated:

> Religion is thus intimately related to human identity, serving to cement political, cultural, and social mores in ways that at times appear to defy logical argument or rational action. Each of the major world religions stemmed from beliefs about the

> good life and peaceful terrestrial dwelling; yet in many ways religion has come to be represented as one of the major causes of conflict (White 1967) and even dogmatic condemnation (Dawkins 2004). Indeed, the scandals that have been perpetrated in the name of religion down the centuries of human history pose a poignant set of contradictions. Geographic dimensions must inevitably involve inquiry into the genesis and endurance of such contradictions. (Buttimer 2006: 199)

The momentum of the discipline was further exemplified by the production of an electronic journal by Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems, a specialty group of the Association of American Geographers, in October 2006. (This followed a reinvigoration of the group in 2003.) The articles in this inaugural issue ranged from local geography and church attendance (Leonard 2006), Mormon identity and its historical geography (Madsen 2006) and the Shakers and their production of space (Carter and Geores 2006). The 2006 AAG Conference in Chicago held eleven sessions on the Geography of Religion and Belief Systems. Topics included Geographies of Religious Nonconformity; Religion, Mining and the New Cityscape; Sacred Space from the Underworld to the Rooftop of the Earth; and Faith-based responses to disasters: Natural and Cultural. This most current literature on geography and religion has yet to approach interfaith and the creation of places and spaces as proposed in this research.

Not only are geographers delving into other disciplinary areas for contextual foundations, sociologists studying religion are grappling with the importance of place and context. Introducing a forum on religion and place that appear in the Journal for Scientific Study of Religion, Williams wrote that there is an increasing "push to think about physical context and geographical location" and "in the study of religion, place may be integral" (Williams 2005: 239):

> many scholars have shown a variety of ways in which urban locations lead to specific developments in American religious life. The diversity and de facto

> pluralism of religious traditions in cities, the density of populations, and the patterns of first generation immigration to cities have made American cities places of religious vitality, creative adaptation, and cultural synthesis…New cultural and social encounters lead to sharing ideas, adopting new practices, and making pragmatic adjustments to life around religious and social others (Williams 2005: 240).

American Pluralism and Geography of Religion

The research will address the origin, formation and societal response to religious pluralism in the form of interfaith centers. Within a diversified society, various religions relate to each other, independently and collectively, as well as cultural, economic, and political factors. The formation of an interfaith organization enters as an additional factor with which to contend. Where, why and how is it formed? How does it act on the social structure it is built within and how does it react to it? Conflict and cooperation between religions are not unique or new, but this expression of purposeful unity in the form of the interfaith center is a phenomenon presently evolving and space is being set aside for that specific agenda. This ideology can express itself in both personal and public space. It forms in imagined, material and social places. What places are being built to house the associations of religions, and how is space being transformed or created? There are even more basic questions that can be asked. What are people doing with their religion? Where are they going with their religion? In essence, where are they taking it? They are taking it into their job, their healthcare, their education, their politics, and their relationships and into their ideals of how the world should be – their social conscience. It is not just organized religion with its doctrine, but also personal spiritual code – a way of living and behaving. How is the landscape altered by such individualized beliefs and its interaction in a group? The interfaith center is one outcome and that will be the focus of this study, but there is

great potential within the study of geography of religion for the examination of interfaith that can build upon the foundation of the existing literature.

In the United States, there has been noteworthy output on geography of religion since the 1960s (Park 1994). A survey of church membership patterns in the United States (Zelinsky 1961) was both innovative and inspirational to other American geographers. The religious landscape of the United States has been well documented for the regionalism it exhibits, including patterns of denominational dominance and change, sacred sites and space, church membership and religious pluralism (Zelinsky 1961, Meinig 1965, Shortridge 1977, Warner 1997, Stump 1998, Tillman and Emmett 1999, Lane 2001, Carroll 2000, Crawford 2005). The Religion by Region Series (Silk and Walsh eds.) is a current attempt to quantitatively and qualitatively define by region the religious character of America.

> There is an overall sense that historical immigration and religious freedoms have created a unique environment in the United States of religious diversity.
> The spatial disposition of the sacred is no longer reducible to a simple model. Greatly exacerbating the complexity of the churchscape has been, first, the remarkable explosion in number and variety of faiths… resulting from both immigration and internal migration…the sheer inventiveness of spiritual entrepreneurs… the loosening of spatial constraints with innovations in transportation and communication (Zelinsky 2001:9).

A central theme of this study is that the interfaith center is a response to the religious diversity in the United States. In 2002 – 2003, a national survey was conducted by Robert Wuthnow to measure the attitudes and perceptions Americans have regarding the different faiths represented in the country and in their community. This diversity is the result of 20th century immigration, which brought large numbers of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists as well as other faiths to the United States (Wuthnow 2005). The survey was part of a larger:

> three-year research project that included more than three hundred in-depth personal interviews …conducted in fourteen metropolitan areas, selected to represent the several regions of the country as well as larger and smaller cities with varying experiences of immigration and diversity… the Religion and Diversity Survey… with a national sample of 2,910 adults…Each person in the survey was asked questions about his or her contacts with people of religions other than Christianity, attitudes toward these religions, personal religious beliefs and practices, and a variety of other social and demographic characteristics (Wuthnow 2005: 5)

The objective was to gauge the response of the American people to religious and cultural diversity. Are we as a nation, "avoiding issues…responding superficially" or "taking advantage of opportunities that diversity provides…a more mature pluralism…?" (Wuthnow 2005: 7). His results indicated more avoidance, cursory (even incorrect) knowledge of different faiths and even fearful reactions to the presence of different religions in communities.

> Millions of Americans who are Christians or Jews come in contact with Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists through work, their business dealings, and in their neighborhood. Many more Americans have formed opinions about these religions through reading, what they have heard on television, and their conversations at church or with friends. The American public holds strong views about the teachings and practices of the various religions. Although it is common to give lip service to the value of diversity, many Americans regard religions other than their own as fanatical, conducive to violence, closed-minded, backward, and strange. A large minority (at least a third) of Americans say that they would not welcome these religions becoming stronger presence in our society. A large minority would not be happy about mosques and temples being built in their neighborhoods, they would not want a child of theirs to marry a Muslim or Hindu, and some would even make it illegal for these religious groups to meet (Wuthnow 2005: 228).

The survey distributed to interfaith centers across the United States was based on Wuthnow's Religion and Diversity Survey. Instead of the general public, the researcher targeted participants or attendees of interfaith centers to measure any difference in response. Is there a

more "mature pluralism" evident in their responses? How does this targeted survey compare to that of the general population?

The American religious and cultural diversity referred to by Wuthnow is the setting for an interfaith center. The center is, as Williams would put it, a "pragmatic adjustment" (Williams 2005: 240). It can be termed a response or a consequence of our pluralism. Therefore, it is intentional: How do we live in the same location, share the same services, institutions and streets, if we do not share the same beliefs or outlook of the material and spiritual worlds? If the answer is adaptation, acceptance, allowance, what forms do they take in our society? In the social structure of an interfaith center, that adaption is designed with goals of positive ramifications for the greater whole - the community, the society, even the global system. There is significance in this research, not only in broadening the scope of geography of religion or adding to understanding and knowledge of social processes, but in the study of a device that may have the ability to influence more amicable human relationships.

Interfaith Space and Geography of Religion

This research contains an examination of interfaith space. Space and worship are both undeveloped concepts in the geography of religion (MacDonald 2002). The sacred and secular elements that comprise interfaith spaces are not predetermined by convention. They form at independent sites, and mediate the requirements of multiple belief systems and the resources and constraints of the locality – on economic, political and social level. According to Kong, what is lacking in sacred space research is the sense of how such space is negotiated if and when contexts change (Kong 2000). The introduction of different faith practices into one structure changes their existing individual contexts and forms new ones. There may be variations by site, yet commonalities in the underlying social processes and social agents. Most research focuses

on place and site construction, and not the production of space in the practice of worship (MacDonald 2002). The idea that space (based on Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*) is "open, contingent and the outcome of complex social processes" has yet to be fully applied to this subset of geography, despite influencing economic and social geography (MacDonald 2002).

The interfaith center offers geographers a unique centre-stage in its compilation of peoples assembled with varied - even conflicting - instructions on belief and worship, yet with a shared desire to achieve a specific goal. People's attachment to sacred places is also fertile ground for humanism (Kong, 2001a). An interfaith sacred space fulfills two functions: to be substantial enough to be binding as a place of attachment; and to be accessible enough to attract more than one system of belief. The interfaith center holds a contemporary position and possibility on the religious landscape. It offers a new path of exploration in religion and geography with these qualities. It is built not only on tolerance, but acceptance and the eradication of ignorance, making the "Other" less strange and more familiar and mending misconceptions (some by geography itself) about religions. Fickeler cites "religious tolerance" as "an extremely important basic concept for the geography of religions" (1962: 97) and this concept can be expanded to include other types of relationships between religions promoted by the interfaith center. Tolerance

> is altogether decisive for the relations of religions and creeds among themselves, and the manner and extent of their spatial distribution, which takes place either peacefully through preaching and missions…or by force and battle…or both together. It is also significant for the mutual relations of religions and states…Toleration of whole religions or of one or another of their parts…can differ according to realm, time and history, and relation to other religions and their parts (Fickeler 1962: 97-98).

"Geographers of religion have been caught up overwhelmingly…with formalized systems of religions, particularly institutionalized, canonical religions of the text" (Kong 1990:

375). This research is an opportunity to move away from the formalized to the more experimental and evolving approaches in geography and religion. The existence of interfaith places constructs a space comprised of a variety of beliefs and faiths with the ambition of recognizing all, not blending identities or diluting distinction. As a means of education and experience, an interfaith center has the potential to accelerate or alter to flow of knowledge concerning religious concepts, beliefs and practices. The information from or contacts made at a center may serve to complement previous interaction with a religious group, or it may constitute a first contact that may shape or inspire further associations. This exposure to others, which is achieved in an environment that is nonaligned, informed and positive can promote in the surrounding community humanitarian ideals of acceptance and respect.

This research considers the production of both social and sacred space as a consequence of the interfaith movement. The formation and development of an interfaith space is a process of constructing new space or deconstructing or adding to the space it contacts. Existing structures, relationships or institutions are altered, or new ones are built. The social space it produces can be included within Lefebvre's triad of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces.

Lefebvre's representations of space or "conceptualized space by those who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" provide access to change social space by conceiving newness or change (Lefebvre 1991:38-39). The interfaith movement is a change in our conceptualization of our relationships, our interactions and our boundaries. Representations of space are "the dominant space in any society" (Lefebvre 1991:38-39). Interfaith centers, found in representational spaces, are a product of what is being conceived as a new structure of diversity. "Space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, hence the space of

the inhabitants and users …this is the dominated space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre 1991:38-39). This is the space where change is manifested - experiential and not conceptual. The interfaith center is the tangible component formed from the movement, derived from society, acting on society.

"The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space…it propounds and presupposes it" (Lefebvre 1991:38). These practices, "working within the bounds of the conceived abstract spaces…while simultaneously being shaped and shaping individuals' perceptions and uses of space" influence everyday life (McCann 1999:173). It is the potential interfaith has, similar to the power of religion, to pervade the daily lives of participants that is the source of its consequence. Perceptions of beliefs and groups in our community are shaped by contact, information and events. The interfaith center is a component of the community that adds to the layering of that discernment. New contacts and new information have the potential then to be interpreted differently. The more involved in the daily and the ordinary, the more potent, effective and lasting interfaith will be. Interfaith centers act as hubs and means for this delivery.

> Everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond and their common ground. It is in everyday life that the sum total of relations that make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and form. (Lefebvre 2008: 97).

As we negotiate the forms of space, we create a spatial practice. As we acknowledge and allow interfaith in that negotiation, the production of space is further influenced. The more pervasive interfaith experiences are in everyday life, the more its ideals and its movement will realize fruition. The productions of this space may be an application of Soja's (1996) "Thirdspace" as a space that combines spatial with social and history. In discussing diversity and

tolerance, Wessel (2009) referred to Soja's 'thirdspace' "as an immensely productive space – a space from which unexpected relations and practices might appear" (Wessel 2009: 5). Within social space, interfaith worship space or sacred space may be such an example. There is no specific template or convention for this type of space, except to conclude more than one faith tradition or belief system is represented. Yet, how is this accomplished? What elements are included or excluded? Within the interfaith space, preservation of self-identity is paramount, yet equally as important as respect for another's identity. How can space be produced to accomplish this when beliefs that comprise these identities are unfamiliar to each other or in conflict?

While interfaith worship is a wide variety of faith traditions presented simultaneously, it is not a religion. "It should not be a replacement of the unique forms of religious worship that can be found within each religious tradition. It should not be a super ritual that transcends or unites all religions" (Brodeur 1997: 553). Interfaith can be described as philosophy of living in a religiously and spiritually diverse world that respects the integrity of different faith traditions. There is a component of worship that can be assigned to it by a small number of participants. It is not an attempt to convert people from one faith to another or to meld different beliefs and practices into a new faith. Frequently, the focus is on experience. The concept is that if one can say the prayers of another in a familiar setting, one can come to a deeper and richer understanding of others and themselves. "An interfaith celebration is not neutral. The very concept implies an openness to see religious diversity as something positive. Therefore, an interfaith celebration can be seen as a possible sociopolitical tool in the promotion of more tolerant and pluralistic societies" (Brodeur 1997:555). The importance of the interfaith influence on space cannot be overestimated, because the importance of space cannot be overestimated.

> Space is becoming the principal stake of goal-directed actions and struggles. It has of course always been the reservoir of resources, and the medium in which

> strategies are applied, but it has now become something more than the theatre, the disinterested stage or setting, of action. Space does not eliminate the other materials or resources that play a part in the socio-political arena, be they raw materials or the most finished of products be they businesses or 'culture'. Rather, it brings them all together and then in a sense substitutes itself for each factor separately by enveloping it. The outcome is a vast movement in terms of which space can no longer be looked upon as an 'essence', as an object distinct from the point of view of (or compared with) 'subjects', as answering to a logic of its own. Nor can it be treated as a result or resultant, as an empirically verifiable effect of a past, a history or a society. (Lefebvre 1991: 410).

According to Soja (1996), neither can the importance of our spatiality:

> …we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities. Perhaps more than ever before, a strategic awareness of this collectively created spatiality and its social consequences has become a vital part of making both theoretical and practical sense of our contemporary life-worlds at all scales, from the most intimate to the most global (Soja 1996: 1).

Connecting this "collectively created spatiality" with the potential of a collectively created spirituality promises to combine the power of religion with the power of space. This synthesis is foundational in the interfaith movement. "Interfaith is when our experience of the diversity of modern life and our connections to our religious traditions cohere in such a way that we develop faith identities that encourage us to interact with others intentionally and appreciatively" (Patel and Hartman 2009: 28).

The intention is necessary to close what Patel and Hartman call "the division between inter and faith in American life" (Patel and Hartman 2009: 27). They use the term "inter" spaces to describe where people from diverse religions gather; such as malls and corporations; and they use the term "faith" space where specific groups talk about their own faith such as synagogues, mosques and churches. Few in number are those spaces where diverse religions intentionally come together about matters of religion (Patel and Hartman 2009). They point squarely to interfaith organizations for this task. "Creating and expanding the spaces where religiously

diverse people gather to work on matters of religious diversity…is the task of interfaith organizations" (Patel and Hartman 2009: 28). By engaging the ideals of interfaith and participating in the process of interfaith, there is the potential to transform social space and society.

Interfaith as a Social Movement

Social movements represent collective action as a means of bringing about change. Participants in social movements construct new meanings with their interaction and "act collectively, creating goals, new organizational structure and new culture" (Staggenborg 2007:13). Social movements offer participants shared experiences and values and they are connected through a belief that their collective action can initiate change (Snow 2001). Those engaged in interfaith organizations and activities are motivated by what they believe to be forthcoming changes in society - changes precipitated by their actions.

Pedersen, in her 2004 assessment of interfaith activity, termed it a movement that is "growing rapidly," "maturing" and "seems ready to become more mainstream" and credits the expansion to those motivated to do interfaith work with a growing body of methods and precedent (Pedersen 2004: 74). Interfaith activity is increasing at the local level, which represents not only broader appeal, but greater depths as relationship and partnerships are formed and daily lives are shared (Pedersen 2004). Brodeur describes the transition as "interfaith dialogue…has moved from the margins of Western society…to multiple centers of power worldwide…" (Brodeur 2005:42). September 11th 2001 is a specific moment in time when the interfaith movement entered a more public arena. It has remained in the public view through a diversity of methodologies, self-awareness and information technology (Brodeur 2005). Technology such as the Internet has become instrumental in creating and maintaining the

grassroots network of interfaith work and expanding the movement. The interfaith movement has also been described as "an enormous conceptual tent under which vastly different activities occur" (McCarthy 2007:18). Pedersen addresses specifically the use of the word movement:

> I use the word "movement" to refer to an activity that can spread horizontally by using particular, known methods, without necessarily depending either on charismatic leaders or on material support or authority from one or a few centers. The thousands of interfaith projects and organizations found all over the world today are not sponsored, coordinated, or directed by any single organization or bureaucracy. The overall picture of interfaith work, rather, shows thousands of groups and activities that are loosely related by a cluster of shared methods, aims and values. Especially when we consider the growth of grassroots local programs, the word "movement" seems accurate and evocative. (Pedersen 2004:79).

She recognizes three primary motives for interfaith work:

i) To live together harmoniously, mitigate tensions, and resolve conflict
ii) To engage a "common task"
iii) To search for truth and understanding in the context of religious plurality

(Pedersen 2004:75)

These motives are equally apparent in the three primary case studies, as well as the interfaith organization data base compiled for this research. They represent collective values that are a call to action for creating these conditions. It is this call to action and the experiences of creating and executing this interfaith action that creates changes in society. The first motive is the most common, knowledge of the other, though personal contact and exchange can build trust and understanding (Pedersen 2004). The need for partnership to solve common problems or to fulfill a common purpose represents the second motive. Concerns on both a local and global level such as poverty, human rights, or disease, can be addressed more forcefully as a collective. The third motive has less realization in interfaith work beyond discussion; it is more the task of theologians and academics. Brodeur utilizes different terminology, but categorizes the efforts in

a similar nature: (1) Clarifying religious worldviews; (2) active social engagement; (3) promoting peace and justice (Brodeur 2005:47). McCarthy has also chronicled the interfaith movement and its foundations "built on a premise of the equal dignity of all religions and the value of open exchange" (McCarthy 2007:18). Patel compares the interfaith movement to social justice movements and notes the pluralistic nature of the world necessitates interfaith cooperation to create justice. The environmental movement is creating spaces of environmental justice and sustainability; the civil rights movement has and is continuing to transform non-equity in social, political and economic space. One model of interfaith work within the movement is to choose an issue and create space where groups can work together (Patel 2005). The interfaith movement, in a quieter but similar fashion has begun changes to the national and global landscape in creating interfaith space for social cohesion and constructive coexistence.

The ability of religion in America to adapt and respond to societal and demographic changes has assisted in its survival and health, and may be the key ingredient for its future (Wuthnow 1988). For geographers there is an opportunity to analyze the social processes and examine their expressions and significance. Interfaith is a social movement that is an intentional response to American pluralism and is acting as an agent of social change. The interfaith center is a mechanism to construct new space for this change and to impact existing social space. The center represents religious pluralism as a place and as a space where "…pluralism is not diversity alone but the energetic engagement with diversity…the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference…the encounter of commitments and it is based on dialogue…"(Harvard University Pluralism Project). The interfaith center is a measure of this response, as interfaith concepts and agencies are expanding on the cultural landscape. On the frontier of religious pluralism in the United States, the interfaith center represents a worthy innovation for study in

the new geography of religion. This research focused on the construction and consequence of the interfaith center, utilizing qualitative and quantitative data as outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology: Mixed Methods Approach

This research into the social and material production of an interfaith center required a mixed method approach. The study followed an embedded mixed method design, in which the qualitative data was the primary basis for the research, with the quantitative data utilized in a supporting role. The three sets of data were obtained independently of each other and analyzed individually. A database of interfaith organizations and a survey distributed to this database provided quantitative data. The database measured distribution, areas of focus and the survey examined the attitudes of participants within these organizations. A map series of the database was produced for spatial analysis. An ethnographic approach was utilized to investigate the formation and development of the interfaith center and the production of interfaith space. From the database of interfaith organizations, three primary centers were selected, and these formed the basis of the qualitative data as case studies for this research.

This research proceeded in five phases, which overlapped at times. The first phase involved assembling information about interfaith organizations across the United States and choosing three for in-depth investigation. The second phase involved the distribution and collection of a survey. In phase three, the researcher developed a set of thematic maps for spatial analysis. Phase four involved the on-site investigations, observations and interviews at the three primary sites. The final phase was devoted to analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data within the theoretical framework.

Phase I: Selection and Categorization of Interfaith Organizations

The Pluralism Project at Harvard University had been documenting the changing religious landscape in the United States since 1991, and has over 600 interfaith organizations

listed in their database as of August 2006, with the greatest concentrations located in the states of California, New York and Massachusetts. It represents a comprehensive collection of interfaith groups within the United States, and this database was the major background source for constructing a general overview of interfaith centers in the United States. The researcher obtained supplemental information to the Pluralism Project's research regarding the organizations, to which this research will refer to as the Interfaith Organizations Database. [1] This final database provided information on organization type, date of origin, activities, mission and location. Components of this database were mapped to illustrate growth and regional distribution.

The Interfaith Organizations Database for the interfaith centers in this research contains the following information from each organization:

A. Organization Name
B. Street Address, City, State
C. Date of Origin
D. Organization Type (as designated by researcher)
E. Programs
F. Population of Location
G. Region designation

From this database, three centers were selected from religiously diverse urban areas: The Interfaith Center at the Presidio, San Francisco; The Interfaith Center of New York, New York; and The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia, Philadelphia. Each of these regions exhibited interfaith movements within the community prior to the formation of the center. This was illustrated by the numerous interfaith organizations or associations in existence. These centers

[1] The information for this database was compiled from public sources. Due to the length of this database it is not included in this manuscript. Contact the researcher to request the complete database.

reflected an area whose diversity was evident on many levels - religious, cultural, and ethnic - and whose community members are reconciliatory toward construction, coexistence and cooperation on issues of mutual or global concern. Table 1 indicates the population base of each selected city, as well as number of religious bodies represented.

Table 1

Urban Area	New York	Philadelphia	San Francisco
Interfaith Center	Interfaith Center Of New York	Interfaith Center Of Greater Philadelphia	Interfaith Center At The Presidio
2005 Population*	8,143,197	1,463,281	739,426
Religious Bodies**	68	71	64

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 Population Estimates, Census 2000, 1990 Census
**Source: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2000 http://www.thearda.com

The Presidio of San Francisco was a military base that was designated as a national park. The San Francisco Interfaith Council initiated a coalition of interfaith organizations in the area, with the goal of creating an interfaith presence in the newly formed park. Beginning in 1992, there was a transition of place, from a military base toward a multifunctional space in which an interfaith center was to be located, as such an addition was deemed important to the religious diverse community. Already in existence on the land was a chapel (built in 1931), which had historically been used for interfaith worship. In 1995, the Interfaith Center at the Presidio was formed and a multi-faith board was assembled. This center now acts as a gathering place for interfaith groups that serve the San Francisco area, and is connected to other organizations on both a national and international level.

New York City was the second diverse urban area, exhibiting the largest total population of the three. The Interfaith Center of New York was founded by Reverend James Morton in 1997, with the aim of creating respect and understanding between religious groups, by

concentrating on social issues, education and civic connections. The organization has issued a statement of belief that defined the foundation for its mission, as well as a "Methodology for Social Change", in which the role of the interfaith center is presented, along with the processes that it attempted to engage.

The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia is the most recently formed of the three primary centers to be studied. Philadelphia is second in total population after New York in this group. This center was inaugurated in 2004, after a planning committee studied various models of interfaith centers in other urban areas. It was founded through the cooperation of religious communities in the area. The goals of this center are similarly oriented toward education, youth, dialogue and understanding between religious groups.

The three centers were chosen, because each exhibited overall common ideals that become differentiated in strategies and particular areas of focus. Each had formed within a general urban environment, but ultimately in different settings and under the influence of varied agents, community objectives, resources and restraints. The selection was also based on a distinguishing element in their history, formation or practice. The center in San Francisco is a transformed military base with a place of worship. The center in New York expresses not only a mission but an ideology and proactive stance to be involved in social process. The center in Philadelphia, as the youngest in the set, had role models for its center design. All three represented ample opportunity to explore the formation, development and role of an interfaith center and the production of interfaith space.

Phase II: Distribution of Interfaith Center Participant Survey

Another segment of quantitative data for this research was obtained through a questionnaire known as the Interfaith Center Survey. The purpose of the Interfaith Center

Survey was to compare views and attitudes of interfaith center participants to those of the general public in the United States. The responses from the survey contained a generalization of the participants in Interfaith Centers and their views on certain subjects. The majority of the questions were taken from the Religion and Diversity Survey, which was completed in 2003 (Wuthnow 2005). This survey acted as a baseline for responses received from the survey distributed as a part of this research. A comparison, therefore, was made between the Religion and Diversity Survey which questioned random individuals in the United States, and the Interfaith Center Survey which questioned interfaith center participants. Original questions were included to specifically address interfaith themes. Permission was received from the lead investigator, Robert Wuthnow, to use the survey in this manner for this research.

The Interfaith Center Survey consists of 53 multiple choice questions. The majority of the questions were taken (either completely or with only minor modifications) from the 2002-2003 Religion and Diversity Survey. There is also a section (Question #54) for additional comments or information by the respondent. There were four categories for questions (Appendix A contains the complete survey):

A. Interaction with Interfaith Center
B. Perception of Religious Groups
C. Contact with Religious Groups
D. Participant Data

Scope. The survey was distributed to the complete database of interfaith organizations compiled by the Harvard Pluralism Project. The database lists 604 organizations (as of August 2006). Only those with sufficient contact information (512) were contacted by mail and/or email.

Timeframe. Surveys were collected for a period of 3 months (May 2008 – July 2008)

Method. A website was set up with information about this project and a means to either participate in the survey electronically or download a copy and return by mail. (www.interfaithcentersurvey.org)

The director of each interfaith organization was sent an introductory letter and/or email with a request that the website be visited and the survey completed. Information regarding the purpose of the project was included in this contact, along with directions for completion and return of the survey. It was also requested that the information regarding the website and survey be distributed to any mailing list of potential participants that they may have.

There was only one version of the survey for all respondents. EXCEL was used to compile the survey responses and statistics for the 2007 survey, as well as for the comparison to the 2002-2003 survey. The response rate was 22 percent. Further details regarding the survey are contained in Chapter 6.

Phase III: Spatial Analysis of Interfaith Organizations

In Phase three of the research, the researcher produced a series of maps. Information from the Interfaith Organization Database was used to produce the following thematic maps:

Map 1: Locations Interfaith Organizations in 1950
Map 2: Locations of Interfaith Organizations in 1975
Map 3: Locations of Interfaith Organizations in 1990
Map 4: Locations of Interfaith Organizations in 2006
Map 5: Population of Locations with Interfaith Organizations
Map 6: Locations with Regional Interfaith Organizations
Map 7: Locations with Network Interfaith Organizations
Map 8: Locations with Agency Interfaith Organizations
Map 9: Locations with Academic Interfaith Organizations
Map 10: Locations with Spiritual Interfaith Organizations

These maps provided pattern information for the interfaith organizations on a regional and national level, and were used in the final analysis in conjunction with the balance of the qualitative and quantitative data that was collected. A series of maps, based on data from the survey was not produced. The responses from the survey were sufficient for their primary purpose, but not for meaningful spatial analysis.

Phase IV: Selecting and Investigating the Three Primary Centers

The detailed examination and interaction with the three primary sites (including the interviews) was the foundation of completing the research objectives, which are determining the formation and development of an interfaith center. This phase was crucial to uncover the context within which the center had originated, the role it has attempted to play in the community and the interaction that has ensued.

For the case studies phase of this research project, three interfaith centers were chosen. The choice of centers was based on the apparent solidness of the organization as determined by years in existence, variety of programming offered, as well as partners and supporters. The researcher reviewed the Harvard Pluralism Project database and initially searched for centers that one could find on the Internet. This was the researcher's initial contact with the center – a view of their personnel, programs and missions. A primary criterion for center selection was an interfaith mission, a focus in community work and clear leadership.

The first center chosen was the New York site, and this was done for a simplereason – proximity. It did, however, also pass the other criteria. The New York center has been in existence since 1999. Its founder, The Very Reverend James Park Morton, was Dean of the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. In March 2007, the researcher contacted and discussed this research proposal with the center's Director of Programs, Matthew Weiner. During the

course of the investigation, the center appointed a new Executive Director, Reverend Chloe Breyer, who provided the center's grant proposals, which offered a glimpse of the future direction which they are seeking to pursue. In July 2008, the researcher interviewed the center's founder and visionary, Reverend Morton. The researcher visited the New York City center for all these interviews.

After the New York Interfaith Center, the second center contacted was San Francisco, as their location in a national park was intriguing. The researcher's initial contact was with Reverend Paul Chaffee, the Executive Director. The researcher visited the San Francisco location three times (April 2007, August 2007, and July 2008), during which time the researcher interviewed Rev. Paul Chaffee, his wife Jan Chaffee, and three board members. The researcher also attended a board meeting and a conference hosted by the center for an organization of which they are part, NAIN (North American Interfaith Network), which is a network of interfaith organizations.

The Philadelphia center is the youngest of the three, and the only one of the centers that were formed after the events of 9/11. While the San Francisco and New York centers had no role models in their creation, the Philadelphia center drew from interfaith leadership in the community (as did the others) and by example of other interfaith centers. This is important to illustrate the progress of the interfaith center concept. The researcher's principal contact with the Philadelphia center was through the Executive Director, Abby Stamelman Hocky, who, together with her board of directors, agreed to the use of their center as a case study. There were two phone-based contact sessions, as well as an in-person interview. The researcher visited the center for an interview in August 2007, and returned in August 2008 for a women's meeting which involved members of the board of directors, as well as other researchers from Fordham

University. The researcher also attended an interfaith Thanksgiving service hosted by the center at the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral in November 2008.

The directors of each site were interviewed at length in a series of meetings, both in person and over the telephone. The interviews were designed to gain in-depth information on all aspects of the center, including history, strategies, ideals and agents who had influence on the center, whether positive or negative. Questions regarding the local or global setting and those directed at social and interfaith issues were designed to examine the interfaith center in various contexts. How well is it succeeding in its mission and how is that measured? Are interfaith relationships improving? Are collaborations for social agendas improving the quality of community life? Has the center been successful in obtaining broad involvement, or has it remained limited to original supporters? Was the greatest accomplishment the concept, the realization of a center or are the true achievements continuing to unfold? The interviews attempted to move beyond a simple reporting of facts about the center and gain valuable knowledge and insights into the reasons for the center's being, the form of its being and the placement of its being in multiple contexts.

For each center there was one main contact, which was: Reverend James Park Morton (New York), Reverend Paul Chaffee (San Francisco), and Abby Stamelman Hockey (Philadelphia). Rev. Morton is the founder and Chair of the Board of Directors. Rev. Chafee and Ms. Stamelman Hockey are Executive Directors. All three have been involved since the origination of their centers, and have extensive knowledge and experience. There were some additional interviews in San Francisco, which was the most extensive case study due to the hospitality of the participants.

From each center the researcher received resources published or promoted by the center, including brochures, pamphlets, and other related material. In San Francisco, the researcher received a book on the McDonald stained windows (an exhibit they sponsored); an interfaith song book they produced; and a sacred space competition book (the competition and book was co-sponsored). In New York, the researcher collected magazine articles and online publications produced by members of the center. Both the founder and the staff are prolific in their writing about interfaith, in such publications as Ethics & Religion, as well numerous online sites. In Philadelphia, the researcher received an interfaith meeting book, which was written by one of the center's staff. All the centers allowed the researcher to receive copies of grant applications. Each of the centers produces a newsletter (quarterly or monthly), to which this study had access. Finally, each center had an up-to-date website, New York and Philadelphia sites exhibiting the most professional polish. The New York center had also added a blog. These features are important for interface with the public, not just with researchers.

As the case studies in Chapter Five explore, the three centers evolved in different contexts, with different (although akin) missions. They employ different strategies to achieve their goals. New York and Philadelphia had more specific programming, while San Francisco acted more as a network.

Phase V: Analysis and Findings of Qualitative and Quantitative Data

This study was based on the premise that interfaith centers are a response to growing religious diversity in American society, and that response has evolved into a force of consequence. The center has the potential to act as a mechanism for social cohesion, an agent for social change and a base for the production of new physical and social space. The purpose of this research was to conduct an in-depth examination of the construction, development and

distribution of this place and the role and space it is creating for itself. This examination will include both qualitative data; in the form of ethnographies; and quantitative data in the form of an interfaith database, a survey and a series of maps.

There are two sets of quantitative data to be analyzed. The first is the database of interfaith organizations, which will be examined and categorized by their organizational objective. The map series illustrated the pattern of their expansion. The survey is the second set of quantitative data, whose results were tabulated and compared to the Wuthnow 2003 survey. Case studies were produced for the primary centers, with information obtained from research, observation, participation and interviews. The narrative is a history of the center documenting and evaluating factors and agents which either assisted or hindered its creation and progress. The case studies tell the stories of the centers, but also provide data for analysis. Integral elements were examined, in addition to identifying social processes and structures; searching for patterns and emerging themes between centers; and identifying local, national and global connections and spheres of influence. Included in the profile is the center's engagement with the surrounding community through the programs they offer. These case studies will be the core of the investigation, and the core of the analysis to support the research objectives. The quantitative data of the database, survey and maps will be supplemental to the case studies in the analysis phase. These data will have an instrumental, but supporting role.

