

FUNDING GÜLEN-INSPIRED GOOD WORKS: DEMONSTRATING AND GENERATING COMMITMENT TO THE MOVEMENT

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Abstract

The projects sponsored by the Gülen-inspired movement are numerous, international and costly in terms of human and financial capital. Critics of the movement often question the financing of these initiatives – with some convinced of collusion with Middle Eastern governments, others (within Turkey) suspicious that Western governments are financially backing the projects. Aware of these criticisms, in a recent comment to a group of visiting followers, Fethullah Gülen indicated greater