

# THE HOUSE DC: THE POWER OF PLACE



BAYLOR INSTITUTE FOR  
Studies of Religion

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PROGRAM ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the following individuals for their assistance in conducting this research:

- Luke Ungarino: Baylor University '17, University Scholars, Social Impact Fellow, Philanthropy Fellows, House DC intern Summer 2016
- Andrea Counts: Executive Director of Youth & Community Outreach, The House DC; and
- Ayana Smith: The House DC



## Executive Summary

Economically disadvantaged communities have often been neglected and denied access to resources and opportunities that could positively impact the long-term prospects of youth. Consequently, too many children raised in neglected neighborhoods are unable to overcome these hardships and to escape these poverty-stricken areas. The House DC, a faith-based organization located in Anacostia, was founded in order to partially remedy this situation. The House DC provides an array of non-traditional programs that prioritizes reading, comprehension skills, technology, and after-school mentoring, as well as the provision of life skills soft training – all within a faith-based environment. Moreover, The House DC has developed important and robust partnerships with the Anacostia High School and local police. In short, The House DC provides a safe place for kids to grow and flourish.

In the current case study, we implemented a cursory longitudinal study comprised of students who participated in the after-school program over the past 12 years. Compared to other Anacostia residents, we found that graduates of The House DC are significantly less likely to drop out of school, more likely to graduate from high school, and more likely to attend college.

We projected an average annual taxpayer benefit that was comprised both of increased tax revenues from higher employment and earnings levels, and reduced taxpayer costs associated with lower incidence of crime. Based on these data, we estimate The House DC yields an estimated taxpayer ROI (return on investment) of \$2.81 in taxpayer savings for every \$1.00 invested in the program.

This research on The House DC, provides preliminary insights to how faith-based organizations can play a powerful and transformational role in the lives of adolescents and youth from disadvantaged communities. It is also a reminder that scholars and key decision-makers should not overlook the contributions of inner-city faith-based organizations and especially those led by African-Americans, in helping youth from disadvantaged communities to flourish. Finally, we need more systematic research on faith-based organizations like The House DC, in order to explore the potential linkages between these faith-based groups and the various beliefs they promote regarding coping mechanisms, prosocial behavior, and the flourishing of youth from disadvantaged communities.



"I REMEMBER OVERHEARING ONE DAY A CONVERSATION WITH ONE OF THE HOUSE DC KIDS WHEN SCHOOL WAS LETTING OUT. SHE WAS TALKING TO SOME FRIENDS THAT WERE CLEARLY UP TO NO GOOD, AND TRYING TO GET THE KID FROM THE HOUSE DC TO JOIN IN WITH THEM. I REMEMBER THE HOUSE DC KIDS JUST SAY TO THEM: 'NAH, I'M NOT GOING WITH YOU, I'M GOING TO THE HOUSE'. IN THAT ONE SIMPLE EXCHANGE, I REALLY UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HOUSE DC FOR THE KIDS IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, SIMPLY AS A PLACE TO GO."

**ANTHONY MANLEY, ANACOSTIA HIGH SCHOOL SECURITY OFFICER**

## Exposure to Risk Factors and Protective Factors in Disadvantaged Communities

Children raised in economically disadvantaged communities often lack access to resources and opportunities that could positively impact their long-term prospects and upward social mobility<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, youth raised in poverty tracts are more likely to experience poor health, score lower on standardized tests, and are more likely to be retained in grade and to drop out of school<sup>2</sup>. The teenagers from these communities are confronted daily with the stresses of poor living conditions and are more likely to have out-of-wedlock births and be exposed to abuse and crime<sup>3</sup>. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that adolescents from poverty stricken communities, especially male black youth<sup>4</sup>, are one of the groups most at risk for participation in delinquent and criminal activity<sup>5</sup>. To state the obvious, the inherent disadvantages within many poor inner-city communities lead many youth living in these areas into unlawful and harmful activities<sup>6</sup>.

For decades, social scientists have studied the effects of variables such as poverty, ethnic diversity, and residential mobility on crime among youth<sup>7</sup>. Among the deleterious effects of these poverty-stricken areas is the increasing inability of local communities to control themselves<sup>8</sup>. Predictably, dissipating community control tends to yield community disorder or a lack of social order. Empirical research seems to confirm what common sense expectations would suggest - community disorder is linked to youth involvement in crime and deviant behavior<sup>9</sup>.

Consequently, the sad reality is that many children reared in poor neighborhoods are unable to overcome these hardships and are more likely than not to end up as poor adults living in the same poverty stricken areas. Efforts to eradicate these problems have remained a problem for decades, and typically target the circumstances of disadvantaged adults – not disadvantaged children. This is unfortunate since long-term, youth-centered approaches are too often overlooked. Stated differently, short-term, adult-centered approaches (e.g., public assistance, tax relief) represent incomplete strategies for providing support to at-risk youth<sup>10</sup>.

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1 Fischer, C.S., Hout, M. 2006. *Century of Difference: How America Changed in the Last One Hundred Years*. New York: Russell Sage.

2 Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne and Greg Duncan (ed.) *Consequences of Growing Up Poor* (New York: Russell Sage) 1997

3 Edin, K. and M. J. Kefalas. 2013. *Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood before Marriage*.

Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Edin, K. and T. J. Nelson 2013. *Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Murray, C. 2013. *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010*. New York: Crown Forum.

4 Long-term poor African-American children are also much more likely than long-term poor white children to live in underclass neighborhoods (generally defined as census tracts in which more than 40% of the residents are poor). See Wilson, W. J. 2012. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*, Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

5 Blumstein, A., J. Cohen, J. A. Roth, and C. A. Visher. 1986. *Criminal Careers and Career Criminals*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press; Elliott, D. S., D. Huizinga, and S. Menard. 1989. *Multiple Problem Youth: Delinquency, Substance Use, and Mental Health Problems*. New York: Springer-Verlag; Sampson, R. J. 1987. "Urban Black Violence: The effect of Male Joblessness and Family Disruption," *American Journal of Sociology* 93: 348-382.