Researcher Positionality

Integral to the selection of the interfaith center as a research topic is the personal interest of the researcher, as well as participation in interfaith activities. This familiarity allows the researcher to approach the topic with greater insight, such as an insider would possess. In the interview, observation and participation phases of the research, the researcher was able to relate

and connect to others, as more than just a researcher or interested party. Arguably, the researcher was able to extract information or identify details that may not have been normally probed or accessible. The researcher was also able to include additional experiences in this paper. For example, the description in Chapter 4 of interfaith worship is drawn from personal encounters with such services, prior to engaging in this research.

The obvious risk is that the researcher has only reflected a positive portrayal of interfaith in this research, and neglected to offer a balanced reporting of the centers. Despite the argument that the interfaith center is an important phenomenon that is worthy of recognition and study, this research makes every attempt to provide a critical account of its subject. Admittance of the researcher's personal involvement had assisted in avoiding any tendency toward partiality and the admission to the reader should assist in their appraisal of the final product.

The next chapter offers a brief overview of the interfaith beginnings and development in the United States.

Chapter 4: Development of Interfaith Centers

The Challenge of Pluralism

The United States is abundant with natural resources, whose bounty is rivaled only by the wealth that is the diversity of its population. The almost 311 million and growing population represents a global immigration that has introduced a multitude of cultures and built a physical presence on the land that has both synergetic newness and the connection of tradition to distant borders. The result is a mosaic of language, religion, and ethnicity that represents broad categories of centripetal and centrifugal forces on society

Religious pluralism is an outcome of immigration, as it has brought people from every continent to the United States, people who travelled with their religion. A new place can alter one's actual practice of religious tradition, but that place is equally altered and influenced by the flow of diverse faith traditions. In the United States, that stream has irrevocably altered the cultural landscape. But diversity needs glue if it is not to tear apart the fabric of society. The interfaith center provides a kind of "social glue", which promotes interaction between people of different faiths who seek dialog and increased understanding. It can be a force of social cohesion in an environment of different thinking, different believing, and different practice.

One mechanism that has been developing in the United States since 1893 is the concept of interfaith. The word itself does not fully convey the concept. It is not a hybrid of different faiths or a new religion. A more accurate, though not as popular term is multifaith. Interfaith or multifaith, as expressed in this research, represents the conscientious contact between faith traditions. It is not merely placement within the same physical region with each faith flowing on independent paths of existence with occasional unavoidable brushes. It is more than nodding recognition. It is an acknowledgement of individuality, of respect and of mutual need upon

which groups are motivated to engage with the other and be, consequently, beneficially empowered by the engagement. It is less about religious dogma, and yet all about that upon which the core of religion rests. In the exploration of interfaith, there are found the ideals of social cohesion, social equity and social justice. Space is being built for this, not only figuratively – as in space in our "hearts and minds" - but also social space and physical place. In doing so, there is a need to not only create anew, but adapt and re-form some existing spaces. The interfaith movement begins with tolerance, truly advocates acceptance, and is built on relationships. The interfaith center is one of the places being built to begin and nurture those relationships.

Interfaith Origins in the United States

The interfaith movement in the United States is often traced to the World Parliament of Religions, a component of the World Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, in which members of the international religious community were invited to the U.S. The Parliament marked recognition of the religious pluralism created in the social environment through the diversity of the population (Braybrooke 1992). Although structured within Christian and American perspectives, it provided the first platform to present religious leaders from around the globe to the United States. (Braybrooke 1993) The invitation read: "Come share the wisdom of your religion and we will help you perfect them in Jesus Christ." This represented a predominantly Christian nation inviting Hindus, Buddhists, and adherents of other religions to the table. Despite the lopsidedness of the representation and the obviousness of the invitation, it was a beginning. The attempt to recognize and acknowledge non-Christian religions at a national venue was the first of its kind. After this Parliament, interfaith organizations such as the World Congress of Faiths (1936) and The Temple of Understanding (1960) were formed and

these, while still in existence, served as predecessors to the interfaith centers studied in this research. In 1993, a second Parliament of World Religions was convened in Chicago (a hundred year interval) and this gathering welcomed a more diverse representation. In that 100-year span, the cultural and religious landscape of the U.S. changed considerably through immigration, globalization, technological advancements, economic growth, urbanization, and industrialization. This proliferation of religious pluralism on the American landscape has been an agent for change, whose full ramifications have yet to be discovered or realized (Eck 2001). If another 100 years were to pass and we were convening a 2093 parliament, the imagination would most assuredly need to be engaged to envision such a gathering, its host and how such an event would be received.

Definition and Formation of the Interfaith Center

In researching the formation and role of the interfaith center, one of the first tasks was to subscribe a meaning to the term "interfaith center." There are two components of the term to be addressed in the context of this project, if one wishes to understand the concept as a whole: interfaith and center. Interfaith consists of relationships between faiths – more than one, maybe two, or more than two. This includes broad categories and sects of religions. In this definition, we must not forget human individuality and personal expressions of spirituality. It is not merely the contact between institutions of faith.

A center can be an equally indefinite term. It may materialize as an organization in a building, a room, or on a website. In the structure of the interfaith center, the connections are based on the obvious connections between faiths, but there are other connections as well. The center can be the intersection of the secular and the religious, the private and the public. It can be the intersection of communities on local, regional or global scales. The interfaith center is a

place, a physical location and social space, where multiple human scenarios can occur, relationships can form, ideas and meanings can originate and even evolutions of thought can occur. The interfaith center is also a product of context and external influences. The center is typically the result of a small contingent of leadership already engaged in interfaith activities, who realized the value of forming a centralized location in their city for interfaith work. The center networks within the city of its origin and creates external connections. The history, religious and cultural diversity, leadership, population compositions, politics and economics of its locale shape the center's outcome. Each place evolves to meet the needs of its community, and diffuses the interfaith concept through its contact with other organizations, councils, congregations, institutions, projects, and networks.

Interfaith Worship as Organizational Category

A subdivision of interfaith organizations is those who engage in, or are formed to support interfaith worship. These represent a fraction of the existing organizations, but are closest to a type of religious practice. The majority of those who are engaged in interfaith work maintain their connection to their religious tradition. Interfaith is not a religious practice for them, but more community or social service. In the interfaith worship space, the form itself exhibits diversity. It is not the occurrence of diverse religious congregations in a region, although this may be a harbinger. It is not the society or the culture within which it exists, but the event itself. The pluralism does not refer to the participants, although this may be the case. The distinguishing factor of the interfaith worship space (or interfaith congregation) is the inclusion and retention of multiple faith traditions, even if the assemblage is homogenous. The pluralism is not contained in the congregation through a variety of economic, social, and educational backgrounds. Although this may be true of the composition, it is not required.

The three interfaith centers used for this research did not engage in interfaith worship. The researcher's experience in the interfaith movement, however, has connected the researcher to interfaith fellowships whose primary purpose is worship. These observations are derived from those contacts. Typically, worship space is designed around a set of doctrines, practices, and rituals of a singular order. This structure bases its format on the declared sacred texts, the traditions, the interpretations of the scholars and leadership. Introducing pluralistic requisites into the structure multiplies that space to include a diverse range of religions to which each are considered equally valid within that space. Each is given scheduled preference in the worship service through either topicality or recurring elements. The basis for the recurring elements is universality and popularity within a multitude of traditions, for example music or a sermon. There is no overriding or determining doctrine. Decorative items or displays of religiosity, such as texts, pictures, statues or symbols will be representative of as many traditions as feasible, or as determined by the community itself representing ideals or values of the group. Through this diversity, the individual spiritual experience has new opportunity for uniqueness and discovery. Individuality is encouraged, through the challenge of exposure to a variety of faiths and beliefs. The importance of community is maintained as a common element among traditions. Interfaith worship provides the freedom to choose and a variety of options to choose from. It is exposure to many elements of existing spiritualities, with no requirement to adapt the tenets of belief of your neighbor or the group. A distinction that may need clarification is that there is no "made up" religious feature to the service. There is an integrated use of established practices and rituals, which does provide a sense of "newness" to the whole, which goes beyond the original parts. Yet, there is no profession to have discovered a new form of worship, a better form of worship or a creed surpassing the rest.

The Interfaith Organization Database

An interfaith organization database was produced using the Harvard Pluralism Project's data as foundation. The database was used to solicit participation in the Interfaith Center Survey. It was the basis the of the map series that was produced. Based on the information obtained for each organization regarding mission and programs, the researcher designated each according type. Organizations could have more than one focus and could be placed in more than one category. For this project, organizations were designated by type, based on their primary function and only placed in one category. The organizational types are:

I. Interfaith organization with a specific local or regional geographic focus
II. Single location of a multisite interfaith organization; national network or geographic focus
III. Organization with a focus on interfaith in education, scholarship, media
IV. Interfaith agency of a single religion body, organization or institution
V. Organization with a focus on interfaith spirituality, worship.

The majority of the organizations were classified as Category I. This result was expected, as most interfaith efforts are local, grassroots efforts. A significant number (almost 20%) represented a single site of a larger (national) network. This represents a type of diffusion, as a network of organizations is created with a specific and common agenda. Figure 1 represents the breakdown of organizations by type.

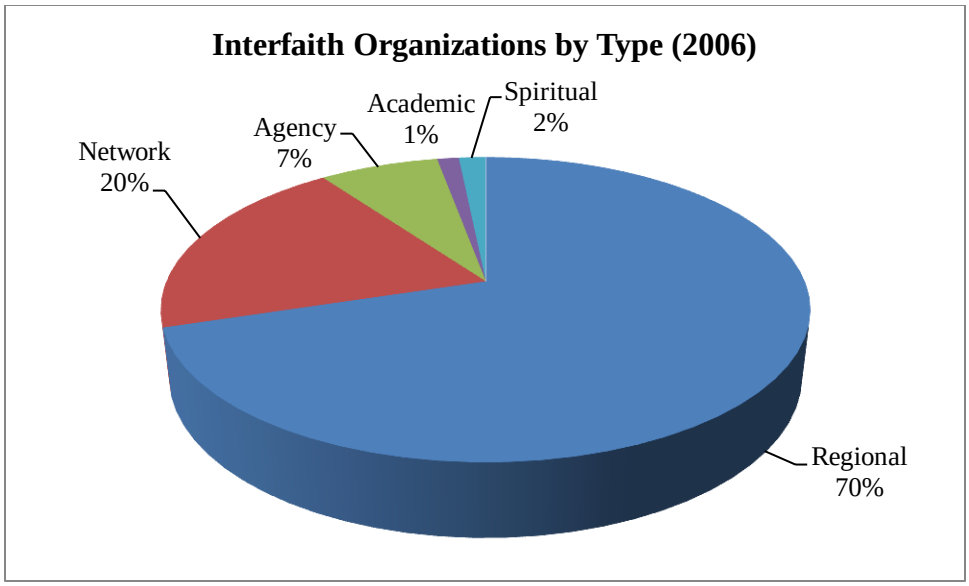


Figure 1

Source: Interfaith Organization Database

The organizations were also classified by region of the United States (Figure 2). (Appendix D lists the states located in each region.) The concentration of interfaith centers matched population clusters in the United States in the midwest and the west. The Northeast has a disproportionately high number of organizations compared to its population, perhaps owing to a higher degree of religious pluralism. In contrast, the south has a disproportionately low percentage of organizations compared to its representation of the U.S. population, perhaps owing to a lower degree of religious pluralism.

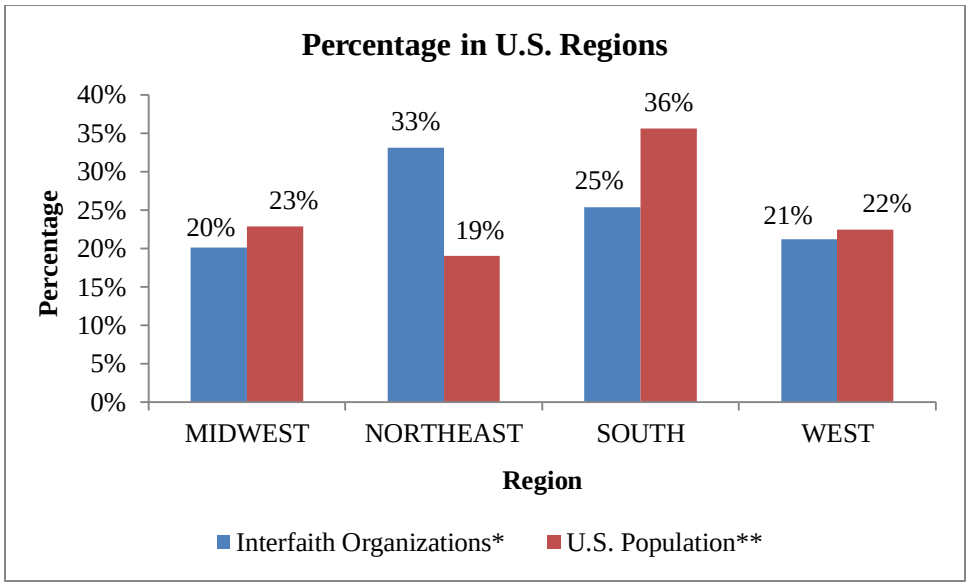


Figure 2

*Source: Interfaith Organization Database
** Source: www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-2.pdf

These organization locations were further classified by population (Figure 3). Most organizations are found in populations larger than 50,000. Yet, almost one third were found in populations of less than 50,000.

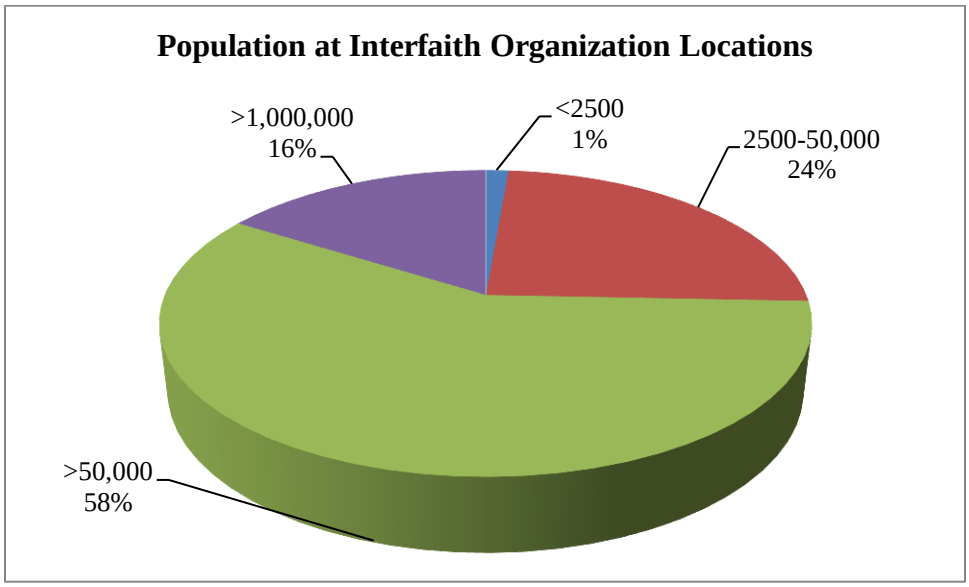


Figure 3

Source: Interfaith Organization Database

The oldest "interfaith" organization in the United States originated in 1883. The overwhelming majority, however, have been founded in the past twenty years. This illustrates the momentum of the movement, but can also be attributed to advancements in communication technology. The Internet has made it possible for the concept of interfaith to be spread not only nationally but internationally. Community groups (or existing interfaith groups) can easily research and duplicate the activities and programs of other communities. Religious conflict and significant events such as 9/11 have placed interreligious dialog and relationships more in the public arena. Between 1990 and 2006, the number of interfaith organizations had quadrupled (Figure 4). Most of this growth was in the number of local or regional organizations. Organizations whose origination date could not be obtained would then appear only in the statistics for 2006.

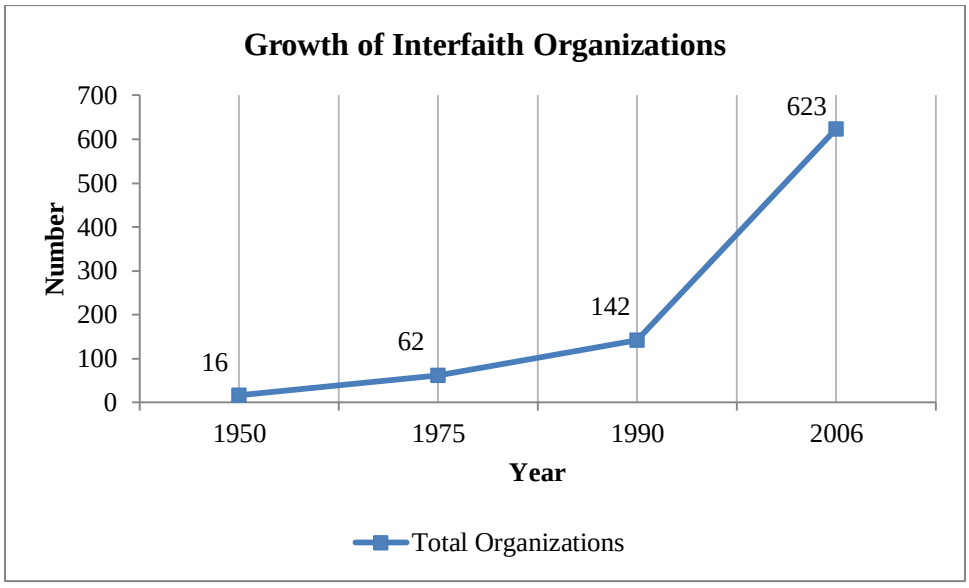


Figure 4

Source: Interfaith Organization Database

Interfaith Organizations 1950 to 2006

There are several general settlement types for interfaith organizations. The most apparent is a large and demographically diverse city. The diversity inspires and perhaps necessitates interfaith councils, organizations, and programs. These are created to assist in the interactions between different groups, address social issues, resolve conflict or create alliances. Another settlement type may be a small or medium size community also exhibiting diversity, although not necessarily to the degree of the city. The motivation to create interfaith organizations may be a particular issue of concern shared by the community. A university is another type of likely venue for an interfaith organization. In accommodating the faith preferences of a diverse student and faculty population, interfaith organizations arise. An institution of higher education is also a common location for interreligious scholarship and dialog. A strong leader or small group interested in interfaith activities could represent a catalyst in an area that may not be as diverse or populated as expected for interfaith locations.

Another characteristic of a settlement and one that may affect the formation and development of interfaith organizations is the political views of the community and/or region. An interfaith organization would more likely be sustained in a location with a liberal political ideology rather than a conservative one. The concept of interfaith is considered more closely aligned with liberal views. One method of examining this correlation is through voting patterns. Red states representing a more conservative view (Republican) and blue states representing a more liberal view (Democratic). Based on the 2008 Presidential Election, 80% of the 612

interfaith organizations in the database were in blue states (Figure 5).

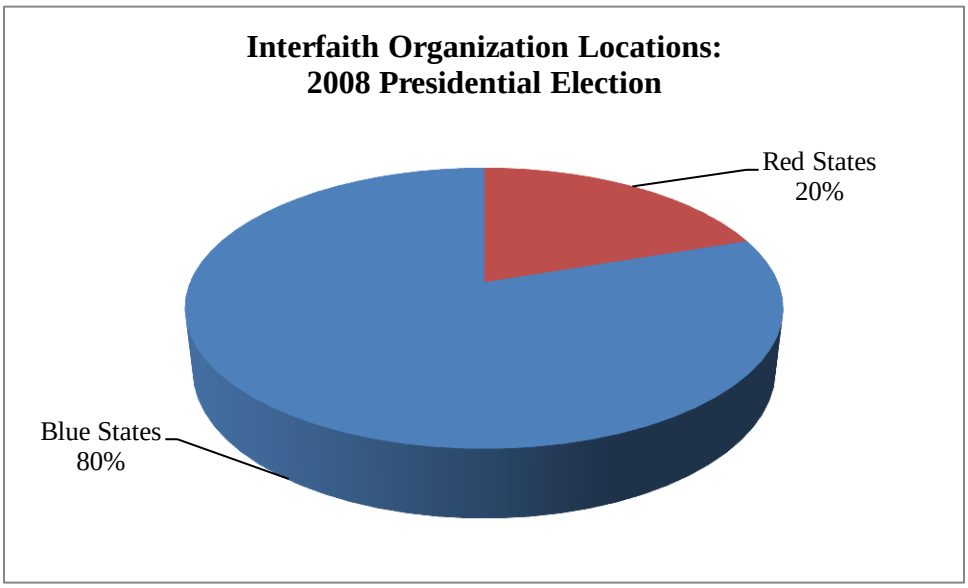


Figure 5

Source: Interfaith Organization Database
(http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html)

Based on the Interfaith Database, there were sixteen interfaith organizations in existence by 1950. Of these, most were smaller communities. Almost half were formed with the specific function of addressing a social issue or community need (Figure 6). Included in this directive was an opportunity to create other cooperation and interaction among the various faith groups. In many cases, this meant primarily various Christian groups. As the decades passed and the demographics of the community changed, many of the organizations have added language to their mission statements to be inclusive of other religions. The university sites were founded as a means to allow their diverse populations to practice their traditions, but also for scholarship and dialog. Of this sample of organizations, only one was located in a red state in 1950 and in 2008. Although not within the scope of this research, a topic of further study would be to examine the political geography not only the states but the local areas (counties) of these organizations.

Examing the political changes over time and the impact on interfaith organizations would also be a valuable project.

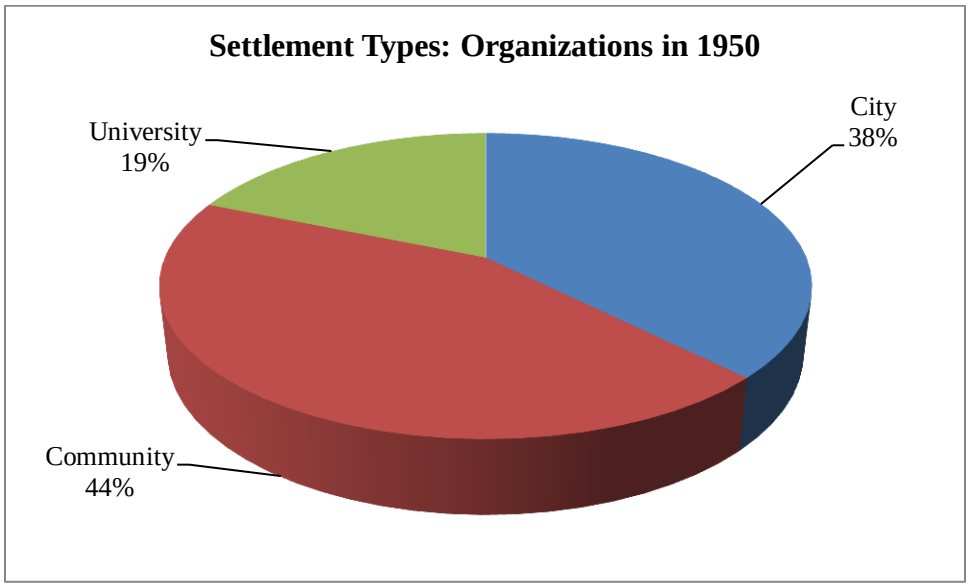


Figure 6

Source: Interfaith Organization Database

The map series of interfaith organizations depict their pattern in 1950, 1975, 1990 and 2006. The objective of the map series is to illustrate the expansion of the number of interfaith organizations over the past fifty years. The series was also produced to highlight any patterns that may occur in the growth of the number of organizations. The 1950 map (Map 1) displayed few interfaith organizations, but a clear majority of placements in large cities with immigrant populations, such as San Francisco, New York and Chicago. The 1975 (Map 2) map indicated both an increase in density at locations that already had an interfaith organization, as well as occurrences in new locations. Cities such as Seattle and Houston continue the trend of interfaith organizations forming at immigrant port cities. A few are now present in the central part of the country. The 1990 (Map 3) map continued the same trend as 1975, with increased quantities.

Organizations cluster in the Boston-New York-Washington area; in the Los Angeles-San Diego area; and the Chicago-Milwaukee area. There are also increasing numbers in Texas and Florida.

The 2006 (Map 4) map displayed the greatest change, and continued the same pattern of expansion. Clusters on the East and West coasts have become denser, as well as the clusters around the Great Lakes. Numbers in Texas and Florida have increased and spread to other locations in those states; the locations in the general south have increased as well. The eastern half of the country contained the majority of the organizations and this correlates with larger population concentrations. There are two notable regional exceptions to the increase in interfaith organization locations: the corridor of North and South Dakota to Nebraska; and the western states of Idaho, Montana and Utah. The patterns that emerged were expected and follow population trends. Map 5 illustrates the population of the locations of interfaith organizations. It also illustrated that the populations did not have to be as significant as over one million, and could be as small as 2500.

The five types of interfaith organizations as categorized in this research were mapped by location in 2006, to identify any pattern that might have emerged. Type I (Map 7), which is an interfaith organization with a local or regional community, is the most common and its pattern follows the general proliferation in 2006. The same pattern was evident with organization types II and III (Map 8 and 9). These types represent networks or academic sites, respectively. The types of organizations that are not as common, such as Type IV (Map 10), interfaith offices of a larger group or Type V (Map 11), interfaith organizations that have a spiritual focus, were generally found in larger population clusters. Not evident with this map series was a regional focus for a particular type of organization.

The next chapter details the three primary interfaith centers selected for this research. Each interfaith center selected was a Type I (local or regional) organization.

Chapter 5: Contrasting Production of Space: Three Interfaith Centers

The forces that engaged the United States as a whole over the past 100 years also found their way into New York, San Francisco and Philadelphia. The premise of the research is that the interfaith movement is an intentional product of society to respond to diversity, and its existence impacts its social environment. The purpose of the case studies was not to provide elaborate timelines of events or even an exhaustive history of interfaith centers. Rather, it was to isolate crucial elements and analyze them within the parameters of the research questions. Many of the historical details were found in public sources. Interviews verified those sources, but more importantly revealed insights into the center's place on the landscape. The centers have different beginnings and stories, but share a commonality in an interfaith mission and strong leadership. The parties responsible for the formation of these centers possess a lifelong work in religious affairs, and have sought relationships and contacts with faith traditions other than their own.

The founder of the New York center created new space, originating from initiatives he began at St. John the Divine, an Episcopalian cathedral built to serve the city in an earlier time. The San Francisco center refitted a military chapel (contained within a former military base turned into national park), with a rallying cry from the founders of "Swords to Plowshares." While New York and San Francisco were, in a certain sense, trend setters with no real models to follow, Philadelphia represented a second generation, a new type interfaith center. Philadelphia founders utilized the experiences and designs of others in formulating their interfaith plan, and sought council for their center.

The New Cathedral: The Interfaith Center of New York

> The Interfaith Center of New York seeks to make New York City and the world safe for religious difference by increasing respect and mutual understanding among people of different faith, ethnic, and cultural traditions and by fostering cooperation among religious communities and civic organizations to solve common social problems.
>
> (www.interfaithcenter.org)

Center City: New York City

New York City was not yet a formal entity in 1893, the year of the World's Columbian Exposition and the World's Parliament of Religions. It would not be until 1898 that the boroughs of Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens were united to form a city of 3.4 million, the second largest city in the world after London at the time. The history of New York City parallels its history of immigration. Approximately 8 million immigrants from Northern and Western Europe entered New York from 1855 to 1890. In response to this tremendous migration flow, Ellis Island, a new federal immigration station, was built. Between 1892 and 1954, an additional 12 million immigrants entered New York. The census taken in 1900 reported a diverse population in the city, with 1.3 million having a country of birth other than the United States. One hundred years later, this trend continues, as the 2000 census reported a population of over 8 million with 36 percent being foreign born, representing 180 countries (www.census.gov).

Immigrants carry with them more than material possessions: they bring their language, their history and of course their religious beliefs. Raymond Williams writes:

> Immigrants are religious – by all counts more religious than they were before they left home –because religion is one of the important identity markers that helps them preserve individual self-awareness and cohesion in a group…In the United States, religion is the social category with clearest meaning and acceptance in the host society, so the emphasis on religious affiliation and identity is one of the strategies that allows the immigrant to maintain self-identity while simultaneously acquiring community acceptance. (William 1988:29)

Within New York's few hundred square miles, there co-exists an array of ethnicities and religious traditions, all competing for a place. Dutch Reformed Protestantism was followed by English and German Protestants, as well as a small number of Jews. The 19th century brought German, Irish and Italian Roman Catholics, with Buddhist Chinese and more Jews arriving later and into the early 20th century. During and after World War II, "La Migracion" brought Puerto Ricans and Hispanic religions and the migration from southern to northern states brought African American Protestants.

In comparison to elsewhere in the United States, the early history of religion in New York City was not only more pluralistic, but more tolerant. This does not mean that tension was not present: there were conflicts between Catholics and Protestants; rivalries between Catholics, Protestants and Jews, and discrimination toward non-western religions or newer ethnic variants of a faith against those longer established. Carnes wrote that 21st century migrations to New York City are "pilgrimages of the soul" and while "not quite Mekkah, Jerusalem or Vatican City, New York is increasingly being transformed into a city of faiths" (Carnes and Karpathakis 2001: 3). This has broad ramifications beyond a picturesque mosaic of world religions. Carnes continues:

> As Max Weber reminded us, all minds, hearts and social action live under authorities, fundamentally religious, but also political and social, in order to reject the chaos and meaninglessness of the world (Weber 1973)...The sociologically most significant authorities claim that they are the ultimate and final arbiters of what is right and wrong, what is real and unreal, and what is meaningful and unmeaningful. (Carnes and Karpathakis 2001: 4)

There have been efforts within these authorities (and those on the outside of the religious establishment) to form an "internationalized, universalized, rationalized religion and image of the city – a sort of cartelization to promote harmony and modern rationality." These efforts materialize in organizations such as the New York Council of Churches, Union Theological

Seminary, Riverside Church and the Interfaith Center of New York (Carnes and Karpathakis 2001: 8).

Center Founding

In 1892, a year before the "birth" of New York City, construction began on The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine. The cathedral was built in the gothic tradition. It can house 5000 worshipers and even though still unfinished, it is the largest Anglican cathedral in the world. In 1972, The Very Reverend James Parks Morton was appointed Dean of the cathedral and inherited a cityscape vastly different from the one that gave birth to the cathedral. Rev. Morton recognized this and envisioned a role for the cathedral, "It was a huge, a very beautiful sort of spiritual oasis in the middle of New York City…It became a center of a new kind of spirituality" (Morton 2007).

What is the connection between the former dean of the largest Anglican cathedral in the world, and one of the first interfaith centers' in the United States? Rev. Morton had been an Episcopal priest since 1954. In 1964, he resided in Chicago and led the Urban Training Center, which trained clergy to work with the poorest inhabitants of the inner city. Along with Al Gore and Carl Sagan, he started the Partnership of Religion and Science. This "partnership" held five world conferences, in Oxford 1988, Moscow 1990, Rio de Janeiro 1992, Kyoto 1993, Konya (Turkey) 1997.

A number of agendas can be found in his background that, while not classified as interfaith, now represent interfaith issues. He participated in common causes for different faiths to rally around in the greater quest of social cohesion. Rev. Morton's background is in urban development, urban relations and addressing urban poverty. Poverty was a focal point of the work done by Rev. Morton prior to his appointment. After his appointment, Rev. Morton

realized he needed to welcome more of the diverse city into the cathedral for its own survival, as a response to the changing demographics of the city. He began this process by reaching out to other religious jurisdictions and offering events and programs that would appeal to a variety of cultural and ethnic groups.

Rev. Morton began to open the space of the cathedral to the city. It is a vast building, initially built for a specific faith, set in what is now a complex and multi-faith city. As the dean opened the doors of the cathedral to allow different cultures, faith groups, essentially non-Episcopalians to utilize the space, St John the Divine was interfaith transformed. In a manner it stayed true to the design of the cathedral, which was to encompass the whole of the city, yet radical in its embracement of the "other" on its sacred ground. His legacy at the cathedral is one of initiating and cultivating relationships among the many faiths present in the city, as well as involvement on the world stage regarding interfaith activities, particularly with the relationship to the environment, a major interfaith issue.

At the end of his tenure as dean, he already knew he wanted to continue interfaith work and to operate without the constraints as an official of a religious body. Therefore, he organized his own nonprofit organization. Founded in 1997, the Interfaith Center of New York (ICNY) is classified as a secular educational nonprofit organization. ICNY was incorporated "for the purpose of promoting interfaith dialogue and harmony among all of the world's religions and the prevention and resolution of conflicts arising there from" (www.interfaithcenter.org). There was no specific methodology to begin what was an experiment in 1997 and is now considered a necessity by some, as illustrated in the Philadelphia case study that follows. The programming over the years had changed and come into focus more as the center – again following no model – gained experience and insight into how the center could influence and respond to their

community. After September 11, 2001, ICNY's mission became increasingly centered on providing assistance to immigrant and disenfranchised communities whose religious leaders were often the only source of knowledge for coping with life in an urban environment like New York City.

Rev. Morton's urban ministry proved to be a valuable training ground for interfaith processes. One of the ICNY collaborators is the New York Theological Seminary. Lowell Livezey, a professor there, stated: "Urban ministry is no longer a simple matter of helping unskilled immigrants fit into an industrial economy, but a more complicated task: helping people from different cultures and classes negotiate an individualistic society and information-driven economy" (Gonzalez 2007). Assisting in this connection has become foundational to the New York center's programming.

There is wide scope of issues and institutions, within which the center believed it could have influence or bridge fissures between groups: legal, medical, educational and housing. On all these fronts, it is thought that the cooperation between secular and religious leaders can be beneficial to the population. Religious leaders are a resource to their community on many levels, not only regarding their faith traditions, but also in the conduct and interaction within the greater community setting. The objective to connect separate components of society came into focus after the center's origin. Immigrant groups, whose view of American society is filtered through their traditions and culture, frequently look to their religious leader for guidance. The secular experts need to connect to the religious leaders, in order to connect these segments of society.

In July and August of 2008, the researcher conducted interviews with two members of the leadership at the Interfaith Center of New York. The first was Matt Weiner, Director of Programming, and he discussed the challenges of their efforts. According to Weiner, secular

organizations are sometimes difficult to work with, until they can be convinced of the project's value. Another challenge was with the participants themselves. While the participants do represent diverse religions, they do not always represent the diversity within the religion. Participants tend to be diverse in traditions, but not politically. Those who participate in interfaith events tend to come from the liberal side of a faith. He stated, "We thought we had everyone because we looked diverse" (Weiner Interview 2008).

The initial strategy, according to Weiner, can be easily summed up: none. In working with Rev. Morton who initiated the idea of the center, Weiner said that there was no model, no structure. In some ways, they thought of it as an experiment. Through some early, unsuccessful programs, they realized that focusing on religious differences or even peace or tolerance was not a broad draw. When they began programming concerning social issues that impact communities, such as domestic violence, health care, immigration rights, "The audience shifted and there was a wider participation of religious organizations" (Weiner Interview 2008).

Much of the center's current programming is aimed at religious leaders, social workers, medical personnel and court system officials. The focus of the center is on grassroots, those in touch with the public, more than the institutional hierarchy or scholars. This includes lay ministries and local congregations. Not all religions have a hierarchy in the same manner, and many hierarchies are structured for the locale and vary in their regional, national or international reach. Devising a scheme to group similarities in levels of leadership between faiths is consequently difficult. There is an almost universal sense of concern among interfaith organizations to know who should be the legitimate spokesperson for the group (and who is just speaking for themselves or a certain segment) and a recognition of the challenge of incorporating traditions without structured hierarchies. Even with structured hierarchies as it is, it is not

unknown for the leadership and the congregants to be divided, and the issue of interfaith has such potential for division. Compounding this already complex issue is the multiple of sects that exist in what we generally classify as the world's major religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This list scarcely hints at the multitude of branches each group includes, and the cultural variations that differentiate even similar branches. In the New York programming strategy (and others), a benefit of a local focus is realized as the hierarchal target is the actual spiritual leader of the local religious community.

Much interfaith work features dialogue between faiths. This was initially the agenda at the New York center. However, dialogue is a challenging task when you attempt to bring together traditions that have split ideologies, historical disputes centuries in the making, and current hostilities. What exactly is there to talk about, and what can be resolved by such a dialogue? It is not just the exercise of dialogue that is awkward and limited, but also the default subject matter – religion. In interfaith dialogue, there is often a presupposition that the conversation needs to be about faith. It is an assumption that this is the only makeup of interfaith work and that is the space which needs to be created. The interfaith mission, therefore, is to discuss differences and discover how to resolve disparate ideologies. There is naivety in the notion that a local group can sit around a table and solve issues have taxed intellect and consciences for centuries, on a global scale. This is quickly evident in some interfaith dialogue. The other consequence of defining interfaith as dialogue and stopping at that agenda is that participation by all parties is not guaranteed. The New York center probably had more trial-and-error than the other two centers studied. San Francisco, although another pioneer, had the advantage of forming around a chapel, which called for a specific type of activity – a needed type in the community, and this became the hub of its network. In Philadelphia, the founders had

the advantage of a decade of experience of others to draw on. Again, the idea of dialogue was core to their perception of the path of their center and its purpose, until the same reality changed their objectives to programs that engaged groups in different types of forums, such as community building or education.

Center Programming

The Interfaith Center of New York utilizes four types of programming to achieve their mission:

- Civic Connections
- Education
- Public Events and Outreach
- International Networking

Civic connections. The civic programs are designed to focus on social justice issues and incorporate education and training. The programs appear in the forms of all-day conferences, forums, workshops and retreats. Religious and community leaders are invited, as well as those representing civic agencies. This attendance mixture is intentional and crucial. According to ICNY, "for a peaceful and inclusive democratic society, it is essential that religious communities in New York City not only develop respect for each other but also build relationship with civic organizations and institutions" (www.interfaithcenter.org).

A major civic program of the center is the Religious Communities and Court Project, which is collaboration between ICNY and The New York State Unified Court System. The foundation of the program is to build and foster relationships between the religious communities and the court system. This program, for example, would consist of a daylong event, with about 100 judges and administrators of the court system and religious leaders in attendance. In a survey of 150 religious leaders in New York City, all said they need a better understanding of the justice system (www.interfaithcenter.org).

A second core program, which began in 1998, is a yearly two day event. This program is the Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer Retreat for social justice, to which an average of 75-100 of the City's religious and community leaders attend. Topics have included immigration, youth and identity, health access, domestic violence, substance abuse, environmental justice, and post 9/11 challenges. A Chinese Buddhist monk at an immigration-rights workshop explained it well: "I am a good monk, and teach meditation well, but my people need advice about green cards, and they trust me," he said, "I need to know green cards" (ICNY Annual Report 2007).

A third program was developed with the New York State Office of Court Administration and with the help of the Center for Court Innovation. This initiative involved developing the mediation skills of religious leaders and to connect the religious communities to the mediation center and the justice system. Religious leaders are frequently put in the position of mediator, either with conflicts within their communities or between their community and another's. The religious leaders are "individuals who are trusted with social and personal problems. They are understood to hold moral authority, and are entrusted with the most important personal and social problems of congregants" (www.interfaithcenter.org). The objective is similar to the Court Project, in that it encourages cooperation between religious communities and the justice system. It also supports the religious leader's ability to handle conflict and prevent situations from escalating to the court system, thus reducing that system's case load.

The program is set up as weekly meetings between mediation trainers and religious leaders. The process also included development of partnerships between religious leaders. This program assists communities by improving their ability to handle conflict among themselves. It offers similar guidance in relationships with other faith communities and it further deepens religious community's connection to other segments of society.

Weiner has written extensively from his experience at the interfaith center on the connection between religious communities and civil society:

> Religious identity propels these people to social action. They help insure that America's public sphere is religiously, culturally, and politically diverse. Each provides a community service that extends to other religions. They are not engaged in public dialogue about norms in the way that advocates for public religion and strict secularism are. And this is precisely the point. In fact, outside of the academy, seminaries, and a few dialogue groups, religious communities interact with one another and with secular partners over issues of common concern. (Weiner 2007:1).

Education. A second central component of the strategy of ICNY is education; it occupies its own category of programming but is also incorporated into the others:

> Prejudices and misunderstandings regarding certain religious groups often stem from a lack of knowledge…ICNY teaches students, healthcare professionals, school teachers, social workers, judges, and court officials about the history, cultural heritage, and social concerns of the different faith communities in New York City…religious leaders and activists often have a poor understanding of the City's public and private institutions, and how to work with them for the benefit of their congregations. ICNY guides…improved relations and collaboration…and acts as a mediator across community lines. (www.interfaithcenter.org/programs).

ICNY has affiliated with other organizations that are both religious and secular, to realize this goal of reducing "prejudices and misunderstandings" including Catholic Charities, UJA-Federation and Columbia University's School of Social Work. These programs, offered specifically to social workers, began in 2006. The program, "Religious Diversity for Social Workers," is a year-long, six part series that trains about 40 students, by adding an experiential component of working with various religious leaders and practitioners. ICNY had also, since 2003, partnered with New York University and (separately) the University of Pennsylvania and PBS (Religion and Ethics Newsweekly) to a week-long intensive course on religious diversity in the context of New York City. The target of this programming, "Religious Diversity in

America," is primarily teachers and educators and includes participants from outside New York State.

Public events and outreach. "The ICNY…host(s) interfaith events and public forums that engage and inform audiences…about diverse religious and cultural traditions…and the benefits of mutual respect and cooperation" (www.interfaithcenter.org). One of the first events of involvement by the ICNY is the Interfaith Prayer Service in honor of the September opening of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Located at St. Bartholomew's Church, the service is attended by approximately 400 people, including members of the United Nations, religious and cultural communities, non-government organizations and the general public, representing more than 20 different religious traditions. Rev. Morton, speaking at the 2006 service, remarked "…as religious and spiritual leaders, we hope to reinforce the sense of collective mission and common purpose that the UN has set out to pursue since its inception…" (ICNY Annual Report 2007). Other events include jazz concerts, exploring the religious roots of jazz; an annual 9/11 Lanterns Ceremony that honors the victims of the World Trade Center tragedy; an annual Interfaith Iftar; and an annual Interfaith Awards banquet, which honors those who have a commitment to understanding diversity (this event is also a fundraising initiative).

International network.

> In one sense, 7 January 1997 seems long distant. In a deeper sense, looking at today's political/cultural/ideological mindset, the absolute necessity of focused interfaith work is increasingly seen as both new and crucial. "Globalization" was a new word in 1997, used largely in the world of banking and finance. Today "globalization" is the watchword for our environmental crisis and for the new planetary context of all culture/education/science/government…even spirituality. Today every city worldwide needs an Interfaith Center. (The Very Reverend James Parks Morton, ICNY Annual Report 2007)

A new arm of programming has been founded to include specific interaction with the international community, The Dean James Parks Morton Visiting Fellows Program or Sister

Cities Network. Rev. Morton saw the interfaith center as "a new instrument necessary in our globalized world" (Morton Interview 2008). "…ICNY has begun to share its approach and learn from the best practices of other organizations doing similar work internationally." The program is designed to promote interfaith work and networking within all the participant cities. The ICNY is interested in urban centers that are similar to New York City in terms of "religious demographics" and "immigration challenges", and investigated interfaith work in a number of such cities – Glasgow, London, Paris, Rotterdam, Frankfurt, Leicester, Birmingham and Barcelona. In June of 2009, delegations from Glasgow, Scotland (The Scottish Interfaith Council) and Barcelona, Spain (UNESCO-Catalonia) were brought to New York for the first of three (as currently funded) annual seminars. The activities in the seminar included participation in ICNY programs, visits to house of worship, meetings with elected officials, cultural visits and sessions the reflected on approaches and methodology in Interfaith work. The next two seminars are scheduled to take place in 2010 and 2011, when a delegation from New York visits Barcelona and Glasgow.

> We envision a "Sister Cities" initiative that would enable ICNY to share its best practices with urban centers in Europe—beginning with those cities that share similar political institutions, religious demographics, security concerns, and immigration challenges as New York City. In a world where these places are the site of an encounter between civilizations, cities in the United States and Europe—France, the United Kingdom, Spain, and the Netherlands—face opportunities and great challenges from increased migration and globalization (www.interfaithcenter.org).

These are the programming strategies to accomplish New York's mission. They promote interfaith interaction, within which relationship-building and mutual understanding are presumed to be naturally occurring outcomes. Lecturing on the virtues of dialogue, engaging in directed dialogue and debating issues (political or social) and religious ideologies, were found to be of varying - and perhaps even limited - value and at the extreme would be a deterrent to attendance.

The strategy in many centers is to set up such philosophical or political debates that have been in existence, long before the center and the participants and are so tremendously complex that their weight can crush the spirit of any interfaith program. While there can be a stalemate quality to dialogue programs in the correct format and venue, they can be vehicles for education. New York found this to be so, looming history between groups or the suggestion of dialogue would curtail attendance. A different strategy needed to be devised. It is simple, utilized by other centers in varying forms, and brilliant in its side step nature of addressing the difficulty of building relationships in a community. The strategy changes the focus. New York engages in civic, social, cultural and educational programs, not religious programs; consequently the intentional connection points are civic, social, cultural and education, and not religious. It engages local concerns and emphasizes those issues shared by the community.

The center has founded programs designed to facilitate interaction, not only between religious leaders but to bring together local community leaders, government officials and other civic agencies as well. These programs take various forms – workshops, seminars, public events, and tend to involve dissemination of information. More importantly, in some cases, it is the opportunity for connections between participants that is the key outcome of the activity. One crucial and often unstated component of these functions is for the participants, who may be unfamiliar with the traditions or roles of the others, to relate to each other in a neutral setting. The leadership of the secular and religious communities are given a view into the world or functions of the other.

To build these relationships between civic and religious leaders, programs are based on issues that both sets of leadership have jurisdiction over - albeit with an authority stemming from different power "sources." There is an overlap that can cause conflict if each authority set is not

properly understood by its counterpart. The programs of the center assisted in the introduction of religious authority to civic authority. Such facilitated meetings allowed for the informal interaction between parties, as well as encouraged trust, both of which are foundational to community authority bases. The formal segments of the programs typically involved presentations by secular authorities. These formal elements permit secular authorities to explain the mechanisms of civil society, which may be confusing to lay persons, particularly where barriers of language and culture are present. Secular authorities need to understand the structure of their communities in the application of civil code, whether justice-related or social entitlements and benefits. Conversely, segment communities, such as certain immigrant populations, need to understand the rules of engagement for the larger society within which they are contained and operate. Misunderstandings are caused not just by complete ignorance, but also erroneous perceptions. This can lead to an exasperation of already difficult situations and at a minimum prevent reasonable or even productive resolution.

The New York Center, as it carved out its space and agenda in the cityscape, was approached by the New York court system with a project for which it would be uniquely qualified. Within the court system, lack of sensitivity to culture difference, whether it be on the level of the judge, the court officers, or the social workers was becoming a significant challenge to the orderly performance of judicial tasks. Nuance in approach to a situation can mean justice served, justice denied, or civil rights denied. These cultural and religious sensitivity issues surface in many fields beyond the civil courts – such as educational and medical institutions. The New York Center had initiated programs within these institutions as well, based on the success of the court program. The social service system needed a better method to connect to the marginalized public, the new immigrants. There are religious, language, and other cultural

barriers that prevent a full streaming of social benefits to segments of the population, and reciprocally a full understanding of the public to those providing social services. The idea was to approach the religious leaders in the community who represented the leadership, guidance, authority and wisdom to their community. If the religious leader could be introduced to the civic system and the civic system could be introduced to the religious leader, a connection could be made that would improve flows of communication and understanding, and the community as a whole would benefit. Interfaith space has many access roads.

In New York's programs, the approach is "top-down", as it is the leadership that is brought together and instructed so they may then disseminate awareness to those in their community or sphere of influence. The religious leaders have the opportunity to have lateral interaction, as they meet each other and have the opportunity to break down barriers with the formation of relationships - in casual conversation or with directed topics of discussion. An activity such as a seminar or workshop accomplishes more than the dissemination of information, there is an opportunity for personal contact and relationship building, and this further erodes barriers between authorities and communities.

These programs give the religious leaders and their constituents a better understanding of civil society and its systems. This is crucial to those who may be marginalized through recent immigrant status, economic or social status or prevailing religious stigmas. It is similarly helpful to civic leaders who may be unaware of the influence of religious practices in a community and the implications of their actions on such a community. In a manner, this is sensitivity training - such as used by hospital personnel and educators. Social workers are another group trained in cultural differences that are relevant to the issues and situations they encounter. For example, religious leaders can be helpful in their insight and assistance in family matters. This knowledge

and understanding can be an asset in prescribing an appropriate and successful course of action. The social workers' response may be their best known effort, but not necessarily the best means to resolve the situation in a particular cultural and religious context. Conversely, the objectivity and skill of a social worker may offer techniques not within the experience of a religious leader. The Center's programs assist in providing these additional dynamics.

There is, however, something inherently global about interfaith, and its reach is beyond elements of the local community. As religion has diffused, it has laid the ground work for interfaith and the interfaith movement. There is a clear and unabashed effort at the New York center to promote interfaith centers beyond the immediate region and place them on the national and international scene. It promotes local planning, global connections and complementing agendas. The New York Center has jumped from the local scene to the global one, much as New York is a city of global influence. They are currently proposing an alliance with organizations in foreign cities. New York proposed a model of an interfaith center with the programs they offer – an interfaith and civil society template. These newly initiated centers would then form an international network, which would include New York. The more expansive the network, the greater the individual and collective impact, and this will continue and expand the diffusion process of the interfaith center.

An interfaith center needs to derive its nature from its environment. The social, religious, historical and cultural context of a place is crucial in the founding, as is the mission and the matching of purpose to the needs (apparent or not apparent) within the community. New York has moved beyond this local-only view with its strategy of building up the international interfaith community. Other centers do have associations with national or international interfaith initiatives, but not to the same extent of trying to create a global network. In its formation,

Philadelphia searched for a model to follow. The New York center is working toward such a blueprint. Although there may be different contexts from which a center may originate, there can be a methodology to an interfaith structure, according to the New York center. Upon this structure they can build interfaith hubs of connection and spiral an interfaith spatial network. Interestingly, their focus was not regional or national outreach, but only international. They did not contact Los Angeles or Chicago or neighboring Long Island for affiliation.

The New York Center is ambitious in it plans to create a global network. If we examine the national landscape, is there a self-evolving network of centers? Can we use New York, San Francisco and Philadelphia as a national model network? Creating a national network was not expressed as a goal of the three centers studied. Leadership in each center was "aware" of the other centers and the persons involved, and in some instances had met at different interfaith conferences and events. Yet, the meetings seemed to be geared toward a best-practices conversation, or general exchange of current happenings. The learning derived from each other would be based on whatever could be garnered in a short time period and then recalled upon returning to their location. In seeding partner cities and networking with those centers, New York can be instrumental in the expansion of the interfaith map. In the discussion of civil society, the context becomes international and the institutions and the society are of global jurisdictions. To the connections already in place at political, economic, and cultural levels, interfaith threads are being woven. One of the potential Sister Cities, Barcelona, had a similar agenda in place, as "…UNESCO-Catalonia recognizes a need for local urban administration to engage religious communities as full members of civil society. It has helped create partnership between communities of faith and the local authorities as well as between religious groups themselves, using secular institutions as a nonpartisan umbrella" (Weiner 2007:2).

ICNY Methodology

The Interfaith Center of New York was specific in its stated methodology, more so than the other centers. New York presented a methodology that strategized its role in civil society to promote social cohesion, positive social change for society, conflict resolution and education about diversity within a diverse population. It was definitive in its ambition, its actual results being difficult to measure, as it is with all the centers. But its mission statement did not idealize a vision of a "better, loving world", as is the case in statements from many interfaith organizations. The New York Center submitted a pragmatic, hopeful role for itself as an agent for change in society.

The Center clearly denoted New York City and the world community as the place for the course of its mission. It defined interfaith -- something not done by the other two centers, and not commonly done by interfaith organizations. At the North American Interfaith Network conference, hosted by the San Francisco Center in July 2008, there was considerable discussion on defining the movement and defining the concept of interfaith and who would be best designated for that role and authority. New York did not hesitate:

> We define interfaith as the positive awareness of religious diversity, and the intention or actual practice of engaging people of different faiths for the betterment of society as a whole. For our purposes social change is defined as the integrated effect of changing attitudes and social patterns towards other religious communities while at the same time improving the social well-being of one's own community and the community at large. (www.interfaithcenter.org_interfaith methodology for social change)

The Interfaith Center of New York had attempted to position itself as a link between the civic and religious institutional worlds, both a crucial and previously scarce link. ICNY programs helped to mend the disconnection that could exist between primarily immigrant

communities and secular institutions of law and social services that are difficult enough to navigate without the addition barriers of language and culture. This mending is a mechanism that fosters social cohesion by both recognizing those outside the establishment and providing a means for drawing them in. The extent of a program's reach can be a measure of its success.

The first step is the engagement of the religious leaders. Both the secular leaders of institutions or the social or religious leader need an education or even an introduction on how the "other" operates within the respective communities. Such mutual understanding (or even basic familiarity) is necessary to mediate common concerns or issues that cross into both jurisdictions, regardless of whether one or the other believes they have sole authority. Ultimately, there needs to be realization that cooperation, more than likely, will produce better outcomes for all parties, most importantly the community at large.

The New York Center was interested in having influence, not only in its own regional agenda and context, but on the international field of interfaith centers as well. It had devised a strategy for an initiative to connect global interfaith sites within which a network can be structured, a network of sharing and collaborating on best practices, cultural, intellectual and ideological exchange. Funding is needed for this international outreach. Consequently, the concept and the strategy to achieve it must convince others - that is, not those in the interfaith movement - of the feasibility and desirability of establishing connected nodes of interfaith places. ICNY's aim was to focus these connect points on an international scale. An international focus would increase the venues of exchange and the reach of the New York Center. New York believed it had a model, in the guise of its programs and methodology. It viewed interaction between international sites as mutually beneficial to the centers and to those they served.

ICNY: An Interfaith Methodology for Social Change

The Interfaith Center of New York had written "An Interfaith Methodology for Social Change." It was based on the following twelve strategy points, which have been summarized and analyzed in this document. The diagrams are from the Interfaith Center of New York. In the methodology, the center defined interfaith as, "…the positive awareness of religious diversity, and the intention or actual practice of engaging people of different faiths for the betterment of society as a whole." This definition described a specific interpretation of interfaith. It was not random ("intention"), it was not neutral ("positive awareness") and it was more than toleration ("engaging"). The definition represents a concept or ideology that has moved beyond the meaning of the word, which can be simply stated as "relating to or between different religions" from Oxford English Dictionary. The Center also defined the social change that their methodology addresses: "the integrated effect of changing attitudes and social patterns towards other religious communities while at the same time improving the social well-being of one's own community and the community at large" (www.interfaithcenter.org).

The following figures and key are from "ICNY: An Interfaith Methodology for Social Change" (www.interfaithcenter.org):

FIGURE KEY:
B = Buddhist
C = Christian
H = Hindu
J = Jewish
M = Muslim
GRRL = Grass Roots Religious Leader
P = Problem

"Religious Communities Meet One Another" (Figure 7)

Every program, project and event initiated by the ICNY is an opportunity to meet, interact and engage a member of a different faith, ethnic, cultural or social community. Without a directed attempt to bring groups together, common aims or concerns among groups drive that connection.

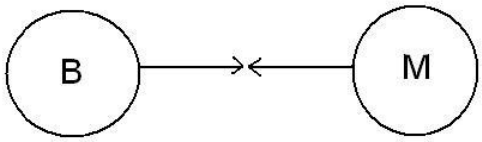


Figure 7

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"The Role of Grassroots Religious Leaders" (Figure 8)

The connections between religious communities are primarily driven by grass roots leadership, consisting of some clergy, as well as some lay people. But the efforts of the ICNY are focused on those individuals who not only represent a community, but are in a position to "mobilize and educate" them as well. As these leaders meet, relationships are formed between them, relationships which then can be relayed and extend to their communities.

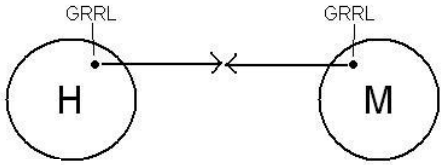


Figure 8

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"Internal Diversity of Religious Communities" (Figure 9)

One of the challenges of interfaith work is the diversity found within a category of a religious group. For example – "Christian" is a designation often used as a singular entity. Yet,

the subdivisions of this category are numerous, and sharing this label does not necessarily guarantee or produce positive interaction. The ICNY is cognizant of this diversity within a group, and therefore attempts attempts to bring leaders into their programs which represent the broad range of a religious tradition.

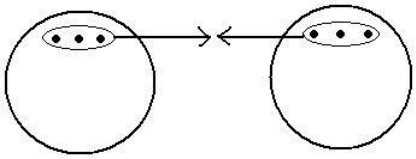


Figure 9

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"Interfaith in a Pluralistic Setting" (Figure 10)

Included in the methodology is a variety of settings. Sometimes two particular groups are brought together; or a one group can be the focus of an education piece attended by a variety of other groups; the most common form is to engage, simultaneously, a diverse mix.

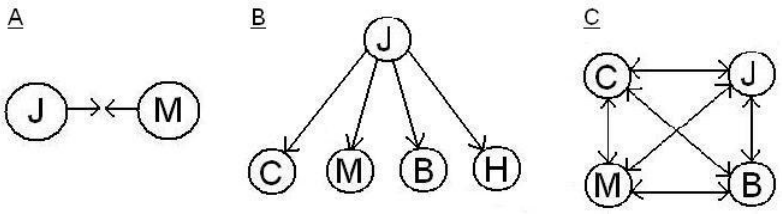


Figure 10

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"Focus on Social Issues" (Figure 11)

One of the foundations of the work done at the ICNY is the focus on social issues. The center uses a social issue, problem or project that is shared by all members of the community (regardless of faith tradition, social or economic background) as a rallying point. Issues such as domestic violence, immigration or hunger impact, in some manner, all members of a community.

Leaders, religious or secular, will participate in programs with aims to alleviate these concerns much more readily than those fused on "dialogue" or "understanding" between faiths.

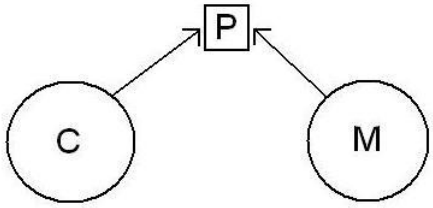


Figure 11

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"Education for Grassroots Religious Leaders" (Figure 12)

The focus on social issues pulls in additional members of society – typically civic or secular sectors – who are engaged or experts on that particular issue. Not only are relationships built between leaders of the religious groups within a community, bonds are built between those leaders and civic and government leaders.

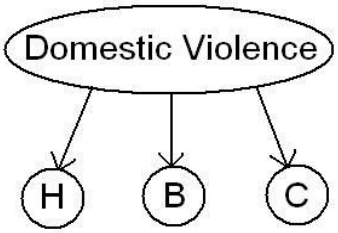


Figure 12

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"Educating About the Social Role of Religion" (Figure 13)

The inclusion of secular leaders serves a dual purpose; it also informs and exposes that constituency to the complexities of religious diversity in the community.

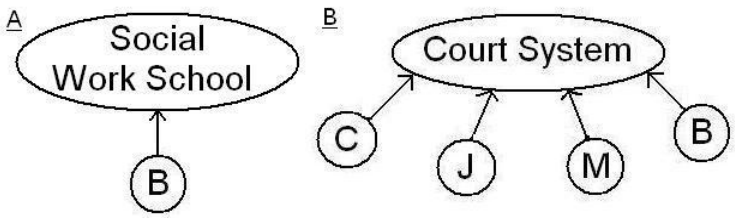


Figure 13

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"The Reciprocal Process" (Figure 14)

In the above exchange, the religious leaders also gain awareness of the complexities of the secular side. ICNY designed its programs to foster and facilitate these interactions.

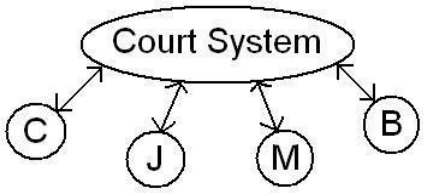


Figure 14

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"Interfaith Education through Social Education" (Figure 15)

As these exchanges within civic society continue, the religious leaders' relationship building and familiarity with each other progress.

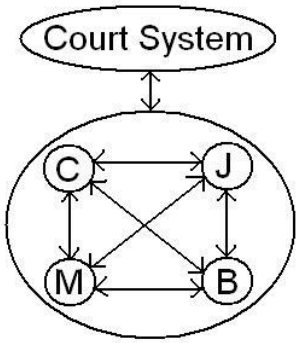


Figure 15

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"Interfaith and Civil Society Foster One Another" (Figure 16)

According to the methodology, by integrating the religious leaders into civil society through common issues of concern, they learn about each other and those secular institutions. Reciprocally, civil society learns about the role of religious leaders as well as the diversity of religious communities. According to ICNY, "interfaith informs civil society, and civil society informs interfaith" (www.interfaithcenter.org).

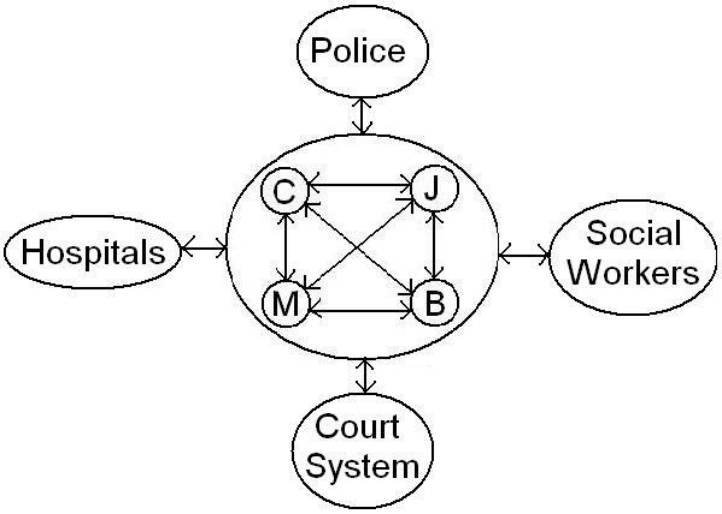


Figure 16

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

"A Framework Model: Not for Compromise or Advocacy" (Figures 17 and 18)

Equally as important to its methodology is what it does not do:

> The methodology does not aim to unify religious traditions on particular religious, ethical, or theological norms (A). It does not attempt to broker compromise positions (B). Nor is it an advocacy model that attempts to steer communities towards a political agenda, thus leaving some groups out (C) (www.interfaithcenter.org).

The ICNY acts as the hub and creates space for these processes. It designs programs that act as catalysts for relationship building between segments of society, mutual education on the structure and role of those segments and problem solving on issues of common concern.

Ultimately, the ICNY "creates frameworks in which a wide range of communities can find organic ways of working with one another for the common good" (www.interfaithcenter.org).

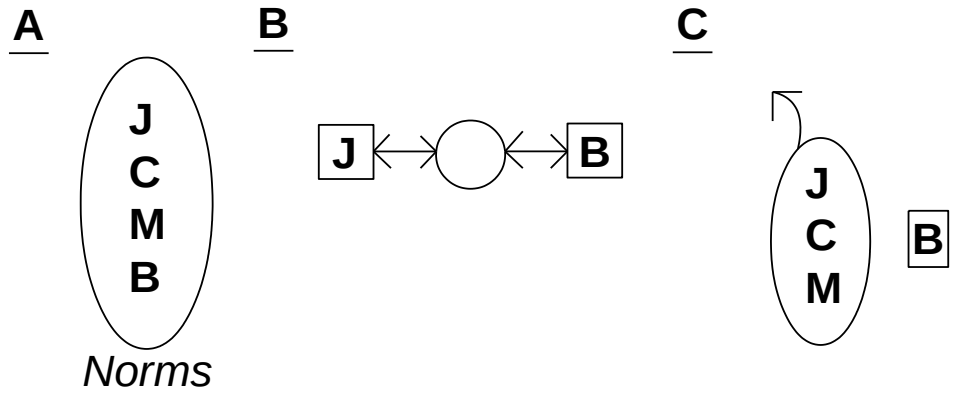


Figure 17

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

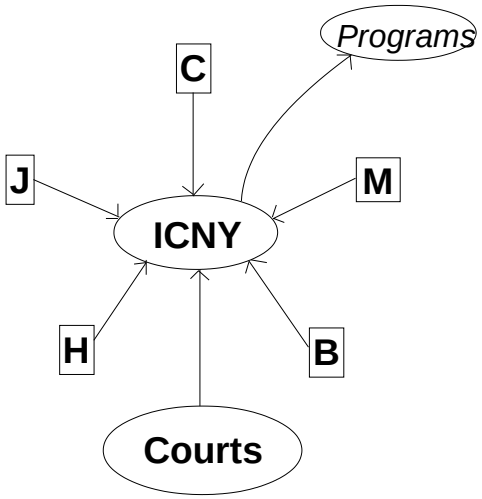


Figure 18

Source: http://www.interfaithcenter.org/pdfs/methodology.pdf

The Interfaith Center's methodology is founded on a simple objective: to find ways for religious communities to meet one another, learn about each other, and eventually partner on shared projects. There are three foundational ideas to their methodology:

1. Interfaith is educational in nature
    - Educating communities about one another includes more than religious aspects
2. Civic participation is central for interfaith interaction
    - To be effective it must happen in the public square, requires commitment of the larger society
3. Social change emerges from social empowerment and relationship building
    - Communities building understanding with one another in civil society

(www.interfaithcenter.org)

The primary way of engaging religious communities is through grass roots religious leaders who lead, reflect, mobilize, or educate their communities. ICNY works with some 1,000 grassroots religious leaders (GRRLs) from every religious tradition in the City, including Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, Shinto's, African Based Faiths, and Native Americans. These individuals are often clergy (that is a rabbi, imam, or priest), but they can also be laypeople, such as the president of a temple, a domestic violence counselor, a school teacher, or a community elder.