6 Bursik, R. J., Jr. 1988. "Social Disorganization and Theories of Crime and Delinquency: Problems and Prospects," *Criminology* 26:519-551; Sampson, R. J. and W. B. Groves. 1989. "Community Structure and Crime: Testing Social-Disorganization Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 94:774-802; Shaw, C. R. and H. D. McKay. 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

7 For a more detailed discussion see the classic study of C. R. Shaw and H. D. McKay, 1942. *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

8 Kornhauser, R. R. 1978. *Social Sources of Delinquency: An Appraisal of Analytic Models*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

9 See, for example, O. Simcha-Fagan and J. E. Schwartz. 1986. "Neighborhood and delinquency: An assessment of contextual effects," *Criminology* 24:667-703; and W. G. Skogan, 1990. *Disorder and Decline*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

10 Heckman, J. 2006. *Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children*. *Science*. 312: 1900-1902.

## Resilient Youth

Though far less acknowledged, it is the case that most urban youth do not turn to drugs, crime, or deviance, even though they live in socially chaotic communities. Indeed, a significant portion of youth in the facing of communal hardship develop through adolescence without serious behavioral problems<sup>11</sup>. This fact raises an important question, "Why would there be significant differences in behavioral outcomes among high-risk youth living in the same environments?" Many adolescents burdened with every disadvantaged life condition possible simply outperform the expectations and develop into well-adapted individuals. How can we predict who will overcome the risk factors and who will not? What indicators help our nation's most at-risk population succeed?

Delinquency research has confirmed for many years that risk factors such as poverty and structural disadvantage cause crime. More recently, however, scholars have also discovered that "protective factors" have just the opposite effect – they help prevent rather than encourage deviant activity. Operating through institutions of informal social control such as the family and school<sup>12</sup>, protective factors tend to partly mediate or offset the harmful effects of community disorder<sup>13</sup>.

Though largely ignored by social scientists, it would seem that religious institutions such as churches, mosques, or synagogues and faith-based organizations are well suited to produce the relational networks of social and emotional support that may help prevent at-risk youth from participating in negative behavioral outcomes such as crime<sup>14</sup>.

The variation in outcomes among youth in equally socially disorganized communities, as suggested by the "resilient youth" perspective (i.e., at-risk kids succeeding in the midst of disadvantage and blight), can be explained by the extent to which an individual adolescent is protected by relationships with social support networks such as family attachments. A body of research suggests certain factors that protect these disadvantaged young people from negative community influences. Researchers studying resilient youth are interested in identifying what they call "protective factors," which buffer or shield at-risk children and adolescents such as inner-city African-American youth, from destructive

11 Johnson, B. R., D. Larson, S. Jang, & S. Li. 2000. "Who Escapes the Crime of Inner-Cities: Church Attendance and Religious Salience Among Disadvantaged Youth," *Justice Quarterly*, 17: 701-715; Williams, T. M. and W. Kornblum. 1985. *Growing Up Poor*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

12 See, for example, C. Smith, A. J. Lizotte, T. P. Thornberry, and M. D. Krohn, 1995. "Resilient youth: Identifying factors that prevent high-risk youth from engaging in delinquency and drug use." *Current Perspectives on Aging and the Life Cycle* 4:217-247.

13 See D. S. Elliott, W. J. Wilson, D. Huizinga, R. J. Sampson, A. Elliott, and B. Rankin, 1996. "The Effects of Neighborhood Disadvantage on Adolescent Development." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 33:389-426; C. E. Ross and S. J. Jang, 2000. "Neighborhood Disorder, Fear, and Mistrust: The Buffering Role of Social Ties with Neighbors." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28:401-420; and C. Smith, A. J. Lizotte, T. P. Thornberry, and M. D. Krohn, 1995. "Resilient Youth: Identifying Factors that Prevent High-Risk Youth from Engaging in Delinquency and Drug Use." *Current Perspectives on Aging and the Life Cycle* 4:217-247.

14 R. J. Bursik, Jr. and H. G. Grasmick, 1993. *Neighborhoods and Crime: The Dimensions of Effective Community Control*. New York, NY: Lexington Books; B. R. Johnson, D. Larson, S. Jang, & S. Li, 2000. "Who Escapes the Crime of Inner-Cities: Church Attendance and Religious Salience Among Disadvantaged Youth," *Justice Quarterly*, 17: 701-715; B. R. Johnson, D. B. Larson, S. J. Jang, and S. D. Li 2000. "The 'Invisible Institution' and Black Youth Crime: The Church as an Agency of Local Social Control," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 29:479-498; B. R. Johnson, 2008. *The Role of African American Churches in Reducing Crime Among Black Youth*. Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR Research Report), Baylor University; S. J. Jang and B. R. Johnson, 2001. "Neighborhood Disorder, Individual Religiosity, and Adolescent Drug Use: A Test of Multilevel Hypotheses," *Criminology* 39:501-535; B. R. Johnson, S. J. Jang, D. B. Larson, and S. D. Li, 2001. "Does Adolescent Religious Commitment Matter?: A Reexamination of the Effects of Religiosity on Delinquency," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38: 22-44, 2001.

behavior and costly societal outcomes<sup>15</sup>. The protective factors most often studied include variables determining the impact of family, school, and peer relations upon deviance of at-risk youth<sup>16</sup>. However, individual religious commitment has also been found to be a significant protective factor<sup>17</sup>, even though resilience researchers have studied it infrequently<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, crime and delinquency scholars have found individual religious devotion significantly reduces socially undesirable activities among adolescents, especially moderate deviance such as alcohol and drug use<sup>19</sup>.

In the present study, we examine the potential importance of The House DC, a faith-based ministry in Anacostia, to protect and support youth in escaping the many deleterious outcomes often associated with being raised in an economically impoverished community. In addition, we assess the role of The House DC in promoting prosocial behavior among the youth that participate in their programs.

## Introduction

Since 1999, The House DC, Inc., (The House) has been a faith-based organization dedicated, first and foremost, to providing a safe place with a home-like feel, for youth in the Anacostia community of Southeast Washington DC. The purpose of this case study is to provide both a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the work of The House DC. From a qualitative standpoint, we examine how The House staff approach and engage youth in a very organic, non-traditionally structured manner, to provide counseling and mentoring for short-term success in their academics as well as long-term success in career, relationships and family. Quantitatively, we utilized longitudinal data on former House DC participants in order to compare various academic and career outcomes for The House DC participants with youth from the same Anacostia neighborhood overall.