Diversity within religious communities is recognized as well. Every religious community is, in fact, made up of many smaller communities. They come from numerous geographical locations, have many different doctrinal approaches, numerous political perspectives and operate in different cultural contexts. According to both Matt Weiner and Rev. James Morton, by working with a range of religious leaders, even within a tradition, there is an attempt to bring the diversity of the community (or in this case New York City) to a project or program (Weiner, Morton Interviews 2008).

Center Space

The Interfaith Center of New York had its first offices at Lexington and 51st Street. In 2000, the Center moved to 40 East 30 Street, this is a street-level space that includes a gift shop, art gallery, lecture hall, 18 offices, conferences rooms and a Mediation Room. In 2005, the Center's offices moved to a Korean Buddhist temple at West 96th Street. In 2006, the Center moved to the Interchurch Center at 475 Riverside Drive. The Interchurch Center itself does have ecumenical foundations, which are served by the inclusion of the Center.

At the time of compiling this research, ICNY had no need for public space, based on the programming at the time. Their events took place at other locations - retreat houses, museums, their cooperative partners for events. There was a small display in the office - piles of articles and publications, their annual report that had details about their organizations and the work. Public interaction was minimal; there was no way to know of their existence from the outside of the office building (not uncommon for an office building). The Interfaith Center of New York did not express an interest in expanding its space to include something that was open to the public or public oriented. Nor did it have any plans for the introduction of sacred space that would be considered interfaith.

The New York Center was creating spaces for its methodology to exist and develop. They were temporary physical spaces that created the mechanisms, setting, and components to engage and create social space. It is subtle and incremental, but each event, each activity, each new relationship formed had the potential for further influence.

Summary

The Interfaith Center of New York was formed with the leadership of Rev. James Morton. It has progressed into an organization keenly aware of the impact its programs have (or

are designed to have) on civic society. It has expressed a specific methodology for its activities. The Center's programs tend to focus on connections between secular and religious leaders and organizations, and it addresses social issues more than either San Francisco or Philadelphia. New York is interested in exploring the concept of a model for an interfaith center and creating centers internationally. It does not have any desire to move out of its office space or create public interfaith space. It does deliberately engage civic society and influence social space with interfaith.

Swords to Plowshares: The Interfaith Center at the Presidio, San Francisco

> The mission of the Interfaith Center at the Presidio is to welcome, serve, and celebrate the diverse spiritual wisdom and faith traditions of the Bay Area in the context of one of the world's premier parks. The Center is dedicated to healing religious wounds, ending religiously motivated violence, and creating cultures of peace, justice, and healing for the Earth and all living beings. (www.interfaith-presidio.org)

Center City: San Francisco

San Francisco and the immigration station at Angel Island holds a place in the immigration history of the United States. While the numbers of people passing through this destination are substantially less than New York's Ellis Island, high-end estimates range close to one million between 1910 and 1940. Angel Island has a significant place in the history of Asian American immigration. During the time period covered by the Chinese Exclusion Act and its successors, 1882 to 1943, San Francisco was the port of entry for almost 90 percent of arrivals to the United States from the Asia-Pacific region. Today, San Francisco's metropolitan area population is 4,123,740, and 27.4 percent are foreign born (www.census.gov).

In 1972, Congress created the Gold Gate National Recreation Area and preserved 75,500 acres of Northern California coast; this began the transformation of the Presidio from a military post to a national park. Included in this legislation was a mandate that the Presidio would become part of the national park at the conclusion of its military mission. In 1989, the determination was made by the national government to close the Presidio and the U.S. Army post was transferred to the National park Service in 1994. On October 1, 1994 the Sixth U.S. Army was deactivated and ended the reign of a military post with local, regional, continental and global connections, dating back to 1776. The original "El Presidion" was established by Spain to be a northern outpost of colonial New Spain. This post, in conjunction with Mission San

Francisco de Asis and the pueblo at Yerba Buena Cove, formed the early units of the City of San Francisco.

Center Founding

Two things happened almost simultaneously to connect the Main Post Chapel (as one of the military chapels in the Presidio is called) to the interfaith community in San Francisco. The Presidio Trust, a board of directors appointed by the President of the United States to preserve and manage the Presidio of San Francisco as a resource for the public, was fielding inquiries regarding using the Chapel use. The Trust had no expertise in managing sacred space and the departure of the military chaplain had left a void. At the same time, the interfaith community saw the announcement of the Presidio land use change as a space uniquely qualified to be the focal point for their activities. They invoked a biblical rallying cry of "swords to plowshares" and contacted the Trust to inquire about the potential of becoming a tenant. The trust had a Chapel, which they did not know how to manage, and the Bay area had an interfaith contingency searching for a place to put roots.

Independent interfaith organizations already established in San Francisco realized the historic opportunity revealing itself in the formation of the national park on the former military base site. The military base housed one of the first interfaith places, in chapels built by the military. The concept of what now describes interfaith was different, and that term was not generally used, but it was still a space open to different traditions (admittedly different sects of Christianity seeing each other as foreign faiths). Since the land already had a sacred site in the form of a chapel, religion was not a new introduction to the space. The interfaith leaders of the areas - those involved in interfaith activities and organizations, came together on this idea of forming an interfaith center to connect the pieces of the interfaith movement in the San Francisco

Bay area. This was a grassroots effort toward unification, toward a strong desire for social cohesion in a well-documented area of diversity.

The Interfaith Council of San Francisco is the heritage of the Interfaith Center at the Presidio. It was their chair, Rita Simmel, who initiated the proposal (three pages in length) from the council to the Presidio Trust for an interfaith presence in the new park, after reading an article in a local newspaper about the park's initiative. Their inspiration was "Swords to Plowshares" in a change of guard from a military base to a national park. Both the park and base are protected lands, for the benefit of society, one permitting access to the public, one not. The shift in terms of the ideological and practical approaches for the use of the land and space is an historic change on the landscape itself. The proposal from the interfaith community was accepted by the Presidio Trust and the interfaith center was formed with assistance from sponsoring organizations in the area.

In 1995, the Center was incorporated and a multifaith board was assembled. The San Francisco Center is a regional network, an organization comprised of organizations. In this structure, it varies considerably from the New York and Philadelphia Centers, which are managed by individuals who form a board of directors. The San Francisco Center has founding organizations that are located throughout the Bay area, and each organization has representation on their Board of Directors. Leaders within these organizations saw the opportunity to multiply their efforts by collaborating through a centralized location that would be positioned to connect the region and interact on a national and international level. The focus is local, the themes and connections are national and global. Individual county interfaith councils or organizations join the Center, and then the Center becomes a regional node for communication and relationship building. This regional node is significant enough that it connects on international and national

levels. This is primarily through the Center's leadership, as many of the board of trustees, including the executive director are members of international and/or national organizations. Paul Chaffee was originally brought in to write grants, but with his wife Jan became the backbone of the Center's board. Native Americans, Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Protestant, Shinto, Sikh, Unitarian and Wiccan groups are represented on the Board.

During the researcher's interview with Rita Simmel in 2008, she described her proposal for the center to the Presidio Trust as a conference center at the Presidio to which all denominations from any location would be welcome. Ms. Simmel envisiond the center as the regional piece of a set of concentric circles – local interfaith centers, regional interfaith centers, global groups such as the United Religions Initiative, of which she was also a founding member. Each group shared and brought people to an event or activity to get to know each other. She used to think dialogue was "useless" as an interfaith activity or tool, and that working together on issues and getting to know each other through these venues was the best approach. She later came to believe that dialogue has a place in the process of "making something better, working on something" (Simmel Interview 2008). According to Simmel, the Center is a place for people all over the area to get together. If it were not in existence, the Bay area groups would be more isolated. Different areas of the city were represented, ideas exchanged, help exchanged and events and activities were circulated. This all takes place through the space of the interfaith center. The Interfaith Center, said Simmel, did not have its own projects, as it played an important role in bringing everyone together to share their work and experiences. She thought that having a place to exchange ideas "grounds the ideas" (Simmel Interview 2008). Although the Center was seen as a place of ideas, the idea that there may be a specific interfaith center model was not one Simmel has considered, but she did concur that a central physical location

was important. "Geography plays a role because the Bay is a cluster of communities and it makes sense to bring people together" (Simmel Interview 2008).

Ms. Simmel, who is from the Jewish tradition, did not believe interfaith meant that no faith should be represented in center activities, because there was a reluctance to offend. Rather, she felt the opposite is true:

> You don't leave your faith at the door, you bring it in when you do a prayer or invocation, you don't have to edit – it should be authentic for you – very important – we are not making homogenized milk. In the early days everyone thought that was what had to happen – not my way or your way. I don't have to believe it, I have to respect it. Now we have principles firmly established in the center that everyone speaks in an authentic voice. I have learned so much – it has broadened my horizons and it hasn't taken anything away from me. It has forced me to learn more about my own religion so I can answer questions. That is the fear, I think, to those that are not grounded in their own faith. It forces you to learn more about your own (Simmel Interview 2008).

She believed it was a good representation of the area's diversity, although evangelicals and Pentecostals were not generally involved and would only come for certain events such as a series on homelessness. "It's very hard when people feel they have the answer and no one else has the answer" (Simmel Interview 2008). During the formation of the center, Simmel said there were some distractors. "There were those who just thought it was words and would not materialize. No one was working loudly against us, maybe they thought we weren't important enough." Sometimes, it was just a matter of choosing something else to support. "There are many competing interests," Simmel continued, "not everything appeals to everyone and there are limited resources." Those who contributed the center are not necessarily interfaith activists, "People who believe in the concept or the history of the Presidio, they support us. " Simmel believed "The interfaith movement is very needed or people will end up in silos. We are not going to agree on everything, but that is okay, it makes life interesting. It is about finding commonality not the lowest common denominator" (Simmel Interview 2008).

The Interfaith Center at the Presidio became an umbrella for other interfaith organizations in the area. Conducting chapel use became an important component of the Center - first as a service to the public and also as a source of income. Over the years, the Center has produced resources, organized events and conferences, solicited other member organizations, and struggled with its financial resources. One of the more recent endeavors involved participation in a capital project to reconstruct the chapel. This reconstruction involved making the building ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) compliant, adhering to newer earthquake building codes, retaining the historical heritage and physical footprint of the current structure plus, most significantly to the mission of the center, making the space interfaith friendly. This capital project hinged on constructing a columbarium and selling spots to create endowment. Though not unprecedented, cemeteries in national parks are not common.

In San Francisco, with the abundance of interfaith councils, the center was important, because of what it could do locally and regionally. One obvious reason is scope of region. Many interfaith councils are limited to their locale - a village, a town, or even a county. The center increased the regional impact by connecting the councils and the interfaith organizations that had a limited focus and multiplied their effectiveness by extending the range of their geographies, as well as the range of issues and purposes. The Center is crucial in its role of extending the reach of the relationship-building efforts. Simmel saw the building of relationships as crucial in San Francisco's diverse society, "It is harder to hate someone if you know them," she said, "sometimes you have to agree to disagree" (Simmel Interview 2008). The Center's first priority connects those in the region, but it simultaneously acts as a node for the national and international connection in a manner that is not always viable or attainable for the smaller, localized group. Ms. Simmel reported that there were over 75 interfaith groups in the

San Francisco Bay area. This is a large number. She attributed it to the groups' role in creating interpersonal family-like ties among the largely immigrant population who have left family behind.

Camilla Smith, a Mormon, who is responsible for Fundraiser Development on the Board of Trustees, viewed relationship building as the Center's primary role. There is much more potential for networking than in a local council. Another key to this Center is the desire for each individual to be "authentically religious" (Smith Interview 2008). "There is great acceptance felt within the group, because there is safety to explain how your faith is meaningful to you." This can be different from other interfaith organizations where the participants are not as vocal regarding their faith and practices, so as not to offend anyone or chance the appearance of proselytization. "Globalization has made us a much broader society and if we do not understand, respect and value others, there will continue to be problems and we will not survive." She believed the movement is critical, because it is too easy to meet someone who is unlike yourself. In fact, she viewed the interfaith movement as a human rights movement, because of the potential of significant social actions and outcomes (Smith Interview 2008).

The Interfaith Center where Paul Chafee is the Executive Director is five blocks from his home, on the same grounds as Lucasfilms Limited, a leader in digital special effects. Chafee says both profit and nonprofit organizations use the space of the Presidio. Both Paul and his wife Jan Chafee work for the interfaith center, she is the Chief Financial Officer. They "work" however for only one salary, a bargain for the Center (which could not afford to pay two). This also illustrated their commitment to the Center's mission. They have both been involved since the inception of the Center. Paul's parents were Christian missionaries who gave their young son

a book on non-Christian religions and different sects of Christianity. Rev. Paul Chafee is now an Episcopal minister who is devoted to an interfaith mission.

They were both interviewed in 2008. One of the first stories Paul Chaffee relayed concerned William Swing, Episcopal Bishop of California (now retired). He supported the idea of the center at the Presidio, as well as the interfaith movement and encouraged his fellow religious leaders to participate. Although many in the hierarchy did not, he was not discouraged and always hopeful. "I will leave the light on the porch on, come when you can" (P. Chaffee Interview 2008). According to Jan Chafee, such hospitality is the touchstone of the work, as well as the perspective that you only represent yourself not two thousand years of religion. "What do you love about your faith? What is good about it to you?" (J. Chafee Interview 2008). Paul Chaffee noted that organized religions are using old models that are not preserving the vitality of worshipping communities. Interfaith organizations, while not necessarily offering worship, are offering new models of organization for communities. In this model exploration, the Center is also trying to figure out how to be educational and how to be financially sustainable (P. Chafee Interview 2008).

In 2008, the researcher also interviewed Donald Frew, a Wiccan Elder and a High Priest of Coven Trismegiston in Berkeley, California. He was a member of the Center's Board. Before the 1993 Parliament, his group was considered "weirdoes", and after it they were classified as "religious minorities" (Frew Interview 2008). Interfaith became one of their highest priorities and this became a dominate role for him as he was appointed the person to "do interfaith." He believed interfaith work is powerful work for change because of the power that religion has over people's minds, even if it is subtle. Since 1993, in a trickle down way, more pastors, bishops and religious leaders know his group, Covenant of the Goddess, and when approached by

constituents have better information. Simultaneously, more people in minority groups are willing to be public. For Frew, the first step was to realize that different religious categories needed to be represented, but the step that showed evolution of the process was when the category gets replaced by a name. "When interfaith works, it goes beyond we need to have X group; it is we need X group, who do we know." In other words, planning an event and not just looking for representation from a Wiccan group, but actually knowing a Wiccan to invite (Frew Interview 2008).

According to Frew, it is important to "do interfaith" because change can only be brought about by shifting perceptions, and thereby changing minds. Nothing has power over people's minds and decisions like religion. "Anything that is bringing religions together for positive change has the potential to be the most powerful force for change on the planet." Frew continued, "We are seeing it, it is subtle. People think that the leaders will get together and agree on something and the wars will stop but it doesn't work like that. Religions leaders will be getting along fine getting their pictures taken while their followers are killing each other. What the leaders do have little bearing sometimes. But there can an education effect: growing tolerance and respect for diversity that trickles down" (Frew Interview 2008).

The Center's board also had an atheist, Henry Bayer, who did not agree with organized religion, but did like the idea of interfaith work. Frew said Bayer "gets the idea that supporting religions coming together to make peace works for the betterment of the world. It doesn't require that people be religious, interfaith is not supporting religion and regardless of what you think of religion, interfaith is a cool thing." Frew viewed "the effect out to society as top down (people participating in groups) but the power of it as bottom up." He gave importance to the variety of participants and their relationships. "It isn't necessarily the leaders; it is the bishop

sitting next to lay person sitting next to spiritual teacher, all on equal footing. That is what is giving power to it. They are not coming together on their hierarchical position; that is not what is bringing them together. People are coming together through their common humanity and their shared belief in a reliance on the divine. That is what lends a deep seated force to what is happening" (Frew Interview 2008).

The motivation for contact is part of the process, "The coming together is not to talk about religion or their experience in religion but what your religious experience has called you to focus on." He called this "literacy." According to Frew, people come together for a common problem and the spiritual experience gives them a sense of power. "The forms are different but the effect is similar." This structure of contact allows people freedom to build relationships in a different way. "When leaders come together they come as diplomats, they speak for their organization, party line and this is what it is safe for me to say. When you come together as people and you speak about personal experience. When you speak for yourself it creates a huge freedom to build relationships. And that is huge and underlying the interfaith center; that is at the heart of it" (Frew Interview 2008). The focus is on creating a "safe space", where all can come together to build and nurture personal relationships. The space, therefore, needed to be neutral, to ensure that everyone feels a sense of ownership. The Interfaith Center at the Presidio is adamant that this is 'your' space. According to Frew, "Space has to reflect the community and has to help the community – the interfaith community." One of the insights for Frew, brought forth from an Interfaith Space Design Competition that the Interfaith Center at the Presidio co-sponsored, was that interfaith space is best designed for different religious experiences, and not different religions (Frew Interview 2008). A room would not be designed for a specific ritual or service for a specific religious tradition. Rather, it would garner common experiences from the

traditions and design a space to accommodate that. For example, many traditions include some form of meditation, contemplation, quiet individual prayer. Space could be designed to best foster that inward activity. Similarly, most traditions have community interaction or meal sharing. A space could be designed to be flexible enough to host that kind of activity, as well as other types of community gatherings.

Frew viewed some of the objections to interfaith, as being based on personal interpretation of religious identities. "Some religions have more fuzzy boundaries around identities such Buddhist, Hindu or pagan so doing something different is not such a big deal. Some religions have more strict boundaries and not as much incentive to do interfaith." His impression was that for some, "Doing interfaith means you are losing your faith. " He relayed a story about one of the center's board members, Rev. Dr. Susan Straus, whose congregants initially thought that her learning about Hinduism was betraying Jesus. [Note: Rev. Straus will be the Interim Executive Director as Rev. Chafee is retiring in December of 2010.]

That type of reaction may be considered an objection to the interfaith movement, since learning about the traditions and practices of others is the powerful educational component of interfaith. According to Frew, the Center has not had problems with anti-interfaith action or sentiment. He knew of isolated incidences where there have been issues. For example, the United Religions Initiative (URI) had on open forum destroyed by conservative Christians who worked actively to undermine the event. The World Parliament of Religions will always get an assortment of threats at their conferences. In some locations, the Parliament will need to convince the local officials that the parliament is not a cover for CIA (The Central Intelligence Agency) activity (Frew Interview 2008).

Frew said there is an evident division between conservative and liberal Christians in the reaction to interfaith. Conservative Christians view interfaith as an effort to create one religion or a new religion, while liberal Christians respond that it is not the case. In Frew's experience, conservative Christians are vehemently opposed to the things that the interfaith groups agree upon, such as gender equality, no proselytizing, acceptance of homosexuality, protection of the environment as the doctrine of a new church. Interfaith, in itself, views their perspective as a common liberal social agenda that is shared, and not necessarily as a dogma. Gender orientation and reproductive rights are especially "hot buttons" and it brings opposition to interfaith. According to Frew, the social agenda or cultural objections are just as looming as any religious objection. He relayed another story that concerns a meeting, where the purpose was to write the URI charter. At one point, someone gave a speech condemning discrimination against homosexuals, where upon the African delegator "objected to the floor being seized for a North American issue since they do not have homosexuals in Africa" (Frew Interview 2008).

While in San Francisco conducting the interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to attend the Board of Trustees meeting. The meeting began at the altar of the chapel with a reflective reading on power and authority. It was followed by a brief meditation and a song, also at the altar. The group then proceeded to the downstairs area to a community room, where everyone could be seated at a large table. After introductions of the eighteen people present (including the researcher) a pre-chosen board member gave their "faith journey." This was about a ten minute statement on a highlight of their relationship with their faith or a particular story in their faith journey.

The balance of the board meeting was more traditional. There was discussion of the center's attempt to raise capital for renovation and expansion. The center had a monthly

operating budget of about $20,000, with debt of $1,400. There was a discussion on how to update the center's database of about 5000 names and how to best conduct a fundraising campaign. The upcoming NAIN Connect conference was also on the agenda.

In July of 2008, the interfaith center co-sponsored an event called NAIN Connect 2008. It was organized by the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN), which is a non-profit association of interfaith organizations and agencies in Canada, Mexico and the United States. The researcher attended the five day event, which was held at the University of San Francisco. It was a unique opportunity to interact with interfaith organizations across the country, represented by approximately one hundred and fifty participants. The theme for the 2008 conference was "Embracing an Interfaith Future." Rev. Chaffee described the focus of the conference as bringing "interfaith and its grassroots into the 21st century" (P. Chaffee Interview 2008).

Much of the workshop involved themes focused on the future of the interfaith movement. One of the noteworthy observations involving the conference participants was a lack, not of religious diversity, but ethnic diversity. Missing except for a few, were participants from Mexico, although NAIN purports to be a network for the entire continent. There was, however a larger representation from Canada. The challenge of involving those from Mexico is at least two-fold: financial resources of organizations to send a representative to the conference and the barrier of language, since the conference is not bilingual. Another focus was the importance of attracting and involving younger participants. This particular conference, for example, involved only a few in the 20-30 year demographic with most, by the researcher's estimate, being 40 and older.

Another area of discussion was defining interfaith, "Who are we?" It was generally agreed that interfaith is a movement, which is young, although no longer in its infancy. While

there may be an awareness of diversity or diversity growing, there is not a parallel awareness of interfaith and how it responds to diversity. Part of the issue in generating interfaith awareness is related to an identity issue or definitional issue with interfaith. The workshops and group discussion generated questions and concerns for the next stages of the movement. How can interfaith make others comfortable, even though religion makes people uncomfortable? How can interfaith be more proactive in creating awareness of itself or addressing social justice issues? How can it enter the mainstream or those places that are resistant? Sometimes, it is a function of understanding the context of a situation. A participant told of her experience in New Orleans, where she found different views of interfaith by different racial communities. According to this participant, the majority of whites with security of wealth approached interfaith more as an intellectual exercise. The majority of blacks, bound in the insecurity of poverty, saw interfaith as a means to fight for rights and fight for survival.

Groups speak from different places in society, as well as from different needs in their interpretation of what interfaith is or what it means to them. Sometimes, poverty answers the question, "Why isn't this group represented at our event?" Understanding the interfaith movement involves not just recognizing the various faith communities, but the context of the broader community within which they operate. Another challenge faced by the interfaith community is what one participant called "obstacles of abundance." He described that many groups in a community may be interested in interfaith activities. This leads to a stretch of resources, without necessarily attracting new participants. It is not always productive if "Everybody wants to have their own unity event." Another challenge discussed is the idea that agreement must be reached. A representative from an interfaith group in Omaha said they emphasize respect and relationships, not agreement.

Center Programming

Despite the network, or perhaps because of it, the actual programming efforts appear to be more limited than the other centers. Although the amount of interfaith work in San Francisco is substantial by any measure - national or international - most of it is done through the interfaith councils and organizations of the particular county or town. The interfaith center focuses its energy on relationship-building between faith groups and interfaith groups, the service of the interfaith chapel and the creation of interfaith space. According to the Center (www.interfaith-presidio.org), the primary programs are:

- Providing hospitality at the interfaith Main Post Chapel
- Developing local and global connections, and
- Creating interfaith learning environments and resources.

In terms of providing hospitality, the core of the center's activities focus on chapel use and the means it provides the center to welcome not only faith groups and interfaith organizations, but also the general public. The chapel is used for weddings, memorials, ceremonies, and retreats, as well as concerts, receptions and lectures. New or small congregations have also used the chapel space until a dedicated space of their own could be secured. The revenue stream from the chapel supports over half of the operating costs of the center. The choice of the word "hospitality" emphasizes their value of welcoming all to their interfaith venue.

With regards to developing local and global relations, in addition to its chapel base, the center's other core strategy is to reach out to interfaith, faith and secular organizations. These connections are forged in various ways, some by collaboration, some through participation, but significantly through the exchange of information. It utilizes an electronic newsletter to

disseminate interfaith activities to approximately 1500 religious leaders in the San Francisco Bay area.

As mentioned, the Interfaith Center at the Presidio is a member of the North American Interfaith Network (NAIN), an organization of grassroots interfaith agencies in Canada and the United States. The Interfaith Center is also affiliated with the United Religions Initiative (URI) as a "cooperation circle." This networks the center with over 400 similar circles in over seventy countries. The purpose of URI is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence, and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings. The center also participates in the World's Parliament of Religions and shares its Global Ethic:

> We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the community of living beings ... We must treat others as we wish others to treat us. We make a commitment to respect life and dignity, individuality and diversity, so that every person is treated humanely, without exception... (www.parliamentofreligions.org)

In terms of creating interfaith learning environments and resources, the Center engages in more single project-type endeavors than long term or continuing programs. The Center has published One World, Many Voices – An Interfaith Song Book (2002), Sacred Spaces – 2004 Interfaith Sacred Space Design Competition (2004), and Shared Wisdom – Developing Grassroots Interfaith Relationships (August 2004). They also produced a 50 minute film, "What Do You Believe", based on interviews with 300 teenagers. Other efforts include: Lost and Endangered Religions, a project gathering supplies for Iraqi children, and a course about 'interfaith literacy' that can be presented in seminaries, congregations, or for special gatherings.

Center Methodology

San Francisco leadership has a philosophy based on a technique called “appreciative inquiry”. This is how their interfaith space is created. Appreciative inquiry was developed in the early 1980s by David Cooperrider, now a professor at Case Western Reserve University, as an approach to organizational culture. Appreciative inquiry considers what people most appreciate and value, rather than looking into problems to fix (Chaffee 2004:1). Participants are asked "what do we most value in the given context, what works for us when we are at our best, and what are our highest hopes for the future?" (Chaffee 2004:1). The technique has an “asset-based”, not “deficit-based” focus (Chaffee 2004:3). This method within the interfaith center encourages the leadership and the participants to bring the best part of their religion (as self-determined) into the interfaith space, and to share it with the other. The focus of the interaction is not centered on differences or trouble spots or grievances, but commonality and an appreciation of the individual. By focusing on what they wish to accomplish, they have greater success moving in that direction. Utilizing this technique and drawing on their interfaith center experience, they have produced a piece called “Developing an Interfaith Family”, which has four main elements:

Diversity. The Interfaith Center at the Presidio consists of a group of people who represent the religious and cultural diversity of the world, who regularly gather to develop friendships, pray and reflect, celebrate their differences, and explore the concerns they share.

Relationships. Interfaith is interpreted not as an alternative, but an adjunct to the church, temple, or mosque. The interfaith group provides a sacred intersection, a time and place where people from all faiths can share dialogue and spiritual practice. Activities promote learning spiritually about ourselves and others in an open, safe, ‘non-partisan’,

appreciative environment. Participants are invited to use the community as a place to pursue their own convictions and questions with similarly questing people from diverse backgrounds. There is an assumption that participants respect and care about each other, joining in dialogue without feeling compelled to agree about issues or change anyone's mind. People are encouraged to stay connected to their own traditions, taking with them an appreciation of what can be learned in an interfaith context.

Shared values. Interfaith is not a new religion, nor does it try to identify or serve as a lowest common spiritual denominator. The center's community offers a sacred meeting place where diversity can be explored and appreciated. The center does have shared values and commitments that set the tone and context for the interfaith community.

Mutual respect. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is affirmed as the necessary groundwork for humankind's health and vitality.Commitment to promote daily, enduring interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence, and to create cultures of peace, justice, and healing for the Earth and all living beings (from the Charter of the United Religions Initiative, www.uri.org).

Cultivating interfaith practice. Activities include shared worship, which is organized by representatives of several traditions. Education opportunities are also a focus, as well as ways to generate dialog, relationship and community building. There are "guidelines" for this type of interaction. Those who attend services are invited to participate, to simply observe, or to leave and take some time out.

- Shared religious practice should never be coerced.
- Offer everyone the same respect and dignity you hope to receive.

- Listen to the other person with enough care to begin to discern the "positive core," the life-giving energy, in his or her faith and practice.
- Speak from the heart, not to make a point but to build understanding and relationship. (www.interfaith-presidio.org).

Center Space

The Main Post Chapel, built in 1931 by the United States Sixth Army, soon became a building of interest for the center's committee. The chapel's architecture, of Spanish mission revival period, with stained glass windows and murals, stood out for its beauty within the 800 buildings of the new National park. Historically, the chapel had been a sanctuary for different faiths, which made it an appropriate house for a center that welcomes diverse faith traditions and spiritualties. In 1996, the center moved into the Chapel, and in 2000 was offered a long-term lease, provided the building was renovated to current building codes and preserved as a piece of the park's and city's history.

The Native American were the first to consider the land now known as the Presidio as sacred. When Spanish explorers discovered the land, two Catholic priests conducted religious services on Punta de Cantil Blanco, where the Golden Gate Bridge meets Fort Point. One of the first buildings on the Presidio was a tiny chapel, and when the Presidio was dedicated as a Spanish fort, it was more of a religious ceremony than a military one. The U.S. army held services there until they departed, September 30, 1995. On October 1st, 1995, representatives of the Interfaith Center, comprising a variety of faiths, commemorated the transition of stewardship from the U.S. Army to the Interfaith Center in a ceremony called "Gathering of Blessings". The following March, the Center was invited to occupy the building on a temporary basis, and also to make it available to the public.

The San Francisco center is the only one of the three that has dedicated public space. The center is located in a chapel, which open for public and private use - for example weddings, concerts, and visits. Worship service is also a use for the space, and there have been worship services under the direction of the former (military) occupants, as well as the current one (interfaith center). While their property is being renovated, St. Peter's Episcopal Church of San Francisco is currently worshipping at the Interfaith Chapel. The center's meetings are held in the rooms below the sanctuary. The venue is also used for shared space with other groups. The chapel component is multifunctional in its worth to the center. There is a financial benefit, as it generates income for the center as a location for weddings. The entranceway upstairs is lined by a wall mural, painted in 1955, that depicts the historical Presidio with the U.S. Army, the Golden Gate Bridge and St. Francis overlooking the city built for the saint. The Presidio is a tourist attraction, and the chapel is a visible stand-alone building within the park, with a sign clearly announcing "Interfaith Center." It is a visible component on the landscape, with a dedicated space for interfaith. The center is listed on the Presidio website, it is easily found, and open to the public. The New York and Philadelphia Centers are not prominently listed on their host websites.

For the center and its members, using a Christian space (or any single tradition space) for interfaith gathering can often be challenging, as the customs and rituals of different faiths are not always compatible. For example, pews are not used in all traditions, but a staple in many Christian settings. There is also no place to remove footwear or water for cleansing the hands or feet, as is required for some non-Christian traditions. The San Francisco center is in the midst of a capital campaign that will re-design the current chapel space and offer to the public an interfaith center that is multifaith friendly, and also has modern facilities to host events, wedding

receptions and the like, to generate more income. This revenue can then be applied to the mission and agenda. The renovated space can be visited by the public and the new center will be representative of an interfaith perspective, the center's mission, and not simply be a Christian chapel with an interfaith sign outside.

This interfaith space is a unique offering to the community - both in terms of the immediate region and the interfaith community, which is very much on a learning curve path. To the region, practical services can be offered as an appropriate setting for the marriage of interfaith couples, or as a site for interfaith events or worship services. This is part of the center's stewardship of the chapel within the park's complex to keep it open to all potential users, regardless of religious traditions. It is also a place for those clergy in the community who do not object to interfaith marriage ceremonies personally, but would not have the ability to offer their home facility, because it would conflict with their official capacity in their faith and consequently with their religious community.

Those marginalized in their tradition, due to being open to diversity and beliefs, can find acceptance in this place. The more diverse the area, the more the need for places where diversity in all forms is thematic. One particularly challenging component of this thought and care is the lack of standardization in the interfaith community. There is no model space or tradition to offer guidance. Interfaith space does have commonality, but it appears to be one formed from independent invention that has replicated itself. These commonalities may have been inspired by reading or hearing about the solutions of other groups - that is the "how-to" of reconciling the diverse and even conflicting values and practices of multiple traditions. These interfaith creations are not the same as civil ceremonies, which are often devoid of spirituality. What

places in society can truly be the home for these human events that are of mixed genres of faith, if not interfaith places?

Summary

The Interfaith Center at the Presidio is unique in its placement in a national park that was once a military base. It is also unusual in that it occupies the dedicated space of the Main Post Chapel. Unlike the other two centers studied, its board of directors consists of representatives from founding organizations. It operates more as a network hub for interfaith organizations in San Francisco and the surrounding area then it does to operate original programming (with few exceptions), as in New York and Philadelphia.

From 9/11: The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia

> The mission of the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia is to advance mutual trust, understanding and cooperation among faith communities in order to work together for the common good of the region. (www.interfaithcenterpa.org)

Center City: Philadelphia

Philadelphia, since its founding in 1682, had been a port of immigration and a city of immigrants. It was also laid out as an utopian experiment. William Penn's city of "Brotherly Love" was intended as a place where religions, under the structure of civil society, could coexist peaceably. The Dutch and German religious groups founded the first non-British European settlement in a British colony. The development of the city and its commerce increased the number of German, Scottish and Irish immigrants and, the city became a center for Lutheran and Presbyterian churches, soon followed by Baptists from Wales. The mid 1700s brought Roman Catholics, and by the end of the colonial period, its Jewish community became one of the largest in the nation. More than 1,300,000 immigrants entered Philadelphia between 1815 and 1985 (www.hsp.org).