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15 Rutter, M. 1985. "Resilience in the Face of Adversity: Protective Factors and Resistance to Psychiatric Disorder," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 147: 589-611; Smith, C., A. J. Lizotte, T. P. Thornberry, and M. D. Krohn. 1995. "Resilient Youth: Identifying Factors that Prevent High-Risk Youth from Engaging in Delinquency and Drug Use," *Current Perspectives on Aging and the Life Cycle* 4: 217-247; Werner, E. E. 1989. "High Risk Children in Young Adulthood: A Longitudinal Study from Birth to 32 Years," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 59:72-8; Werner, E. E. and R. S. Smith. 1992. *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; B. R. Johnson, 2008. "The Role of the Faith Factor in Reducing Crime and Delinquency," in Byron R. Johnson (ed.) *Not By Faith or Government Alone: Rethinking the Role of Faith-Based Organizations – Short Essays on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative*, (ed.) Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR Special Research Report), Baylor University; S. J. Jang and B. R. Johnson, 2010. "Religion, Race, and Drug Use Among American Youth," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, 6: 1-25; J. T. Ulmer, S. Desmond, S. J. Jang, and B. R. Johnson, 2010. "Teenage Religiosity and Changes in Marijuana Use During the Transition to Adulthood," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, 6: 1-19.

16 Smith, C., A. J. Lizotte, T. P. Thornberry, and M. D. Krohn. 1995. "Resilient Youth: Identifying Factors that Prevent High-Risk Youth from Engaging in Delinquency and Drug Use," *Current Perspectives on Aging and the Life Cycle* 4:217-247.

17 Freeman, R. B. and H. J. Holzer (Eds).1986. *The Black Youth Employment Crisis*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; Johnson, B. R., D. Larson, S. Jang, & S. Li. 2000. "Who Escapes the Crime of Inner-Cities: Church Attendance and Religious Salience Among Disadvantaged Youth," *Justice Quarterly*, 17: 701-715.

18 Anthony, E. J. and B. J. Cohler. 1987. *The Invulnerable Child*. New York: Guilford Press.

19 Benda, B. B. and R. F. Corwyn. 1997. "Religion and Delinquency: The Relationship after Considering Family and Peer Influence," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36: 81-92; Brownfield, D. and M. Sorenson. 1991. "Religion and Drug Use Among Adolescents: A Social Support Conceptualization and Interpretation," *Deviant Behavior* 12: 259-76; Burkett, S. R. and B. W. Warren. 1987. "Religiosity, Peer Associations, and Adolescent Marijuana Use: A Panel Study of Underlying Causal Structures," *Criminology* 25:109-31; Cochran, J. K. and R. L. Akers. 1989. "Beyond Hellfire: An Exploration of the Variable Effects of Religiosity on Adolescent Marijuana and Alcohol Use," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 26:198-225; Elifson, K. W., D. M. Petersen, and C. K. Hadaway. 1983. "Religiosity and Delinquency," *Criminology* 21:505-527; Johnson, B. R., D. B. Larson, and T. G. Pitts. 1997. "Religious Programming, Institutional Adjustment and Recidivism Among Former Inmates in Prison Fellowship Programs," *Justice Quarterly* 14: 145-66; Tittle, C. R. and M. R. Welch. 1983. "Religiosity and Deviance: Toward a Contingency Theory of Constraining Effects," *Social Forces* 61: 653-682.

## Background

The House DC purchased and renovated its first property in November 1999 at 1606 17th Street, SE, a street commonly referred to by local police as “Murder Row”. That year, the adjoining property at 1610 17th Street was also donated to House DC. In 2002, President & CEO LaWonda Bornstein began serving and in 2003, House DC became its own 501(c)(3)<sup>20</sup>.

From the beginning, co-founder Steve Fitzhugh saw The House DC differently from many of the other community-based organizations she saw around her:

*I noticed that a lot of community-based organizations serving the inner-city seemed to be about programs and curriculum. We wanted The House, first and foremost, to be about relationships. The building was simply the space in which our relationship work was done.*

In 2003, The House DC was also invited to partner with Anacostia High School, the local high school, to offer daily onsite programming and provide a consistent presence of dedicated mentors at the school. A couple of years later, The House DC established a pregnancy resource center in partnership with the Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center<sup>21</sup>. Finally, in 2014, on their 15th anniversary, The House DC completed renovation of the last of three buildings at 1610 17th street.

## The House DC: Not your typical Community-Based Program

The House DC is an intensely relationship centric model for ministry, which essentially uses the interior spaces and resources of their row of former inner city apartment unit housing as an environment for fostering dialogue and communication between the staff and the youth they serve in the Anacostia neighborhood of Southeast Washington, D.C. The House DC offers three overall opportunities of activity for area youth:

1. **Summer Elementary Enrichment Program (SEEP):** The House DC’s SEEP initiative targets students aged 4-12 with low reading and comprehension skills and students exhibiting low self-esteem in the DC metropolitan area. SEEP provides a safe and fun environment during the summer where these children can access and use current technological equipment in an atmosphere free from bullying and other distractions common to their experience at school. SEEP also provides summer employment for adolescents aged 18-25, many of

<sup>20</sup> This is the official designation for a non-profit organization.

<sup>21</sup> Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center (CPHC) is a faith based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization offering help and support to women, men and their families who are in a crisis pregnancy. While CPHC does not preform or refer for abortions, they provide women and men with complete, medically accurate information about abortion.

whom were graduates of The House DC after-school program (see below) to serve as counselors. These counselors serve as role models and mentors to reinforce positive work skills and habits, and promote behavioral changes for the younger children. Each summer, SEEP offers an enriched, lively and secure environment for about 30-40 children and employs 6-10 adults as counselors.