At present, the city and its suburbs contain a prayer hall for the Muslim Society of the Delaware Valley, a temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, a Korean Won Buddhist Temple, a Vietnamese Buddhist temple, as well as a Thai temple among other "exotic" religious sites. Metropolitan Philadelphia has a diverse mix of immigrants and refugees from Asia (39 percent), Latin America and the Caribbean (28 percent), Europe (23 percent) and Africa (8 percent). In recent years, the 10 largest source countries have been India, Mexico, China, Vietnam, Korea, Italy, Ukraine, Philippines, Jamaica, and Germany (www.census.gov).

Center Founding

Of the three centers profiled, Philadelphia was the only one created after 9/11 tragedy. That event was a catalyst for much interfaith activity. In Philadelphia, religious leaders came together to discuss the potential of forming a specific regional interfaith presence in their city, along with those already engaged in interfaith activities. An advisory committee was formed in September of 2003. The effort was assisted financially by a grant from the Fels Fund and first year funding made available through the Tabernacle United Church. The committee utilized the Goldin Institute to provide guidance for this type of community organizing. The Goldin Institute works "to build grassroots partnerships for global change that are rooted in the power of communities coming together to build their own solutions and determine their own futures" www.goldininstitute.org). The group also attended the World Parliament of Religions in Barcelona, which was a global gathering of interfaith organizations and leaders, as well as a presentation of ideals, agendas and practices. Further financial assistance was obtained from The Rockefeller Foundation and the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral.

The committee, which is multifaith and multicultural, met with existing interfaith groups and community leaders to determine the region's current issues and needs. While many groups were engaged in beneficial community efforts, an assessment of the interfaith work done in the area found no specific organization addressing interfaith dialogue, relationships, or education across the region. The committee recognized an opportunity to launch an interfaith center to fill this gap. The focus of the center was to be dialogue and education, since social issues were already being addressed by other organizations. The decision was also made to focus regionally, not nationally, and to be stewards of their neighborhoods.

The center's founders were interested in what others were doing successfully and what their community needed, in order to improve functionality and community impact. In a way, this founding represents a certain progress in the movement from the experiences of New York and San Francisco. The Interfaith Centers in those two cities developed without blueprints, as depicted. In Philadelphia, there is a decided sense of learning from the work of others in the interfaith field, as well as formulating a project that will benefit the community at large. In addition to the aforementioned contact with the Goldin Insitute and the World Parliament of Religions, the group researched the existence of other interfaith organizations to get a sense of possible programs and activities.

The researcher interviewed Executive Director, Abby Stamelman Hocky, in 2008. She was well acquainted with the Harvard Pluralism Project, which has catalogued interfaith organizations across the United States. The group also made contact with Bud Heckman of Religions for Peace USA, another respected source for interfaith efforts in the United States. The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia clearly references the events of 9/11 as a catalyst for its formation. It was a thoughtful, long-term response to an event that clearly had roots and ramifications beyond the day and needed a response that reached not only into the past and the future, but into people and processes of society. The case for the viability of an interfaith center was being made in other places and it became an element the leaders of Philadelphia believed had value and should be added to their landscape. Their acquaintances with interfaith centers in other areas provided Philadelphia with a possibility for success or an acknowledgement that their goal was realistic, as it had been accomplished elsewhere. There was still no "manual," no "do-it-yourself kit", but having examples of success was more significant than instruction, and provided sufficient motivation to proceed.

According to Stamelman Hocky, who has been the Executive Director since its beginning in 2004, the decision was made by the committee not to be a council of different religions. It was thought such an umbrella organization would be too slow and might lean towards being a second loyalty. The committee wanted people experienced in interfaith work and rooted in their own faith community. The committee envisioned the center as a place focused on social justice issues, although they found other groups with this focus. But they realized there was no one lifting the richness of faith and the stability of religious institutions into the equation. Stamelman Hocky said , "the committee concluded that inherent in the entire enterprise of an interfaith center is the idea of social justice and community cohesion". They saw the Center as a mechanism to fulfill this role on a local level, and be stewards of their own community. With this purpose, the Center was set up to address regional issues, but not national or international issues (Stamelman Hocky Interview 2008).

The Center became a non-profit organization in January of 2005, and seven months later - in August - began operations within the office space of the Philadelphia Cathedral. It was the intention of the committee and the Center to "create an alternative paradigm - one in which differences are acknowledged, individuals are respected, and a place where a shared vision and action for the common good can be shaped" (www.interfaithcenterpa.org). Much of the success was built on word of mouth, grassroots networking and exposure through the website. People approached the interfaith center with many more ideas or offers of collaboration than the center could accommodate with its current resources. Also, some of the proposed initiatives exceeded the scope of their mission. Many of the programming efforts were collaborative. Stamelman Hocky said that some members of the committee laugh about it now, because if they had their way the work would have been "all interfaith dialogue in every neighborhood because that is our

favorite work, we love it. But we have not done one classic dialogue like we thought we were going to do. We listened to what people wanted and their interest drew us in other directions" (Stamelman Hocky Interview 2008). According to Stamelman Hocky, when they approach congregations and say "Do you want an interfaith program?" there is either no response, or the response is a simple "no." But if they say "we have a program for youth which incorporates interfaith ideas", they received positive feedback. If the youth get involved, then the adults get involved. "If you start with the interfaith idea, you get much more resistance" (Stamelman Hocky Interview 2008).

Stamelman Hocky stated that there are groups that are trying to start these things [interfaith centers] in many places, and she supports the idea that everyone is different, but could learn from each other. "Sometimes groups are formed out of disaster or an event or academics that come to the floor with the general premise that there is something to be gained." She repeated the sentiment of Rita Simmel in San Francisco, "Working with others deepens your own tradition." Stamelman Hocky has "faith in faith and every faith tradition calls people to their highest good." She was not certain whether there can be a specific interfaith center model that can be reproduced from place to place. Although there are certainly best practices and it is possible to learn from each other, she believed the structure will be driven by the community. The key, she said, rested on "what are we called upon to do, what can we together solve". She stated that "our priorities are driven by our own needs and interfaith relations won't be highest thing on the list but we are being drawn in and traditions are being pushed to each other". It is not about multiplying centers; it is about "planting the seeds." According to Stamelman Hocky, the question to ask is: "What is the change in society once the interfaith center is present?" Since their inception, Stamelman Hocky believes the circle had widened, primarily by word of mouth.

She measured this by increased contacts with the center, more participants and increasing requests for their programs (Stamelman Hocky Interview 2008).

Stamelman Hocky continued by stating that "very few people know about the center and it is irrelevant to almost everyone but a small group of people. Even the programs people enjoy, they may have no idea that the center sponsored it. People do not remember who initiates things, the center is not branded and it is especially difficult since the program locations will change. Studies that prove meeting different types of people dispel stereotypes are not readily available. It is hard to quantify and in grants for example the center sets its own objectives not global objectives" (Stamelman Hocky Interview 2008).

Stamelman Hocky described her own vision of the center's impact, "to be touched by meeting someone of different faith, to read news differently. It is modest maybe not even measurably but it is there." The overall impact of the center is difficult to measure, according to Stamelman Hocky. "There are so many variants in impacting people and what will sustain impact. It takes intentional reflection." Despite the difficulty in measuring shifting attitudes, she believed the "Interfaith encounter is important." Stamelman Hocky would like to measure if young people will be more inclined to vote after participating at the Center. She thought that it indicated responsibility to local community. "After being involved in a program at the center that raises your sense of community service, elevates your sense of responsibility, your sense of the other – after all that, you should want to register to vote". In a survey done of alumni (high school seniors) of their *Walking the Walk* program, many took religion classes in college, or became involved in interfaith activities on campus. According to Stamelman Hocky, "They probably wouldn't have been involved if not for their experience with us. It just would have been off their radar" (Stamelman Hocky Interview 2008).

In November of 2008, the researcher attended a Thanksgiving interfaith service sponsored by the Interfaith Center at The Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral. The format of the service was simple, in that it alternated readings and songs from different faith traditions, expressing gratitude and appreciation. The interfaith center planned the program for the service and also coordinated the participation. Representative members of the faith traditions were responsible for choosing the appropriate reading and selecting a representative for the event. Local choirs were selected for the musical pieces.

Center Programming

Programming efforts at the Philadelphia Center demonstrated a specific agenda and timeframe, and these are clearly stated to the public on their website:

> The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia enables people of all faiths to share their deepest convictions, shape solutions to common problems, and live out their highest values and aspirations, through celebration, service, education, and action. We intend to:
>
> - Develop more leaders of the interfaith movement who know how to bridge differences and work for the common good.
> - Create accessible models for how people of a variety of faith traditions can works together, not separately, to effectively address common issues and problems in the pursuit of a just and compassionate social order.
> - Educate and inspire youth and adults of various faiths to create communities who have gone beyond indifference and skepticism to the valuing and engagement of differences.
> - Engage diverse faith communities in understanding their respective stories and celebrating the commonalities and distinctiveness of their various faith traditions. (www.interfaithcenterpa.org)

One method of expanding interfaith interaction in the neighborhoods is through the use of youth programs. The idea is to provide youth with the tools to engage in a diverse world, so they will become better citizens of a pluralistic society, instead of being thrust into diversity without preparation. The religious communities and the adults of those communities are often eager to engage their youth in cultural, service-oriented, civic programs. The success of the youth

programs - on many levels, but certainly the positive experiences the youth relay back to the adults - has generated a subsequent interest in the adult community for interfaith and civic programming.

Alternative Spring Break. In 2005, North Carolina State University (The Center for Student Leadership Ethics and Public Service) approached the Philadelphia Center about developing an interfaith service-learning program to be offered to their students during spring break. The University wanted the students to be exposed to the cultures of Philadelphia, while also participating in service work that would benefit the community. The result of that collaboration between the University and the Center is the "Alternative Spring Break."

This program is an opportunity for the student to engage in community service projects, while simultaneously meeting Philadelphia's religious communities. The program attracts students (now high school and undergraduate) from a variety of disciplines and religious backgrounds, as well as those who do not identify with a particular religious group. The project claims three essential outcomes to the student's week long experience:

- Sensitivity to an urban context
- Awareness of the link between religious values and service
- Increased understanding of multiple religious traditions

(www.interfaithcenterpa.org)

Encountering Faiths. *Encountering Faiths* is an adult learning experience based on the book by the same name by Maria Hornung (who is also the coordinator of interfaith education at the Center). This program is an interactive series of seminars that "introduces adults of a particular faith or diverse faith traditions to the art of religious dialogue." This program is conducted within faith communities, but it also has an application in the workplace where diversity is found and "encounters" are inevitable.

Gateway to religious communities. The Center has established, through its interfaith work, a network of congregations representing a variety of faith traditions. This program utilizes that network to offer "tours, programs and worship experiences" to the community at large. It is an experiential component to a community dialogue and relationship building agenda.

Women in Religious Leadership Initiative. The Philadelphia Center has also connected with the Women in Religious Leadership program. This program specifically connects women of different faith groups who hold positions of leadership or authority in their communities. The program acts as a spiritual support system, but also one that enhances understanding between the faiths and a means to network and share resources.

Religious Leaders Council. In 2006, the top religious leadership of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities in Philadelphia committed to forming a council that would build relationships between the groups, provide mutual support, and be a spiritual voice for specific initiatives of common concern in the area. The first of these initiatives addressed violence in the Philadelphia region. The Interfaith Center is the home base to this council, and provides staff and administrative support. It does not, however, represent the true values of the Center, by their own admittance. The council only includes the three religions specified, and although they represent a majority of the adherents in the Philadelphia region, there are other faiths present. The actual formation of the council was predicated on including only these religions. The other religions in the region were considered too culturally and ideologically distant from these three to be included in this initial step. This definition of an interfaith group to include only Christian, Jewish and Islamic representation is mirrored in other interfaith councils, both nationally and internationally. More commonly, however, interfaith councils or organizations include representatives of the Hindu and/or Buddhist communities.

To accomplish the formation of the council, a Day of Discernment was convened by the Catholic community - which is the largest religious group in Philadelphia - in 2006. The center worked with the clergy to design a structural outline. Tension arose in the discussion on who would be invited to the council. The center realized that its role was to be different than that of the new council. It did have to make an internal decision on whether or not to facilitate an activity (helping to form the council) that intentionally decided to limit itself to only three faith groups. Careful language was adopted in the formative document, to state that the origin of the council was based on the three largest groups in the region, and this perhaps would avoid the appearance of exclusivity. Since new relationships were being developed, it was thought that the council, despite including only three faiths could begin the interfaith process and then could find the will and means to explore and include other faith groups. Leadership in each community were sought to form an administrative group, whose first priority was to address violence in the region. The purpose was for the religious leaders and the religious community to be more than a symbolic presence against violence. The council activities included written statements, youth and adult education, and a non-violence pledge (below), which is not only adopted by the religious communities, but is also read at civic ceremonies, such as the inauguration of the Mayor.

> *A Call from People of Faith to Stop Violence*
>
> The Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia prays fervently for an end of violence in our region. The Council calls on all to work for peace as it leads its constituencies into the ways of peace. The Council allies itself with all who work to eliminate today's culture of violence: its causes, incidents, and tragic consequences. Those who commit acts of violence and their victims need us to be peace-makers. Let us listen to their cries, their hopes and their dreams; and let each of us say:
>
> I pledge as an individual:
> To promote peace

In my home and community.

I pledge to work with others
To eliminate the causes of hatred,
To honor the dignity of all people,
To lay down our weapons,
And to find non-violent solutions
When tempted to hurt another.

I pledge to be an instrument of God's peace
To make my home and neighborhood zones of peace,
Free from fear, filled with respect,
And marked by deeds of kindness.

(www.archdiocese-phl.org/press%20releases/pr001329.htm)

As Ms. Stamelman Hocky recalled, while the board of the interfaith center was "delighted they played a role", it was "antithetical" to not include all of the faith communities. It was a "horrible experience" to tell other board members that their faith group was not included in the council. But the decision was made to support the council and get it "off the ground", so it could begin to be a force for good, and trust that the interfaith process would influence the council to bring others into the group. Not everyone on the council was in agreement to exclude the others. The theological concerns between the faith communities could not be reconciled to the interfaith effort. According to Stamelman Hocky, Philadelphia is very conservative, and was perhaps influenced by "fear" and "discomfort" in this decision (Stamelman Hocky Interview 2008). She did not know how long it would take to break down that barrier or who it would be to influence the existing leadership to make changes: the leaders themselves, the public or the smaller communities who say "what about us?"

Walking the Walk. This is another youth oriented program of the Center. This program is directed at teenagers, and is designed to offer the participants experiences, skills and resources in a region (and world) of diversity. The youth have the opportunity to explore their own

identity, but also to connect with those of different religious, cultural and economic background. It represents a microcosm of the Center's mission. The Center partners with either congregations or schools for the selection of youth, and the program engages the participants for thirteen weeks. The goals mirror the mission:

- Equip youth to have healthy relationships with diverse peers.
- Enable teenagers to join hands with others to help improve the world.
- Help build communication and understanding among congregations of different faiths.

(www.interfaithcenterpa.org)

The program is designed on a model that includes four cornerstones:

- Interfaith Engagement
- Service Learning
- Community Building
- Creative Reflection

(www.interfaithcenterpa.org)

One of the most important elements of the program is that it provides a "safe" environment or space for young people of different faith traditions to get to know each other, break down stereotypes, and learn about each other's faiths and common values. The learning in this process includes a deeper understanding of one's own tradition. The youth work together on volunteer and service opportunities, through a number of community projects. This deepens their relationships, but also increases awareness of social issues and social justice. This is interfaith engagement. The relationships with adults and peers can provide support, resources, and mentorship. These connections reinforce the building of empowered individuals, positive identities, as well as community commitment and leadership. The final stage of the program is the creative outlet for the experience. The participants journal their experiences throughout the thirteen weeks and ultimately produce essays, poetry, art or music.

Center Space

The practical production of space involves vision and cooperation. The Philadelphia center currently shares space at with another organization, The Arts & Spirituality Center, at the Philadelphia Cathedral. The Philadelphia site is located within the cathedral, which is public space, but the center is not easily discernible to those who do not know it is there. Its offices are not necessarily set up to receive the public. Events are held offsite. The sharing of space creates challenges for the Center, particularly in the form of identity building and awareness. It does, however assist in terms of practical economics, as shared space means shared expenses.

According to Stamelman Hocky, the board "had rich conversation about a physical building in the first planning phase." The vision was for an Interfaith Cultural Center, where people could come for classes, workshops, exhibits and community events. It is a larger dream than just creating some interfaith public office or even worship space. It is envisioning a substantial venue with 21st century technology, displaying religions similar to the Museum of World's Religions in Taiwan, but even broader in scope. To be successful, it would need to be an attraction that would fit into Philadelphia's current tourist selection of the Liberty Bell – as well as other sites - essentially becoming another history-making landmark in a city of historical landmarks. It would require conference space, studio space, retreat space and specifically income and traffic generating venues, such as food courts and retail stores. But while the Center remains within the walls of the Philadelphia Cathedral, it needs only to create a small interfaith space.

Summary

The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia is the youngest of the centers profiled. The creation of this center was more formalized and studied than the New York and San Francisco

centers, which evolved primarily based on the inspiration and timing of a few key players. The center in Philadelphia is more local community oriented than the others, with a particularly strong youth program. It is interested in building an interfaith center that can be a public space, in the fullest sense of the concept.

Analysis of the Three Primary Centers

This research focuses on organizations and the places that they have built under the term interfaith center. The Interfaith Center of New York, the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia and the Interfaith Center at the Presidio, San Francisco are not a complete representation of interfaith places. They do, however, represent solid regional interfaith structures that are recognized by national and international interfaith communities. Each center has an interfaith focused mission, supported by a strategy of programs and projects.

New York is interested in benefitting the community through bringing about change in civil society – the justice system and social services. San Francisco operates primarily as hub for other interfaith groups, and includes an interfaith chapel. It is focused on the interfaith organizations, which in turn benefit the community at large. Philadelphia has initiated more programs for the actual community they serve, with an emphasis on youth.

The three centers examined are similar in concept and ideology, with differences in available resources, community influences and leadership direction. The sites have similar challenges and opportunities. Each started within a geographic area, with a large and a diverse population, although that is not necessarily a condition of the formation of an interfaith center. The intent of the center is to become a microcosm of the external human environment and then influence that environment with its interfaith mission. It is a house of humanity built with interfaith inside, designed to change what is outside. The space of the center is filled with ideas, concepts and human interactions. People with their faiths, beliefs, visions, agendas, prejudices, fear, intellect and emotions constitute the human part of the equation. Peace, unity, social justice, compassion, understanding, acceptance, equity and wisdom are only a partial list of the ideas and concepts. The relationships between people cannot be emphasized enough in each of

the centers studied. The context of the area adds other layers to those relationships that are beyond religious affiliation. There is the influence of histories, immigrations, economic and social strata, education, arts, ethnicities and cultures. All are within the task of an interfaith mission, which abides not only inter-faith but inter-human, inter-place, inter-space.

Leadership and participation is the key to implementation. Agents include religious leaders, grassroots organization leaders, and civic or community leaders. Participation and influence tend to vary. The interfaith effort is more grassroots than formalized in some ways, but certainly not without structure, power or influence. These centers are not dominated by leaders of religious organizations in the regions, but there is some representation. The definition of religious leaders is again difficult to standardize, since different religious organizations have different hierarchies, if any at all. Leaders of individual congregations are more common than those at the top of religious hierarchies. Secular society is represented in community leaders and individuals.

Besides participants, programming is also important, albeit not always successful. For example, New York had limited success with dialogue. Those in attendance would rarely come to consensus. Those who entered in agreement would leave in agreement and those at odds would remain at odds. Not everyone would attend sessions organized around dialogue. This was exacerbated by two questions that became problematical. Is everyone being invited, and will the invited all attend? Those in attendance were typically the more liberal sects of religious communities, or perhaps those wishing to proselytize. Conservative groups often would not find anything labeled "interfaith" remotely palatable. In cities with such large populations, what was the process of ascertaining that all religious groups were being represented? Finding the appropriate representative within groups compounds this issue. In the beginning, those that were

known to the organizer were invited, with the design that the circle would widen naturally. There is progress on two fronts now: Interfaith is attracting more attention, therefore more are seeking it out; and Interfaith is recognizing its role in ensuring that the community is fairly represented and consequently devoting more effort to that endeavor. This task not only acknowledges the absence of religious types, but also acknowledges the voids caused by unequal representation according to ethnicity, race, gender, age and class.

Other programs have a much higher degree of success and participation. Typical programs engage the community either through youth projects, social concerns, education or networking. Discussion and projects about community issues do not hit as many barriers. Concerns such as poverty, healthcare, AIDS, affordable housing, food insecurity or domestic violence are all community blights that spare no religious doctrine or spiritual persuasion. Furthermore, most of these doctrines instruct that it is obligatory to assist those who are less fortunate or in need. This was the common ground upon which space could be carved out for interfaith action.

This was a change from the original visions of interfaith, which initially was encapsulated by dialogue and an elusive harmony. Bringing leaders together strictly for dialogue often accomplished tangibly little, and did not get much response in terms of participation. While little success might be found with dialogue, crafting social engagement programs where leaders were invited to work on community concerns that impacted them all had significant successes. A similar pattern occurred in Philadelphia. Those involved in the creation of the center initially envisioned more dialogue - only to see that goal preempted by social issues, education, and relationship building. In San Francisco, as their members represent interfaith councils of the

region, there is more inherent dialogue among the members concerning interfaith, yet the priority is relationship building.

In New York, the focus also shifted from an exercise of dialogue. The goal was to help the religious leaders of those groups to navigate the social system of New York City. This would supply them with knowledge that they could then diffuse into their religious communities. The interfaith center was the bridge between the religious leaders and civic leaders. It occupies a position in society that it has carved for itself. In this role, it has created an interfaith space (where the "inter-" connects faith and non-faith), where the civic community and the religious community, two factions of society, can connect. Education and community building are two key strategic elements in interfaith center planning. Education lightens the load of misunderstanding, and increases awareness and mutual respect; community building offers collaboration on shared values, benefits to the shared community and relationship building. Dialogue happens in the spaces of these relationships in conjunction with productive social action, formation of bonds between groups, and even personal fulfillment.

In this manner, social space has been influenced and created by interfaith activity. The creation of space does not end there, as physical space has also been produced. This is particularly apparent in San Francisco, where the chapel is a substantial physical presence as an open and accessible interfaith place. In New York, they rent offices as is the case in Philadelphia. New York expressed little desire to have designated interfaith space, while Philadelphia discusses it frequently, but are unable to make that dream a reality, due to limited resources. Interfaith space can be seen as a design of the consciousness of the organization with an open-ended nature that allows it to be accessible to the public. In their promotion and organization of interfaith events and programs, New York and Philadelphia create transient

interfaith space that opens up upon arrival and closes upon departure, but not without their mission of interfaith concepts lingering behind. The researcher's contact with these interfaith centers suggests mainstream approval and encouragement, if not active support of their existence. The postscript to that statement is that mainstream awareness of the interfaith center is more than likely limited. Still, none of the centers have experienced any outright protest or attack. The most common form of disapproval is a refused invitation. The consequence of which weakens the efforts of the center since by its very nature it is dependent upon community support. Current programs are often more limited by funding or other resources than lack of interest, but are considered successful because they are growing, however slowly.

The case studies represent significant interfaith centers in the United States. All three are located in major U.S. cities with high immigrant populations. Though their creations, histories and current activities vary, they have the value they place on interfaith in common. Each from its own perspective, each with its own strategy and each according to its locale and resources views the existence of interfaith centers as vital to society. They each are faced with the challenge of a low profile in large populations, as well as the difficulty of measuring their influence. Yet each continues to expand its widening circle of influence, albeit slowly. This is evident by the additional programming offered by the centers. This pace of expansion corresponds with a similar expansion of interfaith organizations across the United States, as detailed in Chapter 4. The next chapter shows the results of a survey distributed to those participating in interfaith organizations.

Chapter 6: Comparing Interfaith Participants to the General Population

This chapter focuses on participants of interfaith organizations, through a survey designed and conducted for this research.

Purpose and Description of the Interfaith Center Survey

In 2003, Robert Wuthnow and the Responding to Diversity Project (sponsored by the Lilly Endowment) conducted a survey of the American public, in order to obtain data regarding attitudes about diversity and immigration, and perceptions of religious groups.

The survey, titled "Religion and Diversity Survey," was also designed to measure the prevalence of the belief that Christian values rule the country, as well as to examine how other religious groups would fit into that equation. The telephone survey was conducted from September 2002 to February 2003, and solicited 2900 responses to 212 questions. The entire survey can be found at the Association of Religion Data Archives website (www.thearda.com). Cumulative results and analyses have been published.

The "Religion and Diversity Survey" targeted the continental United States, and attempted to gain a broader understanding of the views held by the general public. Using the questions in this survey as a template and the data as a source of comparison, the researcher constructed a similar survey and distributed it among a directed segment of the population. This survey is titled "Interfaith Center Survey", and it was distributed to participants in interfaith centers or organizations. Using the Harvard Pluralism Project database to identify interfaith groups in the United States, the researcher initiated contact with each group, with an introduction to the project included, as well as an invitation and instructions for completing the survey. These groups do not represent the random general public, but individuals engaged or somehow connected or affiliated with interfaith organizations. Both surveys requested information about

the participants such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, income, location and political and religious affiliation. Both surveys included questions regarding the perceptions of different faiths and the amount of contact with other faiths (and place of contact).

The purpose of the Interfaith Center Survey was to compare the attitudes of the general public (as offered by the results in the Religion and Diversity Survey) to a specific subset of participants in interfaith organizations. Some questions were taken verbatim from the Wuthnow survey to form the basis of a comparison for this research. It does not measure to which degree the interfaith place altered the attitudes or perceptions of the individual, or whether the individual was drawn to this type of organization because of thinking and perceptions already in place. Although the survey included questions regarding the influence of the interfaith center on participants and the practices of individuals in their relationship with interfaith organizations, it was not intended to draw definitive cause and effect conclusions. The Interfaith Center Survey included general questioning of the participant's interfaith experiences to obtain general information pertinent to this project. In that regard, it is in no manner a comprehensive questionnaire. It cannot be classified as an interfaith survey, as it is not designed to measure the issues, prevalence or influence of this social movement.

As interfaith centers are themselves in the early stages of evolution, it is difficult to measure comprehensively their impact among a multitude of cultural, social and economic variables. This research, of which the survey is a component, is directed at exploring the phenomenon in its infancy within the field of geography. The survey supports this end by first offering an initial comparative analysis, as well as generating additional avenues for investigation. It offers greater quantitative detail, to illustrate a general set of attitudes and perceptions towards diversity and religious groups in the interfaith participant population, in

much the same way as Wuthnow has offered for the overall U.S. population. This also drew a contrast between the groups.

Survey Methodology

The interfaith survey consisted of 58 questions and an opportunity for comments. The survey was distributed between May 2008 and July 2008, with September 2008 as the final cutoff date for response. There was also a website (www.interfaithcentersurvey.org) set up that explained the project and contained the survey that could either be downloaded, or submitted online. The researcher reduced the original database from the Harvard Pluralism Project from 604 organizations to 512, because of insufficient contact information. These 512 organizations were contacted through email or direct mail, of which an 86 were returned because of incorrect information and 115 were returned with survey responses. This resulted in a response rate of 22.5 percent. Table 2 summarizes this effort:

Table 2

	Total Database	Total Contacts	Contact Email	Contact Direct Mail	Total Failed Contacts	Response Online	Response Direct Mail	Total Responses
Number	604	512	288	224	86	99	16	115

The survey can be divided into four sections, for the purposes of results and analysis. The first three; perceptions of religious groups, contact with religious groups, and participant data; can be compared and contrasted with the Wuthnow survey. The fourth section, interaction with the interfaith center (or organization), was the original and specialized section of the survey. The survey questions and tabulated responses can be found in Appendix A.

Survey Results and Analysis

Participant data. Participant data were collected to comprise a profile of respondents based on gender, age, income, education, race/ethnicity, country of birth, citizenship, political party and views, religious preference, neighborhood type, and state (which was then collated into regions).

The profile of the participants in the Interfaith Center Survey (I/C) did vary from the participants of the Religion and Diversity Survey (R/D). Beginning with gender, the interfaith survey had 66 percent of the respondents as female, while the R/D survey had 52 percent (Figure 19). The spread of ages indicated by respondents was also different. The R/D survey results had the respondents primarily between 25 and 54, or a total of 56 percent, and the corresponding total for I/C was 49 percent. In the I/C survey, the 45-74 age range dominated with 63 percent, compared to 38 percent for R/D. Participants in the 18-24 range were scarce in the I/C survey, with 4 percent, while the same age group totaled 16 percent in R/D. This imbalance gets reversed at the other end of the age brackets, with the I/C dominating in the 65-74 bracket, with 21 percent, and R/D only having 9 percent representation.

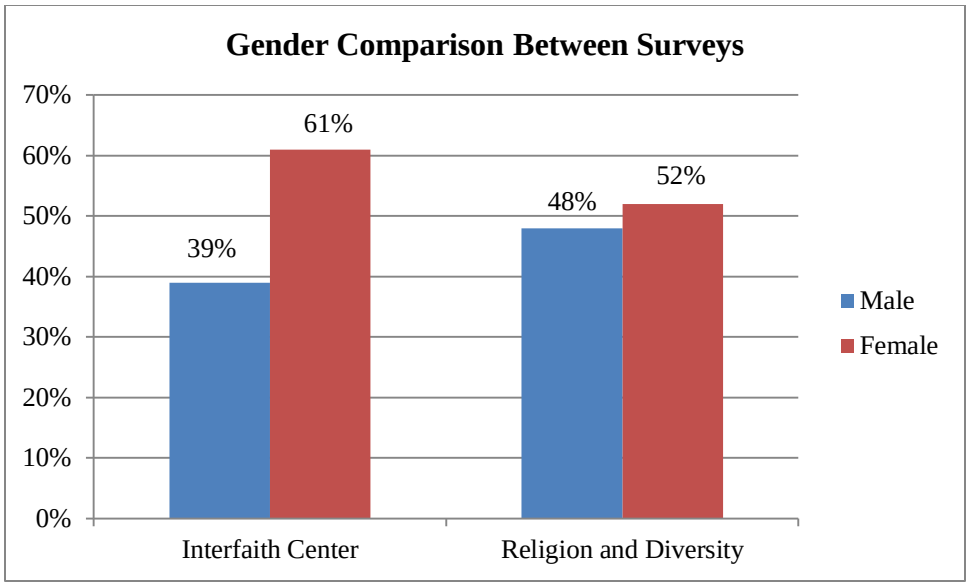


Figure 19

Source: Interfaith Center Survey and Religion and Diversity Survey

The gender bias in the I/C survey could be explained by its grassroots efforts. Traditional religious hierarchies tend to be male dominant. Grassroots efforts and non-traditional faith groups are an opportunity for women to serve more frequently in leadership positions. This may be part of the motivation to be involved beyond the interfaith ideology and the interest in the service-oriented component. Men and women in the older age range (also more dominant in the I/C), may also have more volunteer time, and this likely influenced both data categories. Young people (under 18) may not be as inclined to participate in this type of volunteer endeavor, or be initially drawn to these types of programs. If participation is motivated by a spiritual component or social cohesion, this may not yet be a "concern" for the younger age bracket. Encouraging participation of youth, as seen in the case studies, is on the agenda of many interfaith organizations.

The participants in the I/C survey have higher levels of income than those in the R/D survey. More than half (51 percent) reported having incomes of over $50,000, of which almost

half (24 percent) indicate an income of over $100,000. More than a third (35 percent) of the R/D survey reported income over $50,000. Most reported in the $35,000 to $50,000 range (39 percent). Similar differences exist in the level of education category (Figure 20). The majority of respondents in the I/C survey indicated their highest academic level as either college graduate (23 percent) or post graduate work (61 percent). Corresponding responses for the R/D survey were 15 percent and 7 percent respectively, with the majority indicating high school graduate (32 percent) or some college (33 percent). It can also be suggested that higher levels of education may contribute to an increased desire to explore different faith traditions represented in a community, as well as the resources to contribute both time and funds to an interfaith organization, in addition to their own congregation.

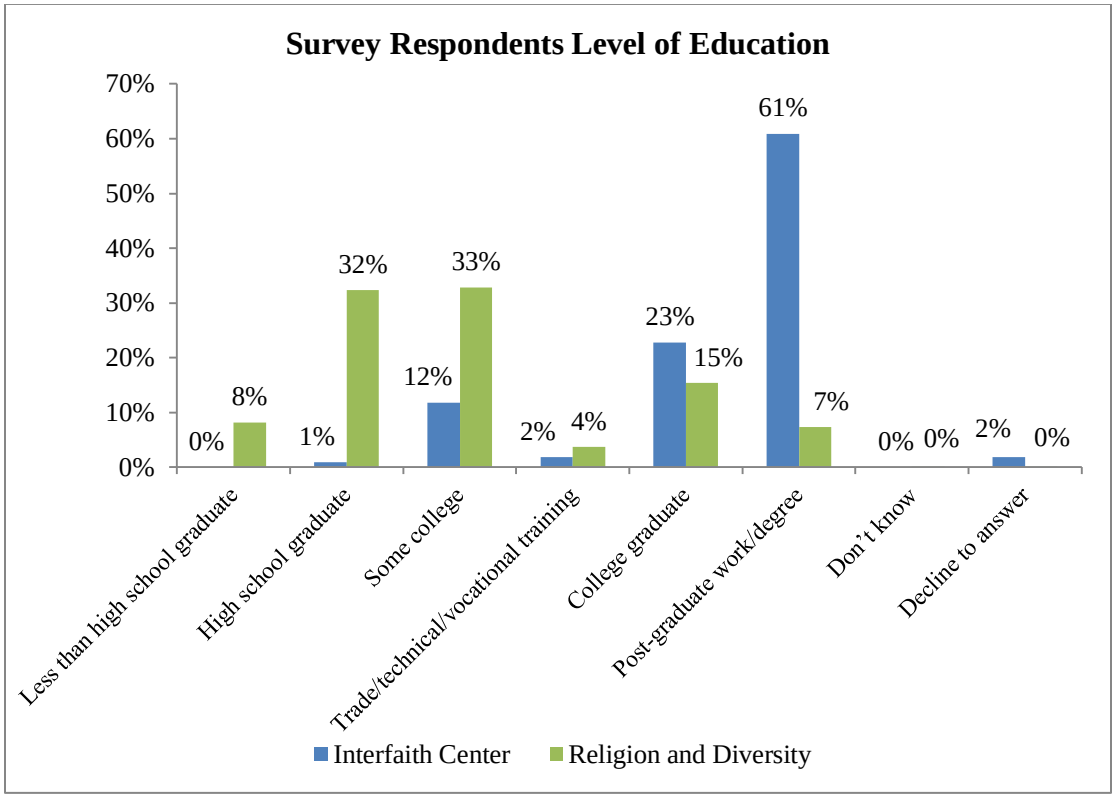


Figure 20

Source: Interfaith Center Survey and Religion and Diversity Survey

Respondents were asked to provide their state and this was tallied by region – Midwest, Northeast, South and West (Figure 21). Percentages were about the same for the Midwest and West. The I/C survey had more responses from the Northeast, with 30 percent, and the R/D had the most responses from the South (38 percent). These results corresponded to the number of interfaith organizations in the Northeast and the percentage of the U.S. population in the South (Figure 2).

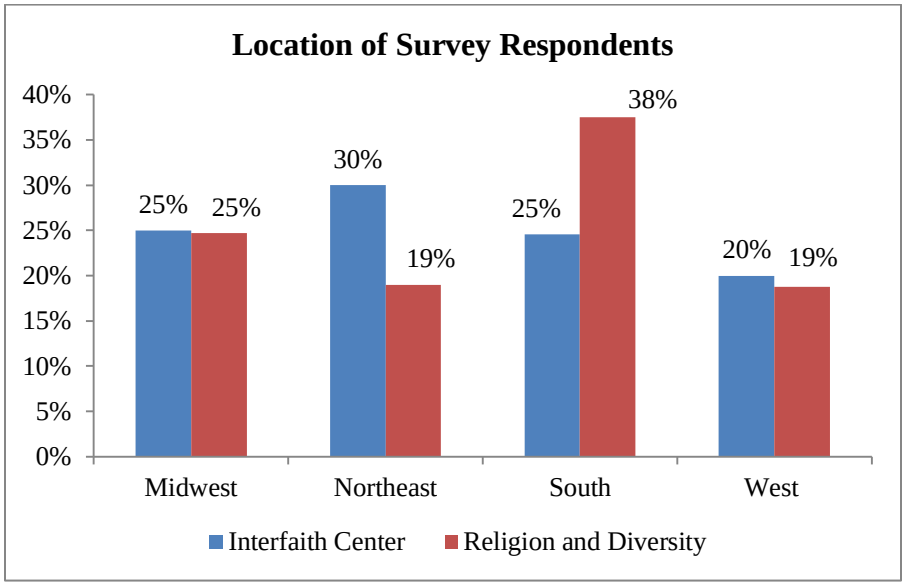


Figure 21

Source: Interfaith Center Survey and Religion and Diversity Survey

Participants were also asked to classify their neighborhood as urban, suburban or rural (Figure 22). The I/C survey reported 38 percent and 39 percent in urban and suburban areas respectively. This differed from the R/D reporting, which dominated with responses for small or rural areas with 44 percent and 35 percent for suburban and only 19 percent in urban areas. This is not unexpected, as the typical setting of an interfaith organization is in areas of high population density and diversity. It is noteworthy that there was not an overwhelming majority

of responses in urban areas. The organizations listed in the Harvard Pluralism Project produced the results in Figure 3 when examined for population density of their location.

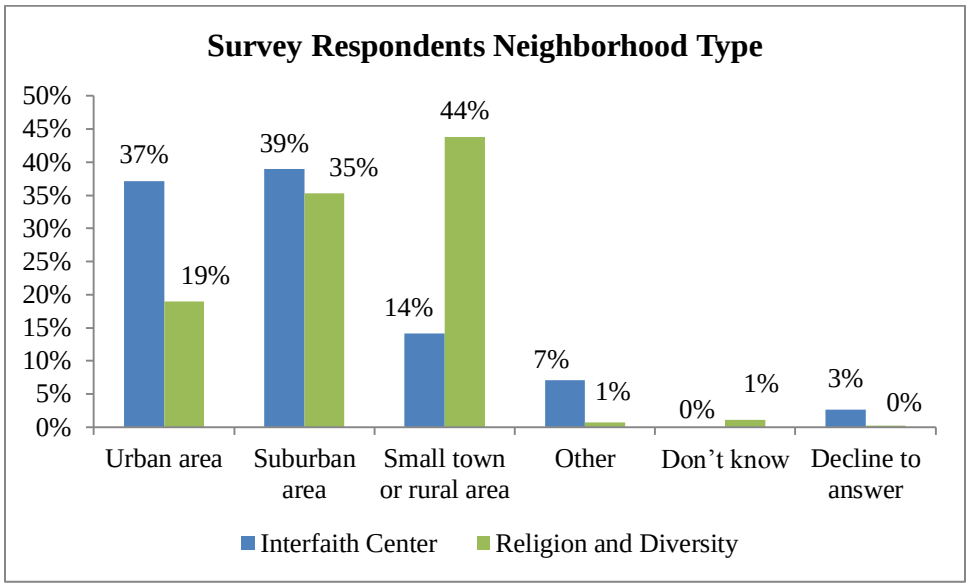


Figure 22

Source: Interfaith Center Survey and Religion and Diversity Survey

Most of the organizations listed in the Harvard Pluralism Project are located in population centers of over 50,000. Population was calculated for the determinable location for each organization, by using the population information provided by the U.S. census (Figure 3).

In the R/D survey, 96 percent responded yes to being citizens, with 90 percent being born in the U.S. In the I/C, 84 percent responded as being citizens, with 74 percent being born in the U.S. Racially, R/D respondents primarily fell into one of three categories (Figure 22), white (75 percent), African American (12 percent) and Hispanic (11 percent). The I/C had more respondents in the white category, with 82 percent and with the next ranked category being "Don't know" with 7 percent. Asian, African American and Hispanic results were all just under 3 percent. The higher African American percentage in the R/D survey may be the result of a

higher number of responses in the R/D from the South and a higher percentage of African Americans living in the South (www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-5.pdf).

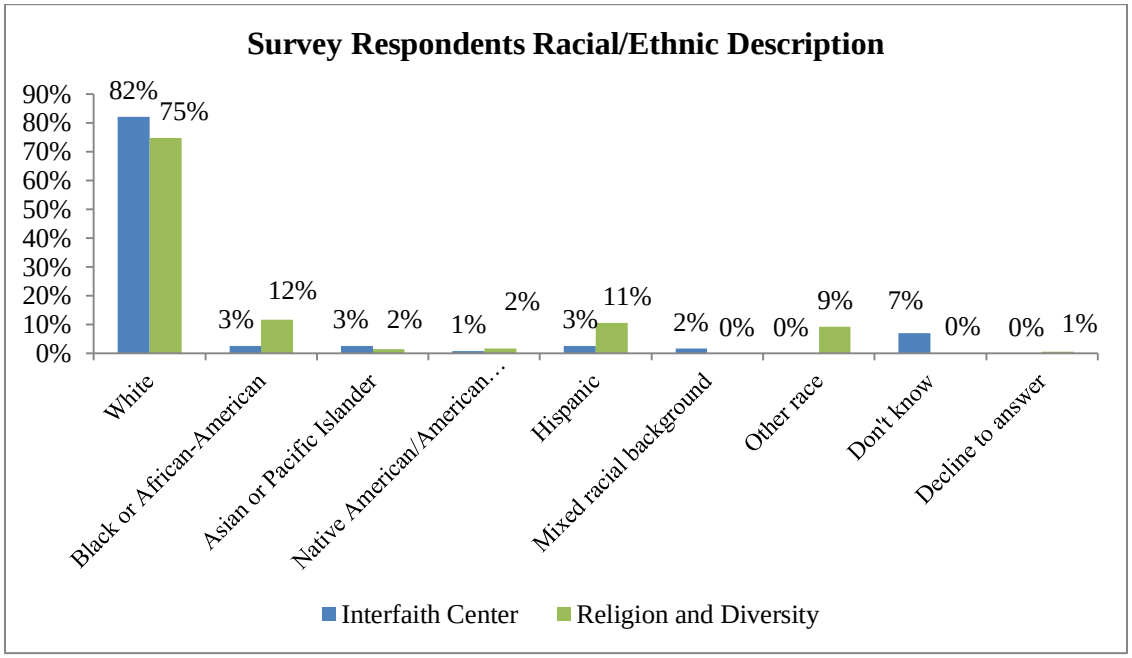


Figure 23

Source: Interfaith Center Survey and Religion and Diversity Survey

The differences in participant data between the surveys in this section are more than likely related to the diversity of traditions and cultures that take part in interfaith activities or are present in a particular region. Whites (or majority religions) may take part in an attempt to understand the changing landscape around them, while immigrants (or the minority religions) take part to better fit into the landscape. Immigrants with non-traditional faiths (for the U.S.) may be seeking points of interaction and relations, in order to generate acceptance and understanding. This would lead to higher percentages of foreign born and non-citizens. These data are better understood when taken in the context of the responses for the religious preference question, as it indicated a broader diversity.

Why would the I/C have more "white" citizens? There may be two separate influences. The higher percentage of white representation may be due to the fact that the region of the country most dominated by interfaith organization also has a predominantly white population (www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-4.pdf). "White" may also have been a default answer to those immigrants not satisfied with the categories offered in the question, and chose white as a default answer. Arabs, for example, are generally categorized as white. The high percentage of white would also influence the education and income survey questions, as white typically have higher levels of both than other groups in the population.

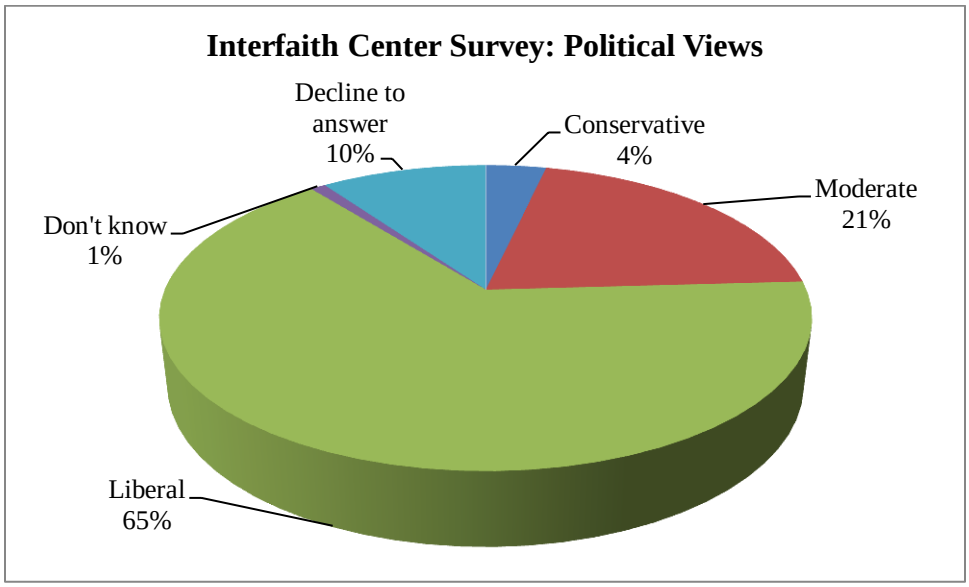


Figure 24

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

The I/C survey respondents were also asked to describe their political party and views. 65 percent reported having liberal political views (Figure 24), with 48 percent considering themselves Democrats (Figure 25). Only 2 percent considered themselves Republicans. Liberal political views are not a surprising response from participants in interfaith activities, as interfaith itself is often considered a liberal movement or philosophy. There was no corresponding

question on the R/D survey, although the respondents were asked who they voted for in the Presidential election, where 49 percent responded Bush (Republican) and 35 percent responded Gore (Democrat).

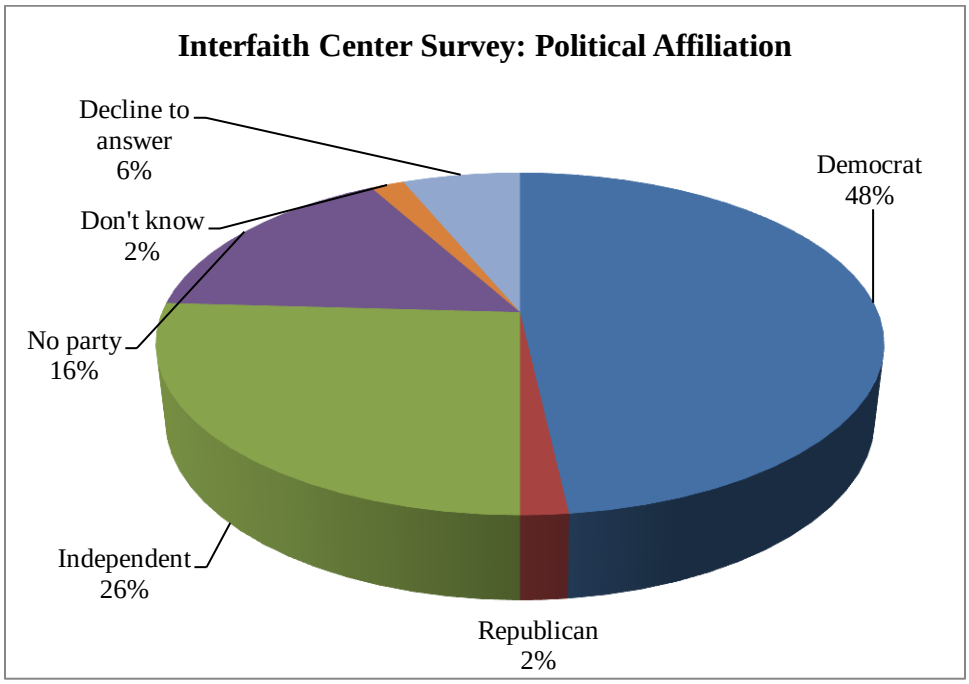


Figure 25

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

As expected, the results from the I/C survey indicated more representation from non-Christian groups than the R/D survey (Figure 26 and 27). Major groups from the R/D survey were Protestants (43 percent) and Catholics (24 percent). Agnostics/atheists or those with no preference (16 percent) represented a large share of those in the R/D survey, yet accounted for under 2 percent in the I/C survey. The largest Protestant groups in the R/D survey were Baptists, Lutheran and Methodist with 34 percent, 10 percent and 10 percent respectively. The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life in 2008, reported the following religious affiliations: 51.3% Protestant, 24.9% Catholic, 1.7% Jewish, .7% Buddhist, .4% Hindu and 16.1% Unaffiliated (religions.pewforum.org/reports#).

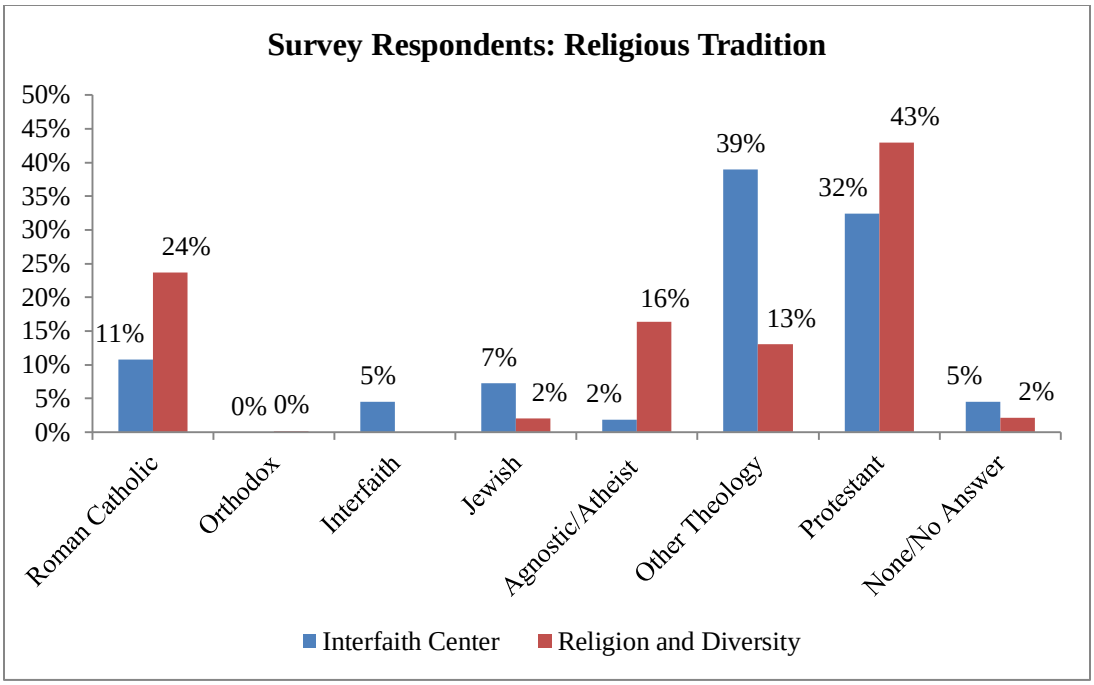


Figure 26

Source: Interfaith Center Survey and Religion and Diversity Survey

Protestant sects represented 32 percent of the respondents in the I/C survey, while Muslims (12 percent) and Catholics (11 percent) were the most represented groups in the I/C survey, although not with a dominant percentage of the total. They were followed closely by Sikh (8 percent) and Jewish (7 percent). Muslim represented only .5 percent of the total of the R/D group, Sikh was not represented at all and Jewish respondents 1.99 percent. Hindu (3.6 percent in I/C), Unitarian (4.5 percent), Buddhist (3.6 percent) and interfaith (4.5 percent) were either not represented, or under 1 percent in the R/D survey. There were more varieties of Protestant sects represented in the R/D survey.

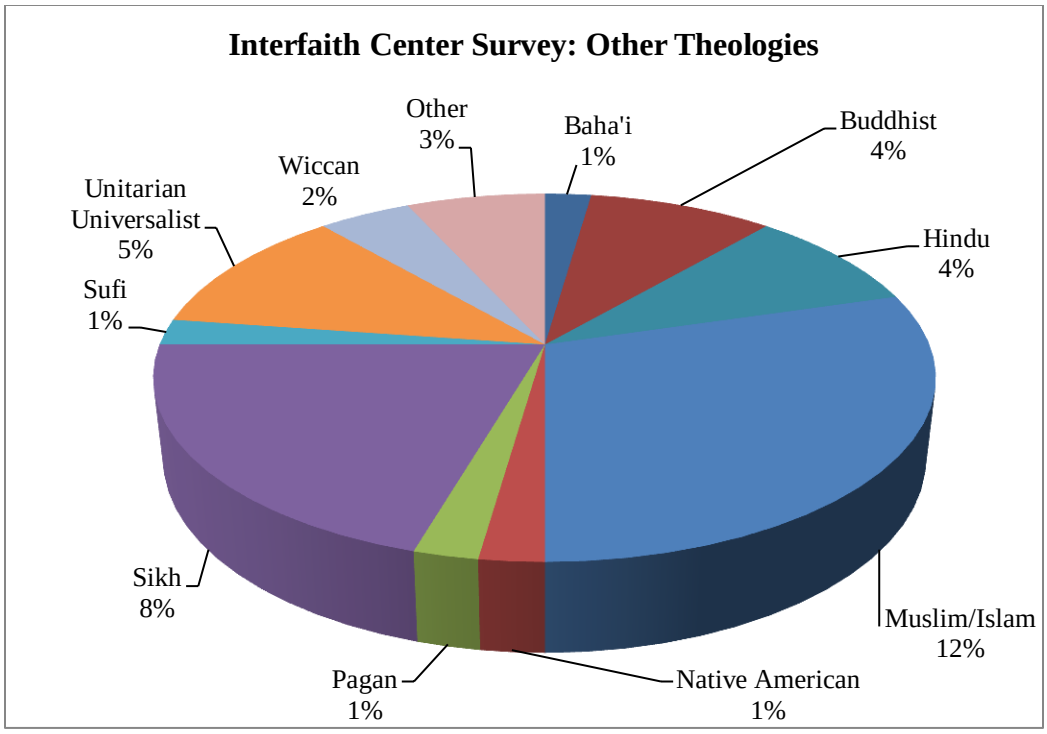


Figure 27

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

Non-Judeo-Christian religions comprise a smaller portion of the total population, particularly in the areas where the R/D received most of its responses – the South and rural communities (religions.pewforum.org/comparisons#). In interfaith organizations, these groups are instrumental as both founders and participants, perhaps motivated by being the numerical minority, to pursue such goals as understanding, acceptance and tolerance in society.

In the I/C survey, a small number answered that their religious preference is "Interfaith", which does not have any official designation as a tradition. This is further explored in the case studies, where adherence to a particular faith and strong ties to one's own faith community was a commitment that seemed to be foundational to the subsequent commitment to interfaith work. The interfaith religious preference can best be defined at this junction as an appreciation of multiple faiths, where the participant takes part in a community of worship that incorporates the

rituals and practices of many traditions. The question on the survey that queries about interfaith worship as one's religious practice is designed to account for this segment.

The nature of interfaith activities is that a greater variety of groups and demographics will be represented than in other community groups. It is a concern of interfaith organizations that they are not varied enough, because there are segments of the national, regional or local populations not represented. This was pursued in the case studies. Some organizations classify themselves as interfaith if they are comprised only of different Christian groups.

Interfaith data. These survey questions were designed around a number of objectives. It was not meant to be an in-depth examination of the interfaith movement. The purpose was to provide supplemental information about interfaith that was relevant to this research project, such as potential influence and means of diffusing the interfaith awareness in the community. Interpretation of these fairly general questions and responses has been influenced by the researcher's observations in interfaith organizations and interaction with participants engaged in interfaith activities.

The respondents were asked if interfaith activities had an important influence on their views of religion or spirituality. An overwhelming majority (87 percent) responded affirmatively. While there was no mechanism in the survey to qualify that response and determine the nature of the influence, it is significant that the organization is having an impact, even on those who may be predisposed toward interfaith activities. Conceivably, the influence will be different if the recipient is a whole-hearted supporter or a casual observer. There was no follow-up to the degree of influence or what that influence may have entailed. The case studies were designed to extrapolate a more qualitative sense of how and in what areas these interfaith organizations are making an impact. In the case studies, the interfaith centers proposed that

their influence is through education (experiential and academic) and relationships, as both help to reduce fear, spread understanding and promote acceptance beyond mere tolerance. Less fear and greater understanding of the people represented in a community (local and global) is a positive force in social cohesion.

Respondents were asked how often they attended activities, events, or programs at an interfaith center or organization (Figure 28). More than 20% attended more than once aweek with most (40%) attending a few times a year. Some (8%) attended almost every week with 10% attending each week. A significant percentage (17%) participated once or twice a month.

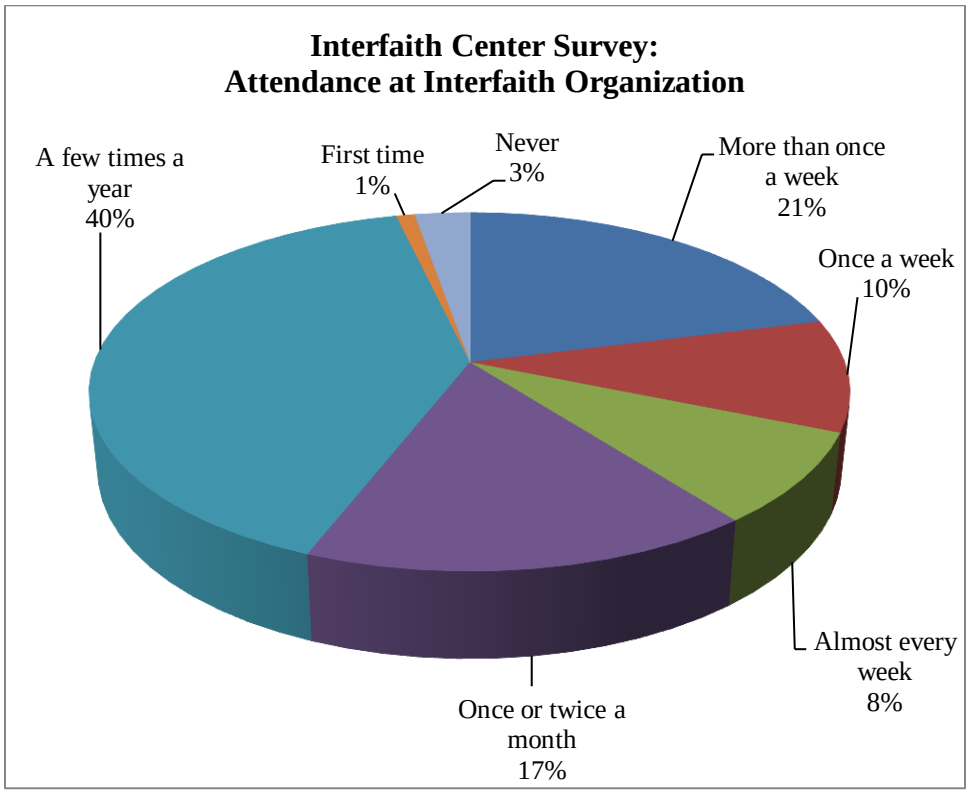


Figure 28

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

Another question asked, was whether respondents were involved in other interfaith activities. How far does the participant extend their level of engagement with the interfaith movement? Are there connections between other places or organizations? This can be an indication of networking within the interfaith community and can offer an indication of potential growth or diffusion of interfaith organizations. Respondents taking part in other interfaith activities throughout the year showed a total of 61 percent, and 21 percent were active almost every week or more than once of week. A few did decline to answer this question or didn't know. About 5 percent indicated that none were available.

Many interfaith center participants (based on the case studies and a review of the missions and activities of the Harvard pluralism projects organizations) indicated that education – adult, youth, experiential, academic - is of vital importance. Since it is not a traditional classroom-based learning environment, it is difficult even for the center to gauge their effectiveness. This survey asked a general question about knowledge and understanding of religions, traditions, and practice, and found that 82 percent of the respondents indicated an increase through an interfaith organization (Figure 29).

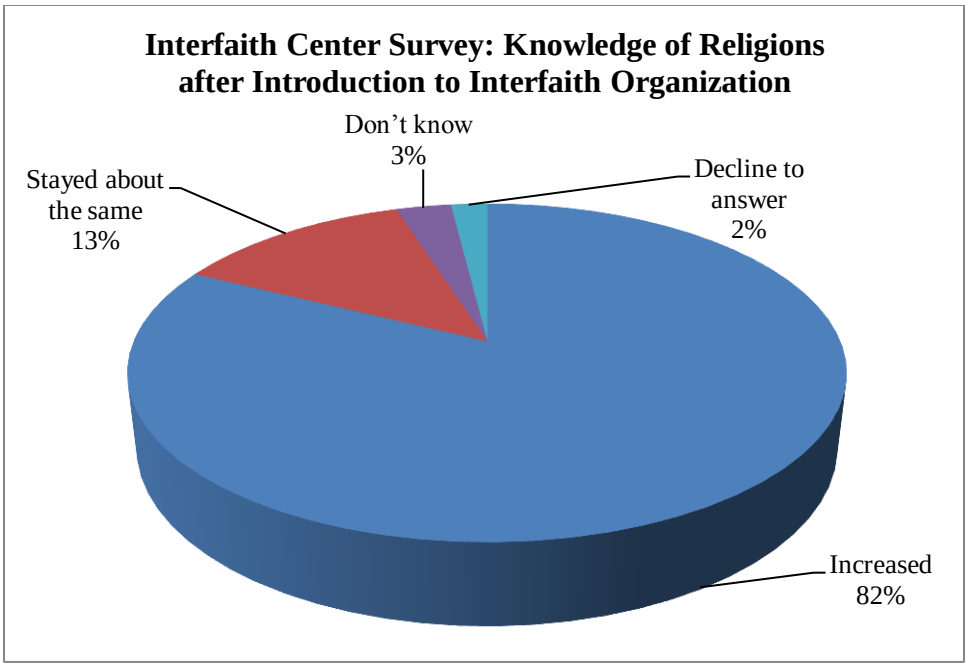


Figure 29

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

Serving in an educational capacity is frequently an aim of these organizations, and it is a void they believe they are filling or attempting to fill in society. Our daily routine may have us in superficial contact with others, in our work place, market places, online exchanges, and news stories, but they are not truly familiar to us. The centers provide resources, not only where "book" information can be obtained, but a place where the experiential is key and rooted in human presence and interaction. An indication of achieving their missions and perhaps even an unwritten ethos of the movement that has seeded these organizations is to introduce, educate and broaden exposure to different religions and people within a cultural context. Education creates familiarity and understanding. The center is a setting of safety in places of diversity where unfamiliarity and fear may abound. As a corollary, the educational and experiential can be shared with others thereby increasing the center's circle of influence.

Recognized within this research is that interfaith space in being created by interfaith interaction, and this question addresses one particular type of activity and consequent space in worship or interfaith services. Fifty-five percent of the participants attend interfaith worship or services a few times a year. This is consistent with recognized, public types of interfaith events, such as Thanksgiving services and celebrations around Martin Luther King's Day. Both those events are focused on themes that transcend religious traditions and secular interests – issues of food security, children, and anti-poverty campaigns. The question was asked to account for those who utilize interfaith as their religious practice. Those attending more than one interfaith activity, or who attend interfaith activities almost every week, may fall within this category and that represented almost 18 percent of respondents. A response of "once or twice a month" likely indicated strong supporters of interfaith, who attended multiple events in their community. Only a small percentage (2.65 percent) indicated that no interfaith services were available. A Thanksgiving interfaith celebration would be a common and well-publicized event within the community's houses of worship, as well as the community at large, and is frequently co-sponsored by nonprofit organizations. Such an event can offer first contact with interfaith and interfaith organizations. These interfaith public events bring together different segments of the community that would typically have limited contact.

Forty eight percent indicated that they would attend interfaith services a few times a year it if were available, and 24 percent indicated that they would go at least once a week if it were available. Most of the balance (almost 17 percent) attended once or twice a month, giving fairly consistent support to the center. This can be used as another indicator of growth potential for interfaith.

The respondents were also asked if they planned to continue to attend interfaith events. This question addressed the favorability of the first impression and the desire to return. For the center, this could indicate potential for growth and continued support through word-of-mouth. The survey response indicated fairly positive feedback to a first time encounter, with 22 percent responding that they will be returning at least once per week, and an additional 18.5 percent returning almost every week. Others responded that they would return every few months (15%) or a few times a year (19%). No one responded that they would not return, although 19% said they did not know. Despite the variations of interfaith – the type of mission, structure, and activity – the survey indicated an appeal to those who attended.

Issues of distance of travel indicated availability of local interfaith worship, as well as motivation to attend. This is another question that addresses the subset of interfaith worship. It opens up the potential for local satellites to be formed by those traveling furthest, if support can be garnered in their more immediate area. It may indicate that if people are traveling far, that the support for the organization is scattered and it needs to maintain a wide radius of support to survive. The largest group, 40.59 percent, traveled more than 10 miles to attend services. Almost a quarter (22.77%) traveled 1- 5 miles, and 28.71 percent traveled 5-10 miles. Only about 4% traveled under a mile, and balance did not know how far they traveled.

More than half of the respondents indicated that the interfaith center was influential in their decision to attend a service of a different religious tradition than their own. This includes 21 percent who answered “very influential”, and 39 percent who answered “somewhat influential”. Relationship building is a stated goal of the three primary centers studied, and is present in the mission statements of a significant number of the interfaith organizations in the database this research assembled. Relationship building can remove misunderstanding or fear

regarding the traditions of others, and it invites interaction, exchange and perhaps curiosity or exploration. While it is not typically a stated aim to have participants attend a variety of religious services, the center may influence the decision process by increasing awareness of other faith traditions.

A third of the respondents indicated that the interfaith center was not influential in their decision to attend the religious service of a faith other than their own, meaning that they would have attended, regardless of their participation in an interfaith organization. This is not contradictory to the previous statement of the interfaith center's influence. It reflects on previous the acknowledgement that those participating in the interfaith center have a predilection for those activities, and would be equally willing to attend the faith services of others.

One of the goals of this section of the survey was to give an indication of contagious diffusion that may be occurring in the population through those who have had contact with an interfaith center. This can give further evidence of the potential for interfaith centers to spread and grow their existing base. Was participating in an interfaith activity something that the participant shrouded in secrecy, or was it an open topic for conversation to friends and family? The idea of engaging with other faiths is not a universally accepted idea, and the degree of acceptance by religious organizations varies as it does with individuals. The individual can be at odds with other members of his or her faith group in either embracing or rejecting interfaith activities.