2. **After-School Program:** The After-School program is the centerpiece of The House DC's relationship-based ministry in Anacostia. As previously described by Fitzhugh, The House takes a deliberately non-traditional structured 'homelike' approach in ministering and nurturing the high-schoolers who participate. The House DC provides a friendly, nurturing environment where teens and positive role models gather to share life experiences. This equips the young men and women to navigate towards future social, emotional and spiritual success. As Andrea Counts, Executive Director of Youth & Community Outreach for the House DC, explained:

*A typical curriculum addressing high-risk behavior is taught in a classroom, and the students and teacher presents information and tries to generate a discussion to engage the students on topics, such as sexual activity or drug use. In The House, for example, I might be in the kitchen with one of The House kids, and have the opportunity to engage in a conversation about a relationship or other situation in school that often relates to a high-risk topic, and often it is the teen initiating the conversation.*

"THE HOUSE IS A SAFE HAVEN, WHERE YOUTH AND THE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE LOVE. IT GIVES YOUNG PEOPLE HOPE AND INTRODUCES THEM TO THE SAME JESUS THAT CHANGED OUR LIVES. THE LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES THEY ENCOUNTER AT THE HOUSE DC GIVES OUR YOUTH A CHANGE OF HEART AND WITH A CHANGE OF HEART COMES A CHANGE IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

THE HOUSE DC IS A MINISTRY WITH CREATIVE PROGRAMS. WHAT WE OFFER IS AUTHENTIC AND POSITIVE ADULT RELATIONSHIPS THAT INTRODUCE OUR YOUTH AND THE COMMUNITY TO GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE. OUR PASSION TO SERVE GOES FAR BEYOND A REGULAR 9 - 5 JOB, IT'S OUR LIFE, AND IT IS WHAT WE DO EVERY DAY AT ANY GIVEN TIME. THE PAY DOESN'T DICTATE WHAT WE WILL DO FOR OUR YOUTH, GOD DOES, AND THAT'S WHAT SEPARATES US FROM A TYPICAL PROGRAM."

**ANDREA COUNTS, EXEC. DIRECTOR OF YOUTH & COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

In fact, afternoon snacks and dinner are prime opportunities to engage in these conversations, often involving an informal group conversation where the youths help one another by reviewing and processing daily events. Handling everyday hassles and anxieties, before they become constant stresses or traumas, in a relaxed home-like environment through a process of casually unpacking their day, helps them make better decisions. For a variety of reasons, many of The House DC kids would not

have dinner due to poverty and homelessness, or eating alone, but instead have a chance to do so in a group setting with familiar faces each day. The House DC serves these afternoon snack and dinner to sixty or more students per day during the week.

The House DC after-school experience also serves as a platform for students to become better acquainted with the Internet and other technology through its own recording studio, where students can also receive training in audio engineering and music production.

3. **The Next Level:** The Next Level is the newest House DC activity, under the direction of Jonathan Harris, Executive Director of the Life Skills Education Center at The House. The goal of The Next Level is to support participants focused on the ages 18-30, many of whom were also after-school participants at The House during their high school years. The Next Level provides a combination of job readiness and life skills to help individuals find employment and stability in life. This expansion of ministry to include young adults is very much in line with recent findings from social science, which suggest that the young adult years, in this current economy, require multiple supports to assist with successfully negotiating this phase of life.

According to an article entitled *Pathways to the Middle Class: Balancing Personal and Public Responsibilities*<sup>22</sup>, the key milestones for the transition to adulthood (ages 19-29) are:

- i. Live independently; and
- ii. Receive a college degree or have a family income  $\geq$  250% of the poverty level.

Before the creation of The Next Level, Jonathan Harris, who serves mainly as a mentor and trainer to The Next Level participants, saw the challenge that many of the after-school students faced after graduating high school. Harris related the story of one such House DC after-school completer, who we will name Yolanda:

*I visited a restaurant where a former student from The House DC, Yolanda, happened to be working. She had the mindset of being abandoned by us after graduating high school. I think she had become accustomed to our constant presence in her life, vouching for her when she got in trouble, and being an ear to talk to. Now, without that hand-holding, she feels like she is doing life all by herself, leaving her unhappy and feeling ill-equipped for the responsibilities of adulthood.*

<sup>22</sup> Sawhill, Isabel et al; Pathways to the Middle Class: Balancing Personal and Public Responsibilities; Center on Children and Families at Brookings; Brookings Institute; September 20, 2012.

This experience, and others like it, prompted Bornstein and Harris and The House to dedicate more staff and resources to this new population in need of ministry support; namely, the young adult. The Next Level program carries the same relationship-intensive essence unique to The House DC, but also include some more structured job skills and soft skills training, as well as entrepreneurship to assist clients in achieving personal and financial independence.

## The House DC Staff: Walking the Talk

Bornstein and The House DC staff are acutely aware, particularly from their close relationships with the after-school students, of the challenges and issues that arise due to family fragmentation in their community. Our American society in recent years has moved away from the traditional definition of marriage. Most of the House DC students do not have role models for traditional marriage in their lives or community. With respect to The House DC's mission, most of the staff is married resulting in an active encouragement of marriage.

The House DC staff finds creative ways to help the kids to whom they minister, by recognizing the challenging family situations many of them face. The staff and mentors at The House DC through conversation and regular interaction are able to encourage students and instill biblical principles in an informal setting. As Deuteronomy 6:6-7 encourages adults to impart God's wisdom to the young on a daily and consistent way. Bornstein described one such event they recently held for Father's Day:

*Many of the kids who attend The House were abandoned by their fathers at birth or lost them to violence. In order to honor the fathers we do have, we invited members of the community to join us for Ms. Rita's famous baked chicken, and showcased four fathers who have been especially active in the work at The House. Though it takes some effort to keep people happy on what is for many an emotionally confusing occasion, with Andrea as emcee and our featured fathers taking seats of honor, the tone of the room was celebratory, with gift baskets distributed and words of praise bestowed on those who have been shining models of commitment to their immediate families and The House family at large.*

## Measuring the Impact of The House DC

There are both qualitative and quantitative ways to evaluate the impact of The House DC on the youth they serve and, by extension, the community where they reside. From a qualitative standpoint, The House DC is best understood in terms of its linkages to the Anacostia High School, with which The House has partnered for more than a dozen years. A year after The House accepted Anacostia High School as a partner, they were asked to host an all-day character seminar attended by the entire school, a clear testimony to the value Ana-



"THE IMPACT OF THE HOUSE DC ON THE KIDS PARTICIPATING IN ITS AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM SHOWS UP IN TERMS OF THEIR BEHAVIOR IN SCHOOL. THE HOUSE DC STAFF SERVE BOTH AS AN ADVOCATE FOR THE STUDENTS AND AS A VOICE OF DISCIPLINE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THEIR LIVES. I HAVE OBSERVED THAT THE YOUTH WHO ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED WITH THE HOUSE ARE GENERALLY MORE PRODUCTIVE IN SCHOOL AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO GRADUATE AND GO TO SCHOOL."