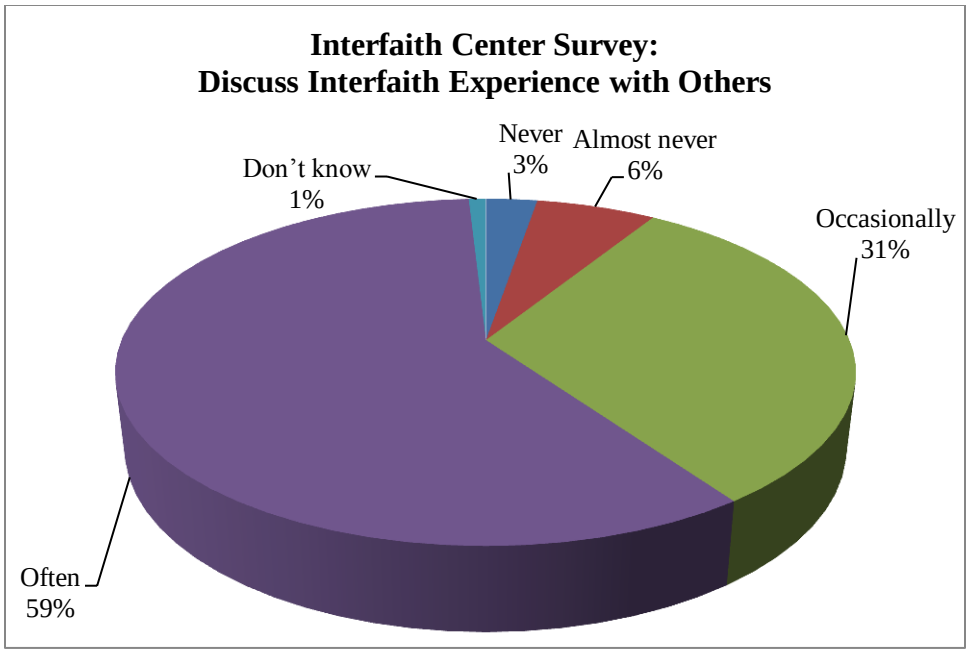


Figure 30

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

The responses in this survey indicated a high degree of contact, with almost 59 percent discussing their experience often, and 31 percent occasionally (Figure 30). More significantly, 35 percent reported having brought more than ten contacts to interfaith events and activities (this could be by bringing members of their congregation to attend an interfaith public service or interfaith social agenda activity). Significantly, 37 percent of respondents reported that their contacts went on to participate in interfaith activities themselves. The case studies revealed the importance of word-of-mouth advertising, and although each center engages in a limited degree of self-promotion, it appears "satisfied customers" are a most valuable marketing tool. Of those that discussed their participation, almost 60 percent discussed it with more than 10 individuals; 13 percent with 5-10 individuals, and 16 percent with 1-5 individuals. All these responses indicated that a majority of interfaith participants spread word of the interfaith center to others.

Of course, there is no way of determining whether they are sharing experiences with those already involved in the center, just not at a particular event, and whether those involved tend to communicate regularly.

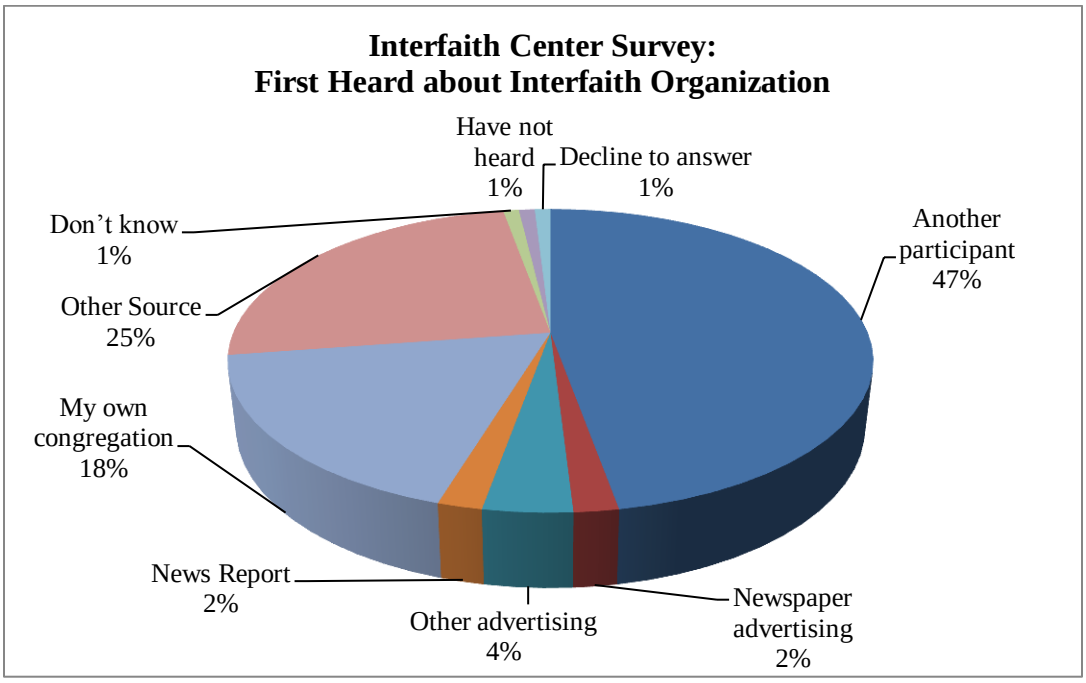


Figure 31

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

Almost half, or 47 percent of respondents, heard of the interfaith center from a participant, again emphasizing the value of word-of-mouth in the potential growth of this phenomenon (Figure 31). It is not surprising that traditional advertising and marketing accounted for a very small percentage of contact initiation. Those first hearing of interfaith through their own congregation were the result of announcements promoting interfaith events (such a Thanksgiving services), or interfaith social actions (hunger, homelessness etc…). Almost twenty-five percent have indicated that they heard of the center through some other

avenue. Other sources could include religious leaders (differentiated in participant's minds from the congregation), other nonprofit or volunteer organizations (networking for social action).

Contact with other faiths. Another section of the survey queries respondents on the places where they have had contact with other faiths. In the R/D survey, there was a predecessor question regarding the amount of contact. Those answering that they had any type of contact with the group were then asked the follow up question. There was also no question regarding contact with Christians, which was added in the I/C survey. In the I/C survey, an additional response choice was added to allow for contact at an interfaith organization.

In the R/D survey, the number of respondents reporting having no contact with Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus (32.4 percent, 43.9 percent and 40.8 percent respectively) were high, compared to those in the I/C survey (1.79 percent, 5.71 percent, and 8.41 percent respectively). In the I/C survey, the primary source of contact was an interfaith center or organization for 42.86 percent for those having contact with Muslims, 53.33 percent for those having contact with Buddhists, and 43.93 percent for those having contact with Hindus. The second most common response for those groups was contact through work, or "other." "Work and shopping" or "personal business" were the most common responses on the R/D survey for those three groups. Neighborhood contact was higher in the R/D survey, and the "other" category much higher in the I/C responses.

Those reporting no contact with Jews and Christian were significantly lower, 12.9 percent and 7.8 percent respectively. For contacts with Jews, the results were fairly evenly disbursed among the center, "other" and "work", with "work" edging out the other two with 28.04 percent. In the R/D survey, the most common responses were "work" (34.9 percent) and "shopping/personal business" (38 percent). There was no question in the R/D survey regarding

contact with Christians. In the I/C survey, most contact was through neighborhood (29.73 percent) and "other" (28.83 percent), with "work" as the third choice.

Perceptions of other faiths. The R/D survey did not address this set of questions to the Christian or Jewish faiths, but both were added to the I/C survey. The questions (neither survey) also did not allow for gradients of responses such as "Most of the time" or "On certain issues." The survey asks the participants whether they find the religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam or Judaism to be appealing, fanatical, strange, tolerant or violent.

Table 3

Percentage of "Yes" Responses to Survey Question "Do you think this word applies to"

	Violent		**Fanatical**		**Strange**	
	I/C	R/D	I/C	R/D	I/C	R/D
Buddhism	2%	12%	0%	23%	7%	42%
Hinduism	0%	16%	1%	25%	14%	43%
Islam	5%	40%	4%	47%	3%	44%
Christianity	12%	N/A	16%	N/A	7%	N/A
Judaism	8%	N/A	10%	N/A	10%	N/A

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

Respondents in the I/C did not find any of the represented religions (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism) as "strange", as did those in the R/D survey. The Christian and Jewish faiths (not evaluated in the R/D) were considered "strange" by under 10% of the responses. In the R/D survey, between 40%-45% of the respondents found Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism religions. The spread in the I/C survey was more broad, as about 3% found the Muslim religion strange; 14% found the Hindu religion strange; and 7% found the Buddhist religion strange. Generally, there were more "Don't Know" responses in the R/D survey.

In the I/C survey, the groups thought most fanatical was the Christian religion with 16% indicating "yes", and the Jewish religion with 10%. Not one respondent classified Buddhism as fanatical in the I/C survey, yet in the R/D, 23% did. The R/D survey also has much higher numbers in classifying the Muslim (47%) and Hindu (25%) traditions as fanatical.

In the I/C survey, both the Christian (12%) and Jewish (8%) faiths received a higher percentage of "yes" responses to the questions regarding violence than the other three faiths (all under 5%). Overall, the I/C survey produced a much lower "yes" response than the R/D survey. In the R/D survey, 12% thought Buddhism was a violent religion, 16% thought Hinduism was, and 40% thought the Muslim religion was violent (compared to 5% in the I/C survey). In the I/C survey, 3%-4% declined to answer this question for the Christian, Jewish and Muslim religions.

Table 4

Percentage of "Yes" Responses to Survey Question "Do you think this word applies to"

	Appealing		**Tolerant**	
	I/C	R/D	I/C	R/D
Buddhism	66%	26%	89%	56%
Hinduism	41%	19%	73%	45%
Islam	38%	16%	62%	32%
Christianity	54%	N/A	51%	N/A
Judaism	47%	N/A	68%	N/A

Source: Interfaith Center Survey

In answer to the question regarding tolerance, the I/C results found the Christian faith least tolerant of the group (38%), and the Buddhists most tolerant. Islam followed with 15% answering not tolerant. In the R/D survey, 53% answered that Islam was not tolerant, followed by Hindu (28%) and Buddhist (21%). A very small percentage of the I/C respondents indicated Hinduism (5%) and Buddhism (3%) were not tolerant.

In the I/C survey, most of the responses were almost evenly split with regard to finding the religion appealing most to respondents, with the exception of Buddhism, 66% of the I/C respondents found that religion appealing. The R/D survey again told of different perceptions, with a much lower percentage finding Islam (16%), Hinduism (19%) and Buddhism appealing, although again Buddhism was a favorite with a high of 26% finding the religion appealing. There were relatively high percentages of "Don't know" responses to this question for both surveys.

The section of the survey concerned with perceptions of other faiths generated the most commentary from the participants. These questions were also present in the R/D, but that survey did not have a spot for commentary. It is therefore unknown whether there was a similar reaction in both surveys. Besides the commentary, this section is the most clear indication of the disparate perceptions of faith traditions between the I/C and R/D survey, and by extension, participants in interfaith organizations and the general public.

The intention of the survey question "Do you think this word applies too..?" was to gauge the initial reaction of the individual toward the specified religion. The researcher's interpretation of the question, when first reading the R/D survey, was that it was structured as a word association exercise. If someone said "Christian," would the respondents think "fanatical;" if someone said "Muslim," would the respondents think "strange"? It was meant to solicit a perception of a tradition, not of an individual practicing that religion. This perception, in fact, can be built on incorrect or misleading information or no information at all. It can represent either a favorable or unfavorable prejudice.

A number of respondents found great difficulty with these questions. The comments (Appendix B) indicated thinking beyond an initial reaction to the survey question. There was a closer examination of the history of violence, for example, in all faiths.

Summarizing the Survey

The open-ended design of the survey and some of the questions were both a strength and weakness. It did offer an overview of information about the interfaith community, and this can be compared to data collected from the general population in the Wuthnow study. Many of the interfaith questions call for follow up to qualify the responses. The nature and purpose of this survey made that impractical. In this research project, the case studies have been designed to qualify and theorize at a greater depth.

The Interfaith Center Survey supports the assumption that participants in interfaith events possess a different perception of faith traditions (other than their own) than the general U.S population. There is less of a negative attitude towards others groups, and the comments would indicate a more tolerant representation towards all traditions. Not measured by the survey is the degree the center or organization has influenced or molded those perceptions.

The demographics of the group differed from the Wuthnow's study – with the latter more closely aligned to the general population, as reported by the U.S. Census. From the data, the researcher has constructed a description of a likely participant in an interfaith organization:

> I am a liberal, democratic female U.S. citizen in my 50's who has a college degree, earns over $50,000 and lives in the urbanized Northeast. I heard about interfaith from a participant and now I participate a few times a year. It has influenced my spirituality and my knowledge of other religions and I do share my interfaith experiences with others. I do not think Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Hindus are fanatical, violent or close-minded although I do know such attitudes exist in all faiths. I believe those faiths are generally tolerant and find

them mildly appealing. I have contact with those of other faiths primarily at the interfaith center.

It can be argued that openness to other faith traditions is a prerequisite even to partake in an interfaith event, and if one was objected to the existence of a group in their neighborhood they would more than likely not attend. Resistance to interfaith is perhaps best measured by who does not attend or partake. Participants will travel a distance to the center if necessary, come frequently and then tell others of their experience. But to what extent does the center accommodate a curiosity seeker or an undecided individual or someone who is apathetic or disinterested, and succeed in engaging them? How well does the center conduct programs that provide interaction between groups with an outcome promoting a healthy society, mutual acceptance and understanding? In carving an interfaith space on our diverse landscape, what can an interfaith center strive to achieve and what can it truly accomplish? The survey does not answer this depth of inquiry; it does provide, however, a first look at those who are participating in the spaces and places that are being formed.

Chapter 7: Construction and Consequence of the Interfaith Center

This research was designed to examine the construction and consequence of interfaith centers in the United States. There were three principal areas of study: (I) Formation, development and distribution within the local, national and global context; (II) Role, including types of focus and participants and areas of potential influence; (III) Production of interfaith space. Qualitative and quantitative data were utilized in a mixed methodology approach: the qualitative data consisted of case studies, and the quantitative data included an interfaith participant survey, a database of interfaith organizations and a series of maps depicting the growth of interfaith organizations.

The research expectation that the creation of interfaith centers or organizations was motivated by both the need to adapt, interact and understand religious pluralism through intentional and constructive engagement was supported by the project's findings. Interfaith space - physical and social – was constructed as a consequence of this intention. The center resulted in an intersection of layers of society, religious and civic, through proactive strategies in the midst of religious and cultural diversity. Through its strategies and programming, the center demonstrated the intention to encourage social change and foster social cohesion. This can be summarized as follows:

The construction of the Interfaith Center is based on:

I. Intentional and constructive response to religious pluralism

II. Collaborative action point for social issues

The consequence of the Interfaith Center is

III. Production of new space

IV. Mechanism for social cohesion

V. Interfaith space as an agent for social change

VI. Evolving component on the human landscape

The study demonstrated that interfaith organizations have been gradually growing in number, with most located in large population clusters in the United States. The organizations operate with a variety of missions and strategies. The existence of these forms has produced not only interfaith physical place, but also social and sacred space. Ideally, the typical participant is expected to derive an elevated sense of acceptance and understanding of the diversity in the local and global community versus a philosophy of merely tolerating. The impact of the expansion of the center is mitigated by the tendency of the interfaith movement to draw like-minded participants, although pluralism has many components that can be discovered even for those predisposed to interfaith ideals. The primary opposition to the center manifests in rejecting an invitation to participate. The goals of the interfaith centers - social cohesion, relationship building, reduction of fear and misunderstanding, interaction between civic and religious society, social justice, tend to lose potency when fewer members of society are engaged. The greatest success in involving all segments of a community will entail creating projects that address specific issues related to social justice, and politics that recognize no boundaries in a community.

The interfaith center attempts to position itself simultaneously in multiple layers of society, with intersecting spheres of influence. Its strength lies in attracting participation across lines of ethnicity, race, wealth, occupation, social status and religion, whether clergy or lay. Its weakness lies in attracting not only small numbers, but more liberal groups or liberal members of groups, consequently more conservative elements of the population are not found. Occasionally, there is conservative participation on certain social issues, but generally such groups appear reluctant to engage in “interfaith” due to a preconception that it represents a new church doctrine

or a liberal social agenda rather than a universal social movement. The success of interfaith strategies that are aimed at widening the base of support will perhaps determine if the interfaith movement will be able to have a significant impact.

Interfaith is built on relationships between groups within society. By engaging different religions, faiths, belief systems or philosophies, we encounter different human groups - ethnicities, races, economics, social, politics, urban or rural neighborhoods, gender or age. Religion, to use the broad term, is part of the strategy and the fuel. These interfaith centers rise from both religious sectors and secular sectors of the society. By its very nature, it is a tool to maintain, enhance or obtain social cohesion. Both the bounty and challenge in a democracy is the cohesion of a diverse and mobile population. A shadow is cast on cohesion with disparity, segregation and unfamiliarity, with tension and conflict as the result. The center provides a place to overcome the unfamiliar through education and experiential contact. The "unfamiliar" join forces to address disparity, crossing boundaries of separation. Relationships based on common social agendas are the outcome.

This center is a mechanism, an intentional response to create a society that envisions itself as a peaceful whole, though it represents diverse pieces. It is not an emotional, quickly assembled, quickly forgotten response, but a plan of longevity and insight for enacting change while preserving valued traditions. It is not designed for a society pushed and pulled by random forces alone, but one that is the intellectual gearbox of its own force directing it toward common desired goals that benefit the greater whole. With a philosophy of trust and understanding - not fear and suspicion - the interfaith center specifically approaches the aggregate of society; not just the religion component, religious adherents or the religious institutions. It focuses not only at the macro level - the relationships between faiths for example – but at the micro level – the

relationships between the people that comprise those faiths. This is of paramount importance if one wishes to realize change or positively influence the community. Relationship-building is part of the strategy, the programming and the broad missions, including community relationships. The more diverse the community, the more diverse the relationships will be. The experiential becomes important in crossing religious and cultural boundaries to form relationships. It is beyond the academic exercise of learning about other faiths. Relationships are a goal of these centers and they are instigated, cultivated and solidified on the literal physical ground, not just on an intellectual or spiritual plane.

Interfaith as a social movement has been described as youthful and modest. It is, paradoxically, all about religion and not about religion at all. It is about building, sustaining and prospering within a community, not creating a religion or a religiously or culturally homogenous world. A center is a planned tool for social cohesion with a significant shortcoming, in that not everyone wants to partake. The basis for this reluctance is core ideological differences - the more conservative of the groups view the others (including the more liberal sects of their own faith) as erroneous in their thinking and their beliefs, and consequently their actions. This attitude presents an inherent barrier before contact is even made. Some groups cannot resist the opportunity to proselytize; others refuse to show up for or acknowledge interfaith activities. It is not typically the case that a protest action will be undertaken to undermine interfaith activities. The common route is just nonparticipation. The idea that everyone is or needs to be represented becomes quite complex, but of paramount importance, if social cohesion using the power of religion is a goal. It is idealistic to believe all invited will attend, although it is important that no one believe they are being left out intentionally or overlooked. Building relationships is a slow process of building trust and respect. Long term goals include inclusiveness and the initiation of

programming that cannot be bypassed by those who operate with genuine concern for the community. Space is made for all, even those not in attendance. Accounting for the variants of faith within the area includes careful inspection of the population and a strident effort to project an interfaith center as a safe place for all groups.

Another consideration is the composition of the population, including ethnic and racial groups, and social and economic classes. This is in addition to the complexity of representing religious systems. If the makeup is of only selected ethnic, social or economic groups, the "look" may be diverse, but it will not reflect the true diversity of the region. When gender and age are incorporated, determining an equitable group representation becomes more challenging. The centers are charged with the task of not just looking diverse, but being diverse themselves. Furthermore, some in society will support the values of interfaith although they may not participate, adding an external support base that is difficult to measure. In this case, the idea that there is interaction, activity or community service on an interfaith level is appreciated and encouraged, regardless of whether or not the interfaith center is recognized.

Changing Life Itself

Religious pluralism is integral in the nature of the American landscape, and is therefore the foundation of the interfaith movement. The interfaith movement is a system derived from a pluralistic context as a mechanism of cohesion to build a more unified local, regional and national community. Sopher's work in geography of religion examined religious systems and behavior. The interfaith social movement with its grassroots network of organizations can be classified as a system, and examined under the same criteria. Interfaith is a consequence of pluralism, and has significance in its spatial expression and social nature. It enables coexistence within a pluralistic setting that is not only tolerant, but also interactive and productive.

One future conceptualization of the interfaith center is that of the new town hall, cathedral or a public square. It has the capacity to be a focal point or location that unites the inhabitants of a city. The current reality of the structure may attain this conceptualization, however miniaturized. It is an agent attempting to represent and engage the diversity of a region with an interfaith ideology. Currently, the impact is limited when compared to the population. There is no true measure of overall effectiveness or awareness of the center beyond those involved or those participating. It can be argued that those who are involved in the centers have a predisposition toward an interfaith philosophy, and this attitude is merely being reinforced. Those who see no value or are "anti-other" would not take an interest in interfaith. Those involved in interfaith tend to attract those involved in interfaith. Counter movements may take many forms, and would not necessarily be labeled "anti-interfaith", as any philosophy which promoted intolerance or isolation would operate against interfaith ideals. A greater concern in the interfaith movement is that the center is invisible, that it is not even known, rather than the rejected interfaith center.

In the interfaith movement, the significance of the interfaith center lies in the vision and the potential. In a homogenous culture the cathedral, the mosque, the town hall was the focal point of the society. Activity, knowledge and leadership emanated from these places. This population space, sacred space, and political space was built and influenced by its geographic locale. In a diverse culture, what replaces these points in society? The breadth and depth of humanity expresses itself in the diversity of faith traditions, ethnicities and cultures, intertwined with secular and civic constituencies to manifest complex societies. Where are the points of intentional contact, critique and reflection? Is the interfaith center this conglomerate of power, does it have this wealth of activity? The answer is no. But this research presents a different

question, one more directly related to its purpose. Does the interfaith center have the potential to influence the pluralistic nature of an area? Does its design and nature provide a plausible mechanism for social cohesion? Future studies in geography will be better able to examine whether the interfaith center realized these possibilities.

Interfaith space is designed to create connections. Those connections can be in physical or social space. Interfaith space is a concept held by a minority, with an ardent intention to include the majority. It is a space where an atypical reality can be found, as typical barriers are transcended. The creation of interfaith space is intended to be an instrument of cohesion, as it joins segments of society together, who were previously either isolated or conflicted. There is a disconnection in the integrity of the social structure when its pieces are strained by separation. This can be especially critical when there is the capacity for tension or misunderstanding between different religious or cultural segments, and any effort of social cohesion can be negatively impaired.

The impact of this phenomenon can be expanded with dedicated interfaith space, as is found occasionally at interfaith centers. Any public interfaith space that has been acquired from a secular or religious entity is transformed into interfaith for the event or immediate agenda, and then it is transformed back upon its conclusion. The changing nature and placement of the space, the lack of permanence, creates obstacles to the movement, yet it allows it to be fluid and frequent the public domain. As the movement continues - neutral space, transformed space, will no longer be sufficient.

Contemporary themes in geography of religion are examining the influence of religion on social structure and the production of space. The interfaith center is an expression of the movement and a representation of the interfaith places that are diffusing on the landscape. As it

evolves, the interfaith movement is changing our conception of boundaries and relationships in society. The complexity of our pluralistic society directs and imprints our production of space. The interfaith center, as a component of that complexity, has been creating new social and sacred spaces for interfaith. It is the task of these organizations to create spaces where religiously diverse groups can intentionally interact. These interfaith spaces are designed to engage not only religious institutions, but civic society as a whole. The outcomes are a means to create and sustain social change. The interfaith movement itself is a collective spatiality that utilizes the social force of religion for intentional social consequence. The greatest potential in the center and interfaith space lies in its ability to pervade the everyday life of its participants.
The construction of spaces for interfaith appear idealistic in design and are narrow in actual deed, yet their consequence is in the attempt to change life itself - and this is revolutionary.

> A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatus. (Lefebvre 1991:54)

Importance and Further Topics for Study

The interfaith center is a place of great activity, but it is severely focused and limited in participants relative to the population. It is, however, this potential that elevates this phenomenon to a worthy subject of study. It is a revolution of places and spaces, built on a vision that maintains boundaries and identities, while removing barriers and obstacles. The interfaith movement grasps the importance of having faith and beliefs systems operate in concert as economic or techlogical systems do.

The infancy of this phenomenon needs to be acknowledged. The case studies are of established centers, although they do only represent a sample. This research, in essence, represents a first contact study of the interfaith center, to offer initial insight into contexts, forms,

involvements, evolutions and spaces. Common themes, patterns, and composition, as well as independent distinctions have emerged, as expected. One of the aims of this research was to recognize these centers and similar types of organizations; not for their position of dominance, but as a new element on the cultural landscape. The centers are an intentional response to pluralism with ideology and methodology that have significant ramifications for social well-being and long term social cohesion.

Future research can examine more closely the site criteria for the formation of an interfaith center. The survey in this research was broad, and used primarily as a tool for comparison, but an in-depth investigation of interfaith participants either through surveys or interviews would be insightful in further understanding influence and dynamics. Similarly, programs of the center could be evaluated for outcomes. The organizations that are devoted to interfaith worship represent a variant in the interfaith movement that may be examined as a new belief system. The production of interfaith space – physical, social and sacred – is a fruitful subject area, which had only been given an overview in this research. Discussions that include economics and politics are plausible areas of study. Finally, there are global interfaith efforts, and studying interfaith organizations on an international level would be a valuable endeavor.

Geographers are in a position to observe, document and analyze pluralism and the change in the religious and cultural landscape. This can be accomplished not only from the perspective of demographics, adherents, statistics on new houses of worship; not only change and alteration, but with attention to new elements being formed, such as the interfaith center. The opportunity is present to observe this change or addition to the human landscape at a youthful juncture. The interfaith center and its evolution in urban and rural areas can be characterized as being in a stage of expansion. If the concept of interfaith dialogue and cooperation prospers, then the interfaith

center will likely continue to grow in numbers. In the examination on how is it formed, what is the role and what is the production of space, this research offers the interfaith center as a component of the landscape gaining momentum and significance in both physical presence and cultural consequence. Religion, regardless of individual or institutional belief, disbelief, definition or worldview, is a momentous dynamic in humanity. The variety of its forms exacerbates the potential for our disconnection from one another – locally, nationally and globally. The interfaith movement will be influencing relationships between religions, and consequently have a cultural and social impact. The interfaith center has the potential to be a mechanism for positively managing religious pluralism, maintaining social cohesion, and combating common social concerns. Research on its origin, vision, and progress can be meaningful addition to the new geography of religion and the study human geography.

Appendix A: Interfaith Center Survey

Key

I/C Interfaith Center Survey

R/D Religion and Diversity Survey

Number of responses from Interfaith Center Survey

** No comparable response

Questions and Responses

1. What is your gender?

	#	I/C	R/D
Male	42	38.89%	48.00%
Female	66	61.11%	52.00%
Other	0	0.00%	**
Decline to answer	0	0.00%	**
	108	100.00%	100.00%

2. Is your age is between…?

	#	I/C	R/D
18-24	4	3.81%	16.48%
25-34	14	13.33%	17.48%
35-44	16	15.24%	21.29%
45-54	21	20.00%	16.90%
55-64	23	21.90%	12.23%
65-74	22	20.95%	9.07%
75 and above	4	3.81%	5.84%
Decline to answer	1	0.95%	0.72%
	105	100.00%	100.00%

3. Are you currently a citizen of the United States?

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	93	83.78%	96.29%
No	15	13.51%	3.58%
Decline to answer	3	2.70%	0.14%
	111	100.00%	100.00%

4. Were you born in the United States or in another country?

	#	I/C	R/D
United States	79	74%	90.82%
Other country	25	23%	9.11%
Don’t know	2	2%	0.03%
Decline to answer	1	1%	0.03%
	107	100%	100.00%

5. Which of the following best describes you?

	#	I/C	R/D
White	92	82.14%	74.88%
Black or African-American	3	2.68%	11.68%
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	2.68%	1.62%
Native American/American Indian	1	0.89%	1.82%
Hispanic	3	2.68%	10.72%
Mixed racial background	2	1.79%	**
Other race	0	0.00%	9.21%
Don't know	8	7.14%	0.24%
Decline to answer	0	0.00%	0.55%
	112	100.00%	110.72%

6. What is your household income?

		#	I/C	R/D
$10,000 or less		3	2.83%	8.38%
$10,001 - $20,000		4	3.77%	8.45%
$20,001 - $35,000		8	7.55%	**
$35,001 - $50,000	[$20,001-$50,000]	21	19.81%	38.49%
$50,001 - $100,000		29	27.36%	**
$100,001 - $150,000		17	16.04%	**
$150,001 or more	[$50,001 OR MORE]	8	7.55%	33.68%
Don’t know		1	0.94%	4.81%
Decline to answer		15	14.15%	6.15%
		106	100.00%	99.97%

7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	#	I/C	R/D
Less than high school graduate	0	0.00%	8.14%
High school graduate	1	0.91%	32.33%
Some college	13	11.82%	32.88%
Trade/technical/vocational training	2	1.82%	3.71%
College graduate	25	22.73%	15.36%
Post-graduate work/degree	67	60.91%	7.35%
Don’t know	0	0.00%	0.10%
Decline to answer	2	1.82%	0.14%
	110	100.00%	100.00%

8. In general, would you describe your political views as:

	#	I/C
Conservative	4	3.57%
Moderate	23	20.54%
Liberal	73	65.18%
Don't know	1	0.89%
Decline to answer	11	9.82%
	112	100.00 %

9. In politics today, do you consider yourself Democrat, Republican, or Independent?

	#	I/C
Democrat	54	48.21%
Republican	2	1.79%
Independent	29	25.89%
No party	18	16.07%
Other party	0	0.00%
Don't know	2	1.79%
Decline to answer	7	6.25%
	112	100.00%

10. Would you describe the neighborhood in which you live as being in…

	#	I/C	R/D
Urban area	42	37.17%	19.00%
Suburban area	44	38.94%	35.30%
Small town or rural area	16	14.16%	43.80%
Other	8	7.08%	0.70%
Don't know	0	0.00%	1.10%
Decline to answer	3	2.65%	0.20%
	113	100.00 %	100.10 %

11. What state are you located in?

Interfaith Center Survey responses for state location were compiled by region:

	#	I/C	R/D
Midwest	28	25.45%	24.70%
Northeast	33	30.00%	19.00%
South	27	24.55%	37.50%
West	22	20.00%	18.80%
		100.00%	100.00%

12. What is your religious preference or with what religious family do you most closely identify?

	#	I/C	R/D
African Methodist(AME/AMEZ)	0	0.00%	0.52%
Agnostic/Atheist (No Preference)	2	1.80%	16.32%
Anabaptist	0	0.00%	**
Assemblies of God	0	0.00%	0.76%
Baha'i	1	0.90%	**
Baptist	3	2.70%	17.18%
Bible Church	1	0.90%	**
Brethren	0	0.00%	0.14%
Buddhist	4	3.60%	0.45%
Catholic/Roman Catholic	12	10.81%	23.68%
Chinese Folk Religion	0	0.00%	**
Christian & Missionary Alliance	0	0.00%	0.10%
Christian Reformed	1	0.90%	**
Christian Science	0	0.00%	0.10%
Church of Christ	0	0.00%	1.20%
Church of God	1	0.90%	0.79%
Church of the Nazarene	0	0.00%	0.52%
Congregational	0	0.00%	0.34%
Disciples of Christ	1	0.90%	0.24%
Episcopal/Anglican	7	6.31%	1.13%
Hindu	4	3.60%	0.21%
Holiness	1	0.90%	0.24%
Interfaith	5	4.50%	**
Jehovah's Witnesses	0	0.00%	0.55%
Jewish	8	7.21%	1.99%
Latter-day Saints/Mormon	0	0.00%	1.13%
Lutheran	2	1.80%	5.29%
Mennonite	0	0.00%	0.14%
Methodist	7	6.31%	5.19%
Muslim/Islam	13	11.71%	0.52%
Native American	1	0.90%	0.21%
Orthodox (Eastern, Russian, Greek)	0	0.00%	0.17%
Pagan	1	0.90%	0.03%
Pentecostal	0	0.00%	1.37%
Presbyterian	4	3.60%	1.89%
Protestant	0	0.00%	6.98%
Quaker/Friends	1	0.90%	0.07%
Reformed Church of America/Dutch Reformed	1	0.90%	0.14%
Seventh-day Adventist	0	0.00%	0.27%
Sikh	9	8.11%	**
Sufi	1	0.90%	**
Unitarian Universalist	5	4.50%	0.10%
United Church of Christ	3	2.70%	0.21%
Wiccan	2	1.80%	0.17%
Non-denominational Christian	3	2.70%	2.65%
None	2	1.80%	**
Other	3	2.70%	1.10%
Don't know	0	0.00%	1.00%
Decline to answer (Refused)	0	0.00%	**
		100.00%	95.09%

13. Do you currently attend interfaith worship or services as your religious or spiritual practice?

	#	I/C
More than once a week	4	3.54%
Once a week	10	8.85%
Almost every week	6	5.31%
Once or twice a month	15	13.27%
A few times a year	62	54.87%
Never	12	10.62%
None are available	3	2.65%
Don't know	0	0.00%
Decline to answer	1	0.88%
	113	100.00%

14. If you do attend interfaith worship, how far do you travel?

	#	I/C
Less than a mile	4	3.96%
Between 1 mile and 5 miles	23	22.77%
Between 5 miles and 10 miles	29	28.71%
More than 10 miles	41	40.59%
Don't know	2	1.98%
Decline to answer	2	1.98%
	101	100.00%

15. How often do you attend activities, events, programs etc…at an interfaith center or organization?

	#	I/C
More than once a week	23	21.10%
Once a week	11	10.09%
Almost every week	9	8.26%
Once or twice a month	18	16.51%
A few times a year	44	40.37%
First time	1	0.92%
Never	3	2.75%
Don't know	0	0.00%
Decline to answer	0	0.00%
	109	100.00%

16. From where did you first hear about the interfaith center or organization in your area?

	#	I/C
Another participant	50	47.17%
Newspaper advertising	2	1.89%
Radio advertising	0	0.00%
Television advertising	0	0.00%
Other advertising	4	3.77%
News Report	2	1.89%
My own congregation	19	17.92%
Other Source	26	24.53%
Don't know	1	0.94%
Have not heard	1	0.94%
Decline to answer	1	0.94%
	106	100.00%

17. Have you discussed your experience or participation at an interfaith center or organization with other(s)?

	#	I/C
Never	3	2.68%
Almost never	7	6.25%
Occasionally	35	31.25%
Often	66	58.93%
Don't know	1	0.89%
Decline to answer	0	0.00%
	112	100.00%

18. If you have discussed your experience or participation, to how many others have you spoken, written, emailed?

	#	I/C
None	4	3.85%
Only one	3	2.88%
1 to 5 people	17	16.35%
5 to 10 people	14	13.46%
More than 10	62	59.62%
Don't know	4	3.85%
Decline to answer	0	0.00%
	104	100.00%

19. How many of those contacts have then participated in interfaith activity, events or programs themselves?

	#	I/C
None	9	8.82%
Only one	3	2.94%
1 to 5 people	24	23.53%
5 to 10 people	14	13.73%
More than 10	36	35.29%
Don't know	16	15.69%
Decline to answer	0	0.00%
	102	100.00%

20. Since your introduction to the interfaith center, has your knowledge and understanding of other religions or traditions

	#	I/C
Increased	84	82.35%
Stayed about the same	13	12.75%
Decreased	0	0.00%
Don't know	3	2.94%
Decline to answer	2	1.96%
	102	100.00%

21. If you have attended the religious services of a faith other than your own tradition, was the interfaith center or organization influential in your decision to attend?