**SHATANE PORTER, GUIDANCE COUNSELOR FOR ANACOSTIA HIGH SCHOOL**

costia High School placed on The House DC's contribution to the well-being of the community at large. As Shatane Porter, guidance counselor for Anacostia High School described:

*The impact of The House DC on the kids participating in its after-school program shows up in terms of their behavior in school. The House DC staff serve both as an advocate for the students and as a voice of discipline and accountability in their lives. I have observed that the youth who are actively engaged with The House are generally more productive in school and are more likely to graduate and go to school. The students in The House DC represent a fairly accurate cross-section of the students in Anacostia, meaning that the higher performance of The House DC youth is not because they somehow cherry-picked the best kids in the school<sup>23</sup>.*

## The House DC and the Partnerships

Another important linkage that The House DC has created is with the local police department, and especially with the school resource officers assigned to Anacostia High School. The Anacostia High School resource officers are particularly focused on the first hour after school ends, when students tend to congregate into groups and when altercations often occur. The presence of The House DC is especially important because there are a high percentage of latch-key kids in the Anacostia community, and there are no other comparable community centers in the area that intentionally focus on providing relational models.

As school resource officer, Charles Jones, explained:

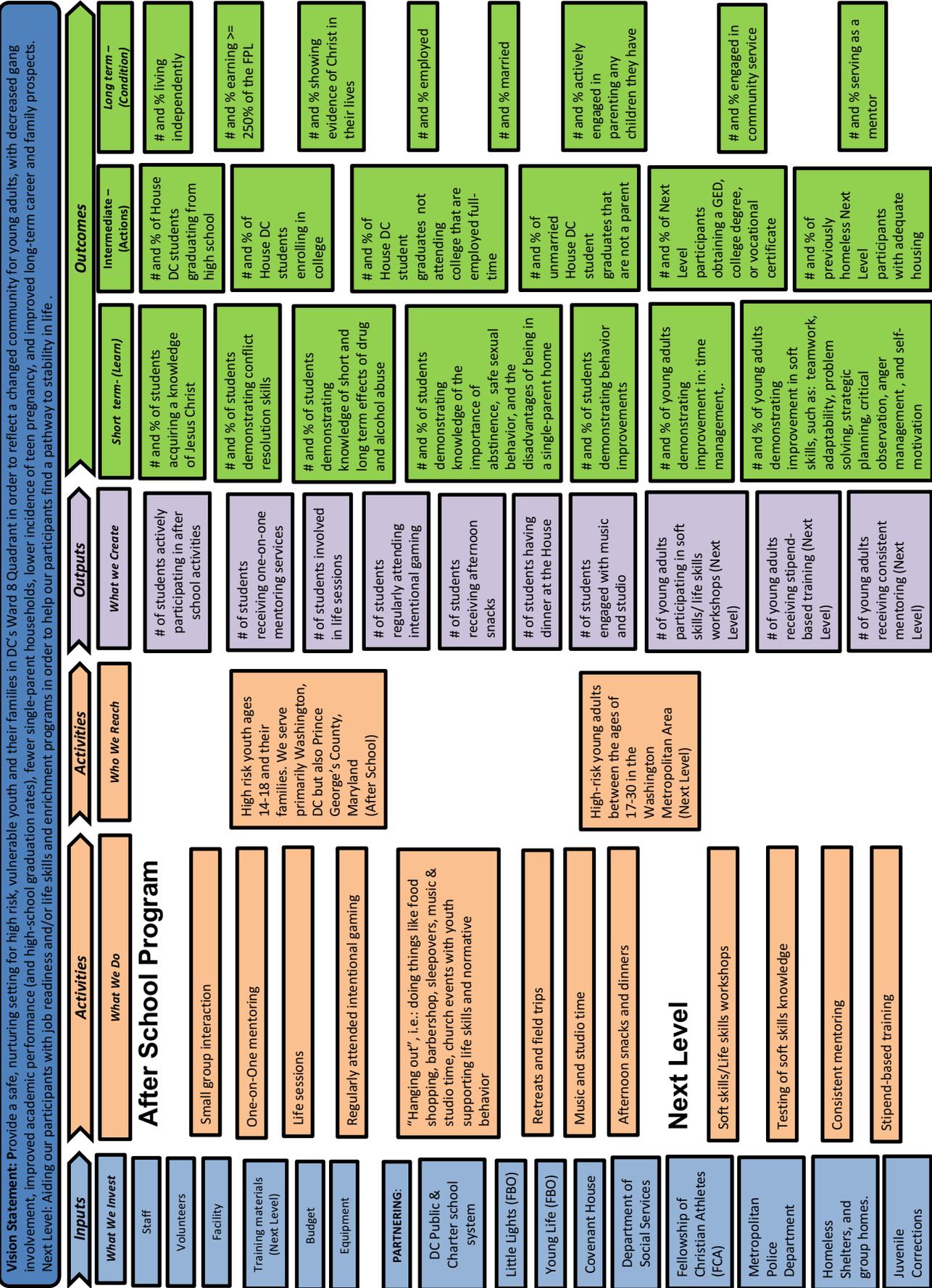
*We observe fewer fights involving students that are actively engaged with The House. For a number of reasons. A lot of these kids are essentially raising themselves, and sometimes are raising their siblings as well. They come to The House for security and comfort, because the staff genuinely care, and they can see that and feel that. As I overheard one student say on his way to The House one day: 'I'm going to the safe house, not the stress house.'*

As mentors, The House DC staff model and encourage positive interactions and exchanges with the local police officers, which help the students recast how they may have perceived the Police officers. This in turn, helps the police develop positive relationships with The House DC youth which affects the impact of juvenile crime on the community.

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23 The fact that House DC serves a cross-section of the teens in their community is especially relevant in the evaluation section, where we compare House DC student long-term outcomes with those of Anacostia neighborhood as a whole.

# EXHIBIT 1 Logic Model: House DC, INC After School/Next Level Programs



## Measuring the Value of The House DC – Methodology

The fluid, organic, and decidedly non-traditionally structured nature of The House DC ministry poses some initial challenges in the effort to assess their impact on individuals and the community. Traditional pre/post evaluations<sup>24</sup> of students that are taught a particular curriculum over a specified period of time does not work here, nor is it necessarily the best approach when trying to assess the value of a particular program/ministry. The two primary goals, one Core for House DC and one Outward for stakeholders are:

1. **Core:** To provide the process and tools for The House DC to better understand both the outcomes they produce and the data they need to collect on a regular basis to demonstrate the financial impact of those outcomes on taxpayers in general.
2. **Outward:** To project the value of The House DC in terms of long-term outcomes associated with active participants in its after-school and, for the future, The Next Level program, and the projected savings those outcomes produce for taxpayers.

### Mapping Outcomes Through Logic Models

Logic Models<sup>25</sup> are often a staple for community-based organizations seeking government or foundation funding, as they are often a required element of an application for funding. Sadly, the logic models developed for these purposes (i.e., need one to get funding) are rarely seen again if and when funding is received. Logic models, for purposes of this evaluation, play a central and ongoing function of helping The House DC better understand the specific outcomes associated with their ministry efforts for the after-school and The Next Level programs<sup>26</sup>.

Exhibit 1 (previous page) shows the logic model developed for the after-school and The Next Level ministries at House DC.

### Longitudinal Data Collection for Projecting Outcomes

As previously described, traditional social services program evaluations often revolve around what is commonly referred to as "pre/post" analysis, whereby program participants are surveyed before and after participating in a specific class or program. The general purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate changes (hope-

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<sup>24</sup> This refers to the process by which program recipients are surveyed before and directly after the completion of a given program, primarily aimed at assessing improvements in knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) pertaining to the type of training and/or curriculum content.

<sup>25</sup> A logic model (also known as a logical framework, theory of change, or program matrix) is a tool used by funders, managers, and evaluators of programs to evaluate the effectiveness of a program. They can also be used during planning and implementation. Logic models are usually a graphical depiction of the logical relationships between the resources, activities, outputs and outcomes of a program.

<sup>26</sup> As previously indicated, The House DC also operates a summer camp for elementary students (SEEP), which is not included in this evaluation due to a lack of needed data to perform the evaluation.



"A LOT OF THESE KIDS ARE ESSENTIALLY RAISING THEMSELVES, AND SOMETIMES ARE RAISING THEIR SIBLINGS AS WELL. THEY COME TO THE HOUSE FOR SECURITY AND COMFORT, BECAUSE THE STAFF GENUINELY CARE, AND THEY CAN SEE THAT AND FEEL THAT. AS I OVERHEARD ONE STUDENT SAY ON HIS WAY TO THE HOUSE ONE DAY: 'I'M GOING TO THE SAFE HOUSE, NOT THE STRESS HOUSE!'"

**CHARLES JONES, SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER**

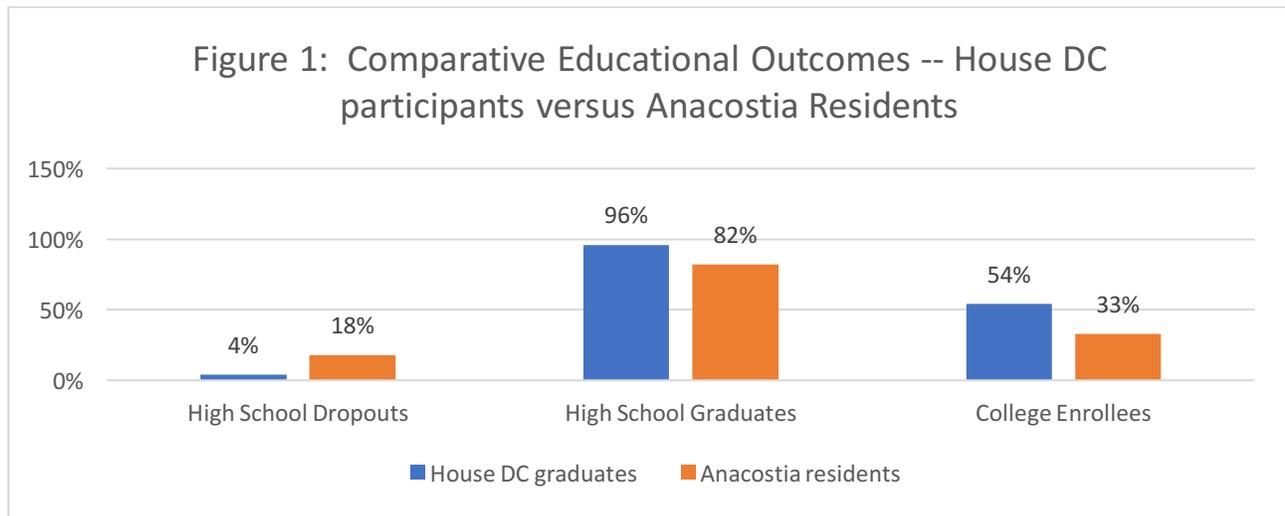
fully improvements) in individual's Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes (KSAs). However, this approach is not a good match for trying to evaluate House DC's after school program for two reasons:

1. Rather than traditional programs, The House DC provides a collection of interactions and activities that comprise the experience that youth have when they participate in The House DC's after school program, which will differ for each youth,
2. Changes/improvements in KSAs, while often an important precursor, do not in and of themselves represent an actual change in a particular youth's behaviors and achievement of various milestones (e.g., graduating high school). Referring back to the logic model, what is most important is the ability to document improvements pertaining first to the intermediate and eventually to the desired long-term outcomes.

Therefore, we decided to work with House DC staff to develop a cursory longitudinal study comprised of 336 students over the past 12 years who, according to House DC staff, participated in the after-school program at least once a week during their high school years. We then took a random sample of 66 students by sorting the students alphabetically by last name and selecting every fifth student as part of our sample.

The House DC staff then utilized any and all possible means (Facebook, email, phone, personal contact, etc.) to obtain the following information for each of these 66 alumni that participated in The House DC after school program:

- Graduated High School (Y/N)?
- Attended College (Y/N) <sup>27</sup> ?



<sup>27</sup> House DC staff also collected information on whether the individuals was employed and, if so, the name of the employer, and whether they were married. In this first ROI projection, however, we were not able to incorporate this information. Future ROI projections of House DC graduates will incorporate these and other data elements.