	#	I/C
Very influential	21	20.79%
Somewhat influential	39	38.61%
Not influential	34	33.66%
Don't know	3	2.97%
Never attended	3	2.97%
Decline to answer	1	0.99%
	101	100.00%

22. Do you participate in interfaith activities and events outside of the interfaith center?

	#	I/C
More than once a week	8	7.69%
Once a week	3	2.88%
Almost every week	6	5.77%
Once or twice a week	5	4.81%
A few times a year	63	60.58%
Never	9	8.65%
None are available	5	4.81%
Don't know	2	1.92%
Decline to answer	3	2.88%
	104	100.00%

23. Have your interfaith activities (if any) had an important influence on your thinking about religion or spirituality

	#	I/C
Yes	87	87.88%
No	9	9.09%
Don't know	3	3.03%
No interfaith activities	0	0.00%
Decline to answer	0	0.00%
	99	100.00%

24. Do you think this word applies to the Muslim religion: violent

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	5	4.55%	39.90%
No	100	90.91%	47.80%
Don't know	1	0.91%	11.90%
Decline to answer	4	3.64%	0.30%
	110	100.00%	99.90%

25. Do you think this words applies to the Muslim religion: fanatical

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	4	3.64%	46.60%
No	98	89.09%	37.90%
Don't know	3	2.73%	15.10%
Decline to answer	5	4.55%	0.01%
	110	100.00%	99.61%

26. Do you think this word applies to the Muslim religion: strange

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	3	2.75%	44.40%
No	101	92.66%	45.80%
Don't know	3	2.75%	9.50%
Decline to answer	2	1.83%	0.20%
	109	100.00%	99.90%

27. Do you think this word applies to the Muslim religion: appealing

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	41	37.96%	16.40%
No	45	41.67%	69.80%
Don't know	17	15.74%	13.50%
Decline to answer	5	4.63%	0.40%
	108	100.00%	100.10%

28. Do you think this word applies to the Muslim religion: tolerant

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	69	61.61%	31.70%
No	17	15.18%	52.90%
Don't know	23	20.54%	14.90%
Decline to answer	3	2.68%	0.40%
	112	100.00%	99.90%

29. Do you think this word applies to the Buddhist religion:
violent

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	2	1.90%	11.80%
No	99	94.29%	67.90%
Don’t know	3	2.86%	20.00%
Decline to answer	1	0.95%	0.20%
	10 5	100.00 %	99.90%

30. Do you think this word applies to the Buddhist religion: fanatical

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	0	0.00%	23.20%
No	107	96.40%	54.80%
Don’t know	3	2.70%	21.70%
Decline to answer	1	0.90%	0.30%
	111	100.00%	100.00%

31. Do you think this word applies to the Buddhist religion: tolerant

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	95	88.79%	56.40%
No	3	2.80%	21.40%
Don’t know	8	7.48%	21.90%
Decline to answer	1	0.93%	0.30%
	107	100.00%	100.00%

32. Do you think this word applies to the Buddhist religion: strange

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	8	7.27%	42.40%
No	96	87.27%	41.70%
Don’t know	5	4.55%	15.70%
Decline to answer	1	0.91%	0.20%
	110	100.00%	100.00%

33. Do you think this word applies to the Buddhist religion: appealing

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	73	65.77%	25.80%
No	27	24.32%	55.60%
Don’t know	8	7.21%	18.30%
Decline to answer	3	2.70%	0.20%
	111	100.00%	99.90%

34. Do you think this word applies to the Hindu religion: violent

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	0	0.00%	16.40%
No	99	94.29%	58.60%
Don’t know	4	3.81%	24.70%
Decline to answer	2	1.90%	0.30%
	105	100.00%	100.00%

35. Do you think this word applies to the Hindu religion: strange

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	15	13.76%	42.60%
No	85	77.98%	38.80%
Don’t know	7	6.42%	18.40%
Decline to answer	2	1.83%	0.30%
	109	100.00%	100.10%

36. Do you think this word applies to the Hindu religion: tolerant

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	82	73.21%	45.30%
No	6	5.36%	28.00%
Don’t know	21	18.75%	26.40%
Decline to answer	3	2.68%	0.30%
	112	100.00%	100.00%

37. Do you think this word applies to the Hindu religion: appealing

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	44	40.74%	19.20%
No	43	39.81%	59.10%
Don't know	18	16.67%	21.50%
Decline to answer	3	2.78%	0.30%
	108	100.00%	100.10%

38. Do you think this word applies to the Hindu religion: fanatical

	#	I/C	R/D
Yes	1	0.92%	25.40%
No	99	90.83%	48.20%
Don't know	5	4.59%	26.00%
Decline to answer	4	3.67%	0.30%
	109	100.00%	99.90%

39. Do you think this word applies to the Christian religion: fanatical

	#	I/C
Yes	17	16.04%
No	79	74.53%
Don't know	3	2.83%
Decline to answer	6	5.66%
	105	99.06%

40. Do you think this word applies to the Christian religion: tolerant

	#	I/C
Yes	55	50.93%
No	41	37.96%
Don't know	9	8.33%
Decline to answer	3	2.78%
	108	100.00%

41. Do you think this word applies to the Christian religion: appealing

	#	I/C
Yes	59	54.13%
No	37	33.94%
Don't know	8	7.34%
Decline to answer	5	4.59%
	109	100.00%

42. Do you think this word applies to the Christian religion: violent

	#	I/C
Yes	13	11.82%
No	91	82.73%
Don't know	2	1.82%
Decline to answer	4	3.64%
	110	100.00%

43. Do you think this word applies to the Christian religion: strange

	#	I/C
Yes	8	7.21%
No	99	89.19%
Don't know	2	1.80%
Decline to answer	2	1.80%
	111	100.00%

44. Do you think this word applies to the Jewish religion: strange

	#	I/C
Yes	11	9.91%
No	95	85.59%
Don't know	2	1.80%
Decline to answer	3	2.70%
	111	100.00%

45. Do you think this word applies to the Jewish religion: appealing

	#	I/C
Yes	53	47.32%
No	42	37.50%
Don't know	13	11.61%
Decline to answer	4	3.57%
	112	100.00%

46. Do you think this word applies to the Jewish religion: fanatical

	#	I/C
Yes	11	10.09%
No	91	83.49%
Don't know	3	2.75%
Decline to answer	4	3.67%
	109	100.00%

47. Do you think this word applies to the Jewish religion: violent

	#	I/C
Yes	9	8.41%
No	92	85.98%
Don't know	2	1.87%
Decline to answer	4	3.74%
	107	100.00%

48. Do you think this word applies to the Jewish religion: tolerant

	#	I/C
Yes	72	67.92%
No	24	22.64%
Don't know	5	4.72%
Decline to answer	5	4.72%
	106	100.00%

49. Have your contacts with Hindus come about mostly…

	#	I/C	R/D
Through your work	20	18.69%	34.90%
Through your neighborhood	4	3.74%	11.50%
Through shopping and other personal business dealings	8	7.48%	45.40%
Through an interfaith center or organization	47	43.93%	**
Other	18	16.82%	6.00%
Don't know	1	0.93%	2.10%
No contact	9	8.41%	**
Decline to answer	0	0.00%	**
	107	100.00%	99.90%

50. Have your contacts with Christians come about mostly…

	#	I/C
Through your work	26	23.42%
Through your neighborhood	34	30.63%
Through shopping and other personal business dealings	4	3.60%
Through an interfaith center or organization	12	10.81%
Other	32	28.83%
Don't know	2	1.80%
No contact	1	0.90%
Decline to answer	0	0.00%
	111	100.00%

51. Have your contacts with Jews come about mostly…

	#	I/C	R/D
Through your work	31	28.97%	34.90%
Through your neighborhood	18	16.82%	17.80%
Through shopping and other personal business dealings	10	9.35%	38.00%
Through an interfaith center or organization	25	23.36%	**
Other	22	20.56%	7.90%
Don't know	1	0.93%	1.30%
No contact	0	0.00%	**
Decline to answer	0	0.00%	**
	107	100.00%	99.90%

52. Have your contacts with Muslims come about mostly…

	#	I/C	R/D
Through your work	30	26.79%	40.90%
Through your neighborhood	5	4.46%	14.60%
Through shopping and other personal business dealings	3	2.68%	36.80%
Through an interfaith center or organization	48	42.86%	**
Other	23	20.54%	6.50%
Don't know	1	0.89%	1.10%
No contact	2	1.79%	**
Decline to answer	0	0.00%	0.10%
	112	100.00%	100.00%

53. Have your contacts with Buddhists come about mostly…

	#	I/C	R/D
Through your work	17	16.19%	29.80%
Through your neighborhood	2	1.90%	18.30%
Through shopping and other personal business dealings	4	3.81%	41.60%
Through an interfaith center or organization	56	53.33%	**
Other	19	18.10%	8.30%
Don't know	1	0.95%	1.90%
No contact	6	5.71%	0.20%
Decline to answer	0	0.00%	0.20%
	105	100.00%	100.30%

Appendix B: Comments from Survey Respondents

The following is all the commentary from the respondents; all are quoted completely and without correction:

> Your survey is very black and white and if anything I have discovered in interfaith work is that no religion is all good, all bad, all fanatical, all tolerant, all ordinary or all strange. You did not allow, in this survey, for sometimes. Some parts of every one of the faiths can be destructive, intolerant, violent, and odd, some parts of all of them can be beautiful, tolerant, open, and welcoming.
>
> I answered your survey as best I could, but I don't really fit the map. My experience of any faith is that there are some good, some bad, some fanatical, and some welcoming, so a black and white survey doesn't capture that.
>
> I found questions 13-40 difficult to answer in accordance with the way this survey is structured. Practically all religions have an intolerant, fanatical, and even violent element within them. So when you ask if I find Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, etc. intolerant or fanatical my most honest answer is that it depends upon which Muslim, Jew, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, etc. you're referring to. I would have preferred more options than 'yes,' 'no', 'don't know', or 'decline to answer.' My initial impulse was to say 'decline to answer' because I am resistant to having 'yes', 'no', or 'don't know' as my only options.
>
> But I did want to keep faith with the spirit of the survey. So, consider my answers to questions 13-40 as being preceded by the words "In general..."
>
> The reason I answered "don't know" to the questions of did I find a particular religion appealing is because since I do not practice that religion I don't really know how appealing or not it is. I consider myself a religious humanist and a universalist, meaning I'm a humanist who sees value in the teachings and practices of many of the world's religions while not specifically subscribing to any particular one of them.
>
> Questions 13 - 40 were difficult to respond to given the answer choices and the framing/phrasing of the questions. Is (for example) Christianity appealing? To whom? Other Christians? People of other faiths? People who understand its practices? PWho don't understand its practices?
>
> On the question of "x" being "strange": Any religion might appear strange to those who are not part of that faith or understand its practice and rituals.

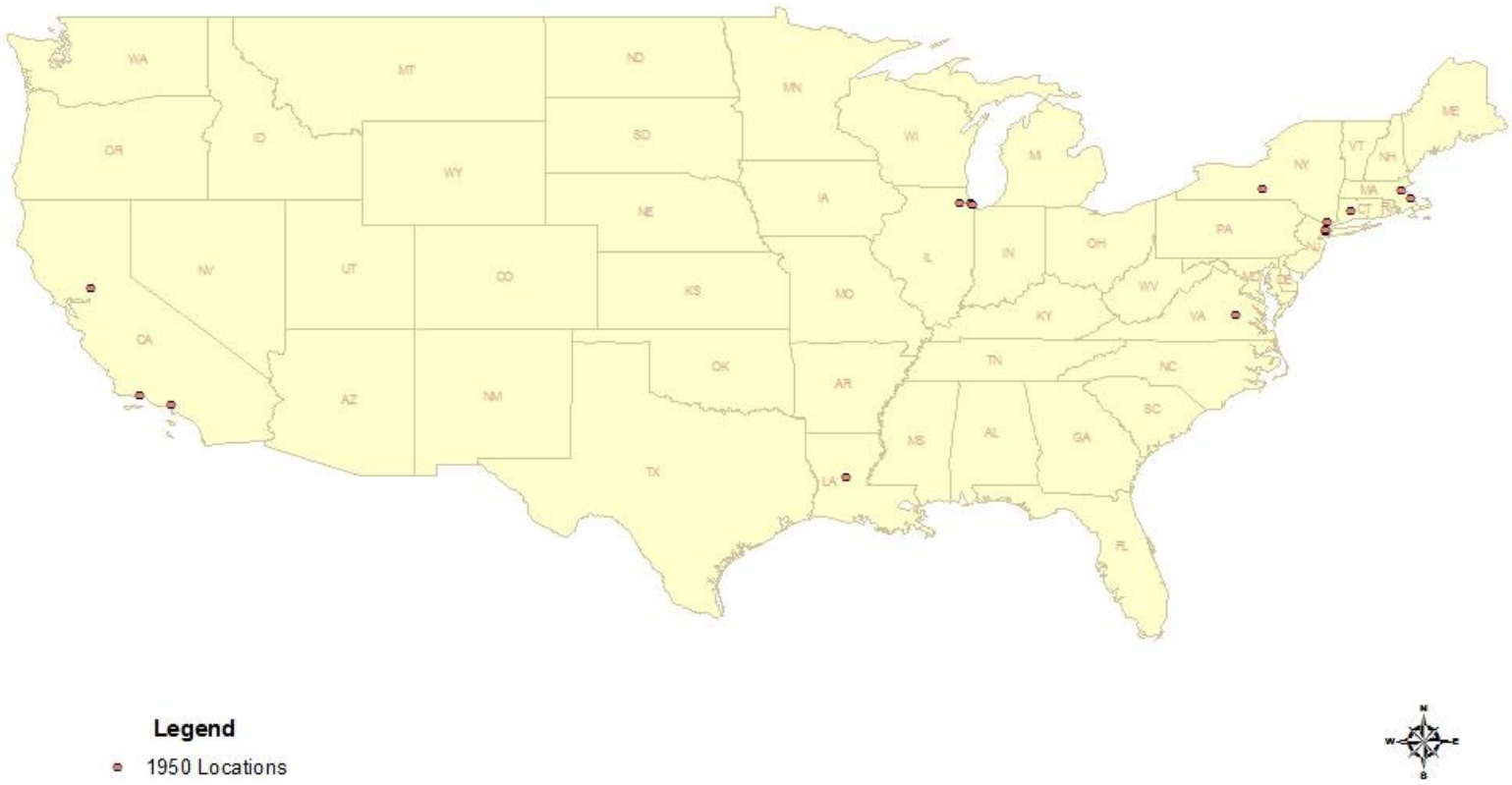
I declined to answer the questions regarding those particular religions being fanatical, violent, etc., because I have seen individuals with those characteristics in all of them. I cannot and I will not generalize them. As a Baha'i, I believe all religions come from God and they are like chapters of the same book. Religions are like grades of school. The child starts in kindergarten and learns A, B, C, then starts to use them to build words with the letters in first grade and so forth. Religions themselves are not fanatical or violent, but the followers of religions become so when they drift away from the original teachings of their faiths. Interfaith organizations bring people of faith together and create understanding among them. Those involved in interfaith activities are less likely to have religious prejudice and hatred for the followers of other religions.

My negative responses about Christianity come from being one for many years. I suppose it is unfair to judge all Christians on the ones I've known, so please take those comments with a grain of salt! I have known some gentle, good Christians, but what I see happening in America today as far as religion goes, is scary!

Appendix C: Map Series

The maps represent only the 48 Conterminous United States.

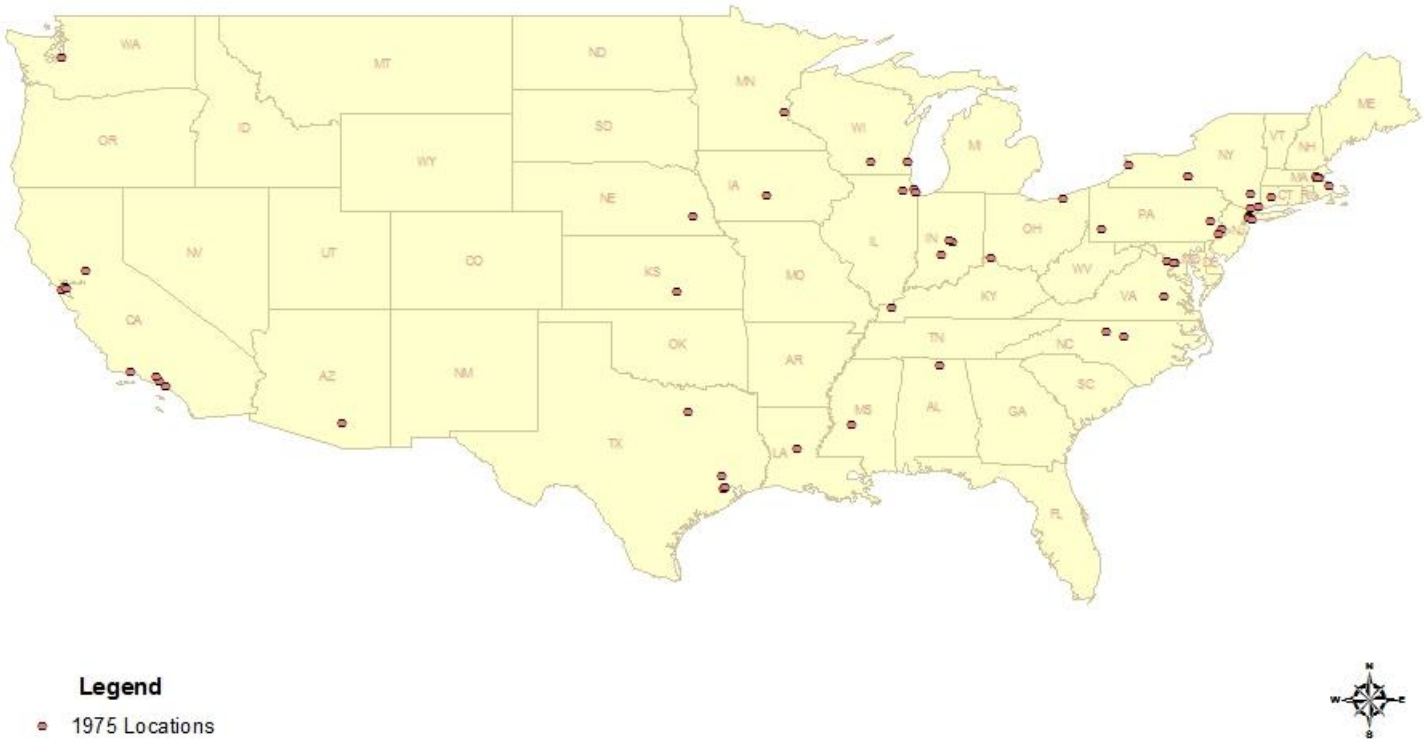
MAP 1
Locations of Interfaith Organizations in 1950



Legend

- 1950 Locations

MAP 2
Locations of Interfaith Organizations in 1975



Legend

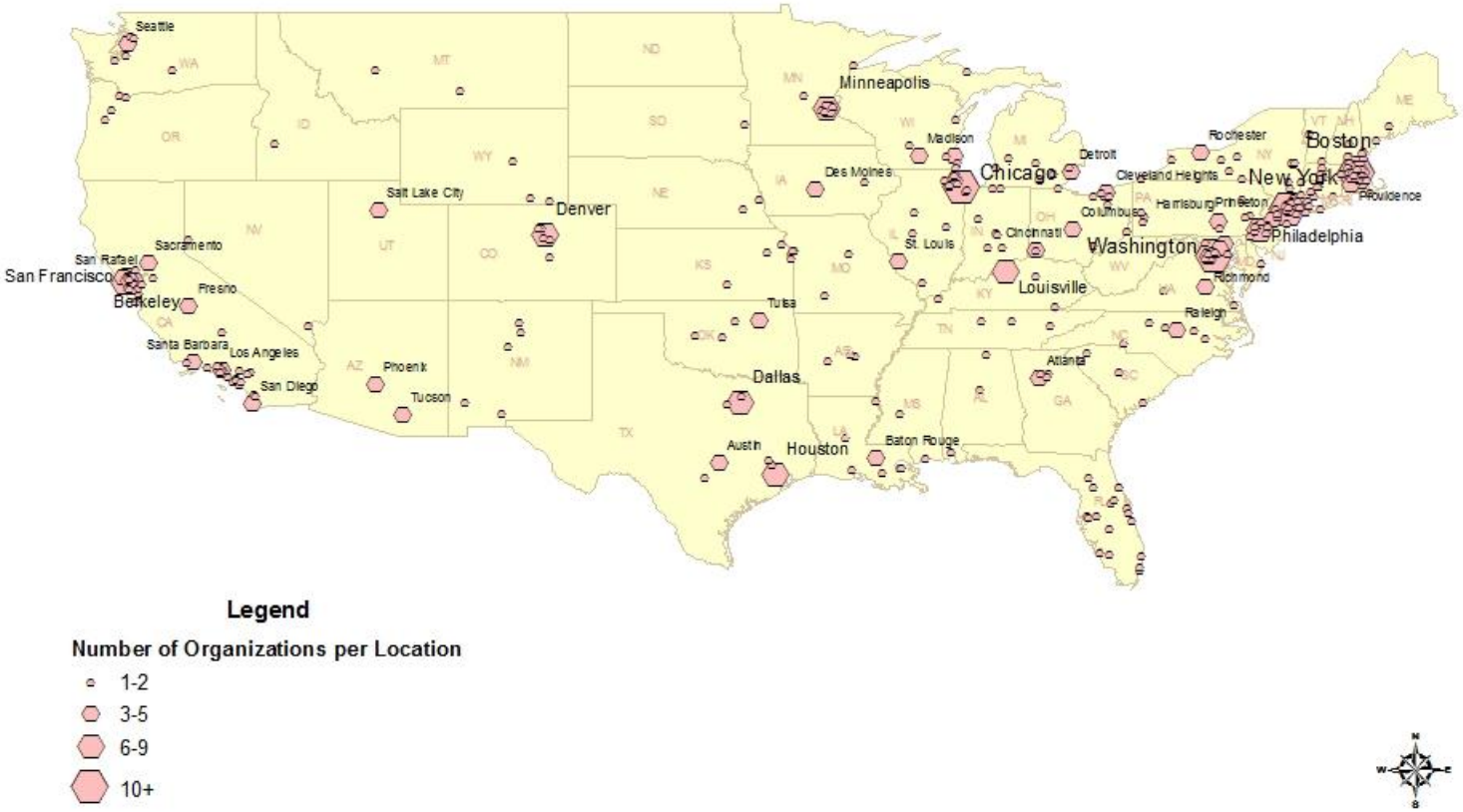
- 1975 Locations

MAP 3
Locations of Interfaith Organizations in 1990

Legend

- 1990 Locations

MAP 4
Locations of Interfaith Organizations in 2006



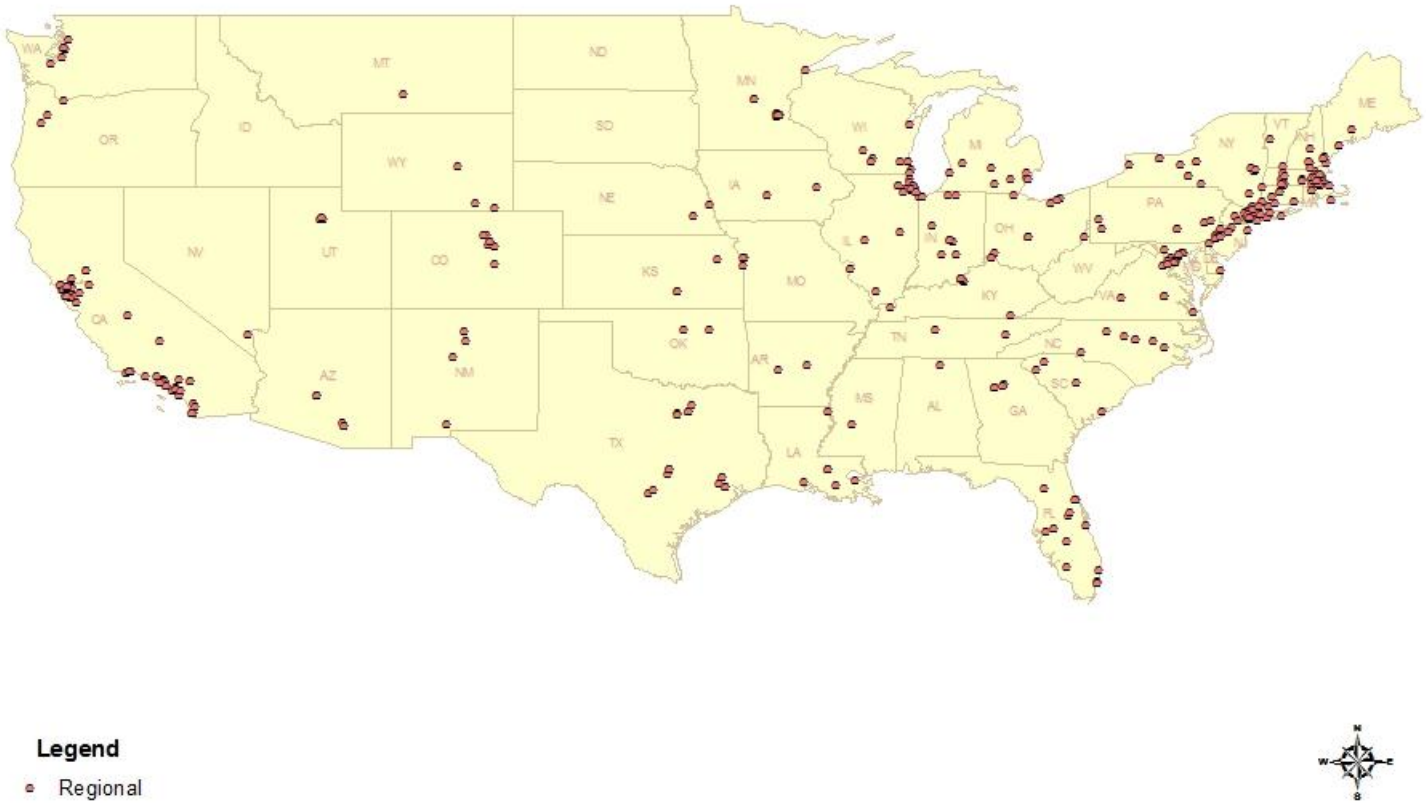
Legend

Number of Organizations per Location

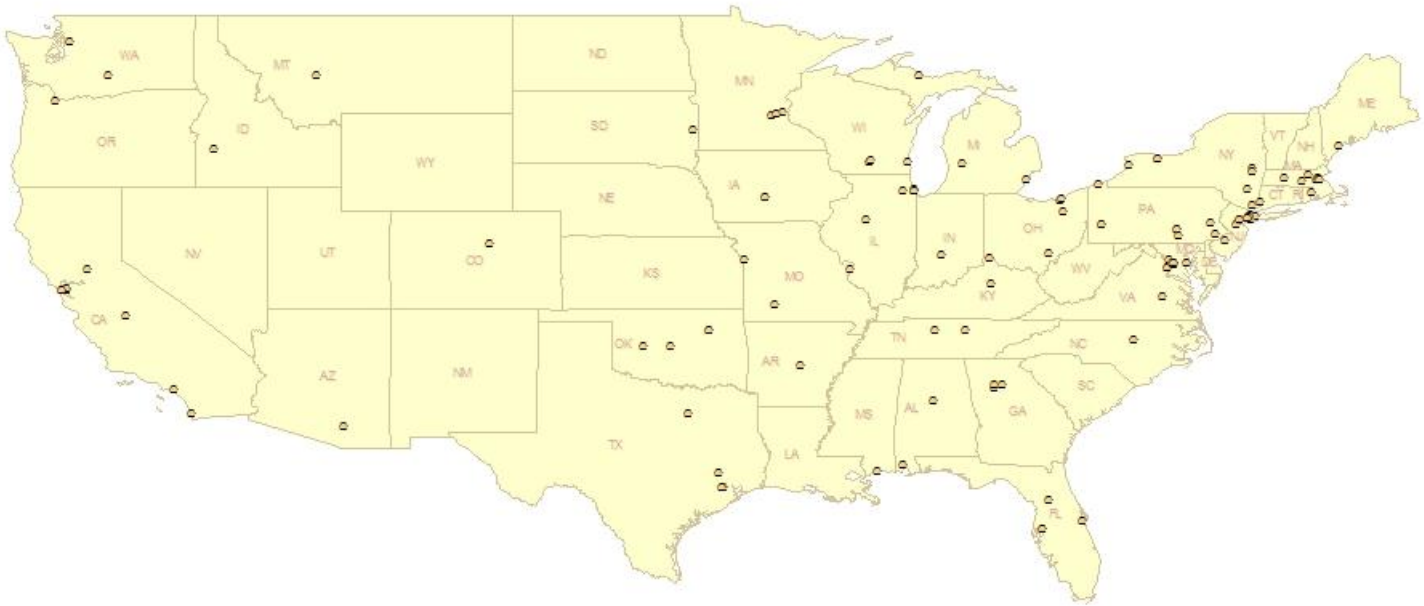
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-9
- 10+

MAP 5
Population of Locations with Interfaith Organizations

MAP 6
Locations with Regional Interfaith Organizations



MAP 7
Locations with Network Interfaith Organizations



Legend

- Network

MAP 8
Locations with Agency Interfaith Organizations

Legend

- Agency

MAP 9
Locations with Academic Interfaith Organizations

Legend

- Academic

MAP 10
Locations with Spiritual Interfaith Organizations

Legend

- Spiritual

Appendix D: U.S. Regions by State

U.S. REGIONS							
MIDWEST	**STATES**	**NORTHEAST**	**STATES**	**SOUTH**	**STATES**	**WEST**	**STATES**
	ILLINOIS		CONNECTICUT		ALABAMA		ALASKA
	INDIANA		MAINE		ARKANSAS		ARIZONA
	IOWA		MASSACHUSETTS		DELAWARE		CALIFORNIA
	KANSAS		NEW HAMPSHIRE		FLORIDA		COLORADO
	MICHIGAN		NEW JERSEY		GEORGIA		HAWAII
	MINNESOTA		NEW YORK		KENTUCKY		IDAHO
	MISSOURI		PENNSYLVANIA		LOUISIANA		MONTANA
	NEBRASKA		RHODE ISLAND		MARYLAND		NEVADA
	NORTH DAKOTA		VERMONT		MISSISSIPPI		NEW MEXICO
	OHIO				NORTH CAROLINA		OREGON
	SOUTH DAKOTA				OKLAHOMA		UTAH
	WISCONSIN				SOUTH CAROLINA		WASHINGTON
					TENNESSEE		WYOMING
					TEXAS		
					VIRGINIA		
					WEST VIRIGINA		

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