## EXHIBIT 2

### Economic Savings: Projected Earnings Based on Academic Achievement

Incremental Lifetime tax revenues for High School Graduate versus High School drop out.	A	\$111,033	Source: Labor Market Consequences of an Inadequate Education; Rouse, Cecilia Elena; Princeton University and NBER; Prepared for the Equity Symposium on "The Social Costs of Inadequate Education" at Teachers' College, Columbia University; September 2005.
Incremental Lifetime tax revenues for College Enrollee versus High School drop out.	B	\$253,612	Source: Labor Market Consequences of an Inadequate Education; Rouse, Cecilia Elena; Princeton University and NBER; Prepared for the Equity Symposium on "The Social Costs of Inadequate Education" at Teachers' College, Columbia University; September 2005.
Average annual number of House DC participant completers per year	C	28	Source: House DC program roster for 2004 - 2016.
Average High School Graduation rate for House DC students.	D	96%	Source: Based on a 20% randomized sample of 53 House DC participants from 2004 to 2016. 13 additional House DC students in the sample are still in High School.
High School graduation rate of Anacostia DC neighborhood (2015-2016).	E	82%	Source: Census Data 2015-2016.
Incremental improvement in graduations attributable to House DC.	F	14%	Formula: D - E (Average High School Graduation rate for House DC students less High School graduation rate of Anacostia DC neighborhood (2015-2016).)
Incremental number of High School Graduates attributable to House DC.	G	3.9	Formula: C * F (Average annual number of House DC students eligible for graduation multiplied by Incremental improvement in graduations.)
Percentage of House DC High School graduates who attend college.	H	54%	Source: Based on a 20% randomized sample of 54 House DC students. 12 additional House DC students in the sample are still in High School.
Percentage of Anacostia High School graduates who attend college.	I	33%	Source: Census Data 2013-2014
Incremental improvement in College enrollment attributable to House DC.	J	21%	Formula: H - I (Percentage of House DC High School graduates who attend college less percentage of Anacostia High School graduates who attend college.)
Incremental number of College attendees attributable to House DC.	K	0.8	Formula: G * J (Incremental number of High School Graduates attributable to House DC multiplied by incremental improvement in College enrollment attributable to House DC.)
Total projected incremental Lifetime tax revenues attributable to House DC for college attendees.	L	\$205,045	Formula: K * B (Incremental number of College Attendees attributable to House DC multiplied by Incremental Lifetime tax revenues for College Enrollee versus High School drop out.)
Total projected incremental Lifetime tax revenues attributable to House DC for High School Graduates only.	M	\$337,707	Formula: [G - K] * C (Incremental number of High School Graduates attributable to House DC less incremental number of College attendees attributable to House DC multiplied by total number of House DC students since 2004 - 2016.)
<b>Total estimated incremental Lifetime tax revenues for House DC participants.</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>\$542,752</b>	<b>Formula: L + M (Total projected incremental Lifetime tax revenues attributable to House DC for college attendees plus total projected incremental Lifetime tax revenues attributable to House DC for High School Graduates only.)</b>
<b>Economic Gains: Reductions in projected lifetime costs of crime due to improved high school graduation rates</b>			
Incremental number of High School Graduates attributable to House DC.	G	3.9	Formula: C * F (Average annual number of House DC students eligible for graduation multiplied by Incremental improvement in graduations.)
Estimated annual savings in costs of crime per high school graduate	O	\$3,507	Source: The effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports; Lochner, Lance and Moretti, Enrico, October 2003. Result expressed in 2016 dollars.
Estimated per person lifetime savings from reduced crime costs due to high school graduation	P	\$105,210	Formula O * 30 - Based on an estimated 30 years of 'active' life from graduation.
<b>Total estimated savings in crime cost reductions per annual additional high school graduations attributable to the House DC</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>\$405,059</b>	<b>Formula: P * G - Incremental annual number of high school graduates times the estimated per person lifetime reduction in crime costs</b>
<b>Totals: House DC ROI Projections</b>			
<b>Total estimated incremental Lifetime tax revenues for House DC participants.</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>\$542,752</b>	<b>Formula: L + M (Total projected incremental Lifetime tax revenues attributable to House DC for college attendees plus total projected incremental Lifetime tax revenues attributable to House DC for High School Graduates only.)</b>
<b>Total estimated savings in crime cost reductions per annual additional high school graduations attributable to the House DC</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>\$405,059</b>	<b>Formula: P * G - Incremental annual number of high school graduates times the estimated per person lifetime reduction in crime costs</b>
<b>Total estimated economic impact for House DC program</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>\$947,811</b>	<b>Formula: N + Q - Estimated increase in income tax revenues plus estimated savings due to reductions in crime attributable to the house DC program</b>
<b>Estimated annual cost for House DC after school program</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>\$337,652</b>	<b>Source: House DC financials - Average annual costs for After School Program, 2004-2016</b>
<b>Estimated taxpayer ROI per \$1.00 invested in House DC's after school program</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>\$2.81</b>	<b>Formula R / S - Estimated annual economic impact of House DC program attributable to improved high school graduation rates divided by estimated annual program cost for House DC after school program</b>

Previous longitudinal research, including the aforementioned meta-analysis by the Brookings Institution, shows that both high school graduation and at least enrolling in college is a significant predictor, both for lifetime earnings and in terms of decreased likelihood of criminal involvement. Figure 1 (previous page) shows the comparative educational outcomes for the sample of 66 The House DC graduates<sup>28</sup>, as compared to the most recent high school graduation and college enrollment for the Anacostia community as a whole (per U.S. Census data).

#### Projecting Economic Value for Improved Educational Outcomes via ROI

The next step in the development of a projected ROI for The House DC is to translate this differential in educational outcomes into economic terms in three ways:

1. Incremental lifetime tax revenues for high school graduates versus high school dropouts
2. Incremental lifetime tax revenues for college enrollees versus high school dropouts
3. Estimated annual savings in the cost of crime per high school graduate.

In social science terms, these first two measures are generally referred to as prosocial outcomes, which, in this context, refers to the benefits of improved educational outcomes that accrue to taxpayers. The third measure is simply producing a value by measuring the absence of a negative outcome, which means taxpayer savings associated with lower incidence and thus costs of crime associated with improved educational outcomes.

Based on an average of 28 The House DC 'graduates' per year (336 total active The House DC participants over 12 years), we project an average annual taxpayer benefit (comprised both of increased tax revenues from higher employment and earnings levels, and reduced taxpayer costs associated with lower incidence of crime) of close to \$1 million. Based on the estimated average annual cost of \$337,652 for the The House DC after school program over these past 12 years, this results in an estimated taxpayer ROI of \$2.81 in taxpayer savings for every \$1.00 invested in the program (see Exhibit 2 for the complete ROI analysis for The House DC's after school program).

See Exhibit 2: Economic Savings: Projected Earnings Based on Academic Achievement (previous page).

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<sup>28</sup> 13 of the 66 House DC participants in the sample had not yet graduated. Information regarding college enrollment was available for only 43 of the 53 House DC participants that graduated high school.

## Conclusion

Though it may seem counterintuitive, some research suggests that religion's influence provides the greatest impact on behavior in highly secularized and run-down communities<sup>29</sup>. This line of thinking suggests that religion becomes least effective in highly integrated and organized communities where religious morality is redundant given the other sources of moral authority and social control. Consequently, faith-based ministries located in very poor and disadvantaged communities, like The House DC in Anacostia, have the potential to play a unique and catalytic role in changing the trajectory of adolescents from these communities. It would seem prudent, therefore, that faith-based ministries seeking to aid youth be even more intentional about outreach efforts to youth residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods (i.e., high crime areas) rather than middle class suburbs.

The present study suggests that future research concerning protective or resiliency factors for youth from disadvantaged communities may be short-sighted if the role of faith-based organizations in protecting disadvantaged black youth from harmful outcomes is overlooked. In the spirit of multifaceted approaches to various social problems, the religious community should be included in various partnership strategies to help youth become more resilient in the face of adversity. Though much more research is needed in this area, the current study provides preliminary evidence that organizations like The House DC may play an important role as an agency of local social control in communities too often hampered by disorder and disadvantage.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that faith based organizations, and especially those led by African-Americans, should no longer be overlooked by scholars and key decision-makers. Moreover, social scientists should begin conducting both qualitative and quantitative studies of the efficacy of these agencies of local social control. On the qualitative side, for example, ethnographic research is needed to explore the formation and intensity of social support networks within faith-based organizations serving residents of inner cities. This research should also explore the potential linkages between these faith-based groups and the various beliefs they promote regarding coping mechanisms and prosocial behavior within high disorder communities. Further, we need to know more about which factors motivate workers, volunteers, and mentors to assist, mentor, and collaborate with youth, particularly at risk youth, in addition to how and why these factors motivate in the first place. Finally, we need to conduct more rigorous research and quantitative analyses that facilitate a better understanding of the interaction between, as well as the direct and indirect effects of, religious involvement, and other intervening and dependent variables that are traditionally studied in social scientific research.

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29 C.R. Tittle and Welch, M.R. (1983). Religiosity and Deviance: Toward a Contingency Theory of Constraining Effects. *Social Forces* 61, N 3 (March): pg. 653-682.

## About The Authors

**Byron Johnson** is Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University. He is the founding director of the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR) as well as director of the Program on Prosocial Behavior. Johnson has completed a series of studies on Boy Scouts and Eagle Scouts. Professor Johnson was the principal investigator on a project funded by the Department of Justice that produced a series of empirical studies on the role of religion in prosocial youth behavior. He is a former member of the Coordinating Council for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Presidential Appointment). A leading authority on the scientific study of religion, the efficacy of faith-based organizations, and criminal justice, Johnson's recent publications focus on the impact of faith-based programs on recidivism reduction and prisoner reentry, and is the emphasis of his books, *More God, Less Crime*, and *The Angola Prison Seminary*. His new book *The Quest for Purpose* was released in August 2017. Before joining the faculty at Baylor University, Johnson directed research centers at Vanderbilt University and the University of Pennsylvania. He is the 2013 Big Brother of the Year for Big Brothers Big Sisters Lone Star of Texas.

**Alfreda Alvarez** currently serves as a Principal for Harvest Home Institute, LLC. Ms. Alvarez-Wubbenhorst worked in a variety of capacities with faith-based and community programs funded through the US Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services, for whom she served as a grant review panelist. Ms. Alvarez-Wubbenhorst has also received training and earned numerous certifications to enhance her work with a wide-ranging array of nonprofits – largely serving as a facilitator, advocate and trainer. Previously, Ms. Alvarez-Wubbenhorst served as an evaluator of faith-based and community organizations funded by the US Department of Labor. Ms. Alvarez-Wubbenhorst also worked on a project, also funded through the US Department of Labor, to integrate faith-based and community-based organizations into local Workforce Investment Boards at two selected pilot sites in Memphis and Milwaukee. In addition to these work experiences, Ms. Alvarez-Wubbenhorst has also been a social entrepreneur and program development specialist with an extensive history of training and organizing at the grass-roots level. She is skilled in facilitating collaborative partnerships between local government and faith-based/community-based organizations. As co-founder of Sterling Sparrow consulting, she co-authored two articles, published through the Center for Public Justice, entitled *Charitable Choice in Massachusetts: An Untapped Resource* (2000), and *The Pitfalls of Contracts for Funding Faith-Based Ministries* (1998). She also received acknowledgements in a case study published by Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion in 2015 entitled: *Multi-State Mentoring Research and The Center for Neighborhood Enterprise's Violence-Free Zone Initiative*.

**William Wubbenhorst** served as a Non-Resident Fellow for the Institute for Studies of Religion (ISR) at Baylor University. In addition to his role with the Sagamore Institute, He previously served a total of 13 years as a

Senior Management Consultant and Return On Investment (ROI) Specialist for ICF International and Macro International. Over the years, William Wubbenhorst has collaborated with professors from several prestigious academic institutions, including Baylor University, Boston University and Harvard University. He has published a variety of peer-reviewed journal publications and case studies. Most recently, Mr. Wubbenhorst co-authored a national study entitled *Assessing the Faith-Based Response to Homelessness in America: Findings from Eleven Cities*, published through the Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion. He also co-authored "Demonstrating the Value of Social Service Programs: A Simplified Approach to Calculating Return on Investment" -- a peer-reviewed article, published in the *Foundation Journal* (September 2010). Mr. Wubbenhorst also co-authored an article entitled: "Assessing the Effectiveness of the Violence Free Zone in Milwaukee Public Schools", published in the *Journal of Knowledge and Best Practices in Juvenile Justice & Psychology* (2013). Additionally, two recent case studies were published through the Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion entitled: *What Keeps them from Coming Back? – The Indiana Faith and Character Training Initiative*, and *Incorporating Faith and Works within a Healthcare Network: Baylor, Scott & White's Office of Mission and Ministry*. Other recent Baylor ISR publications related to prisoner re-entry and recidivism include: *Recidivism Reduction and Return On Investment: An Empirical Assessment of the Prison Entrepreneurship Program* (2013), *Stronger Families, Stronger Society: An Analysis of the RIDGE Project, Inc.* (2014).





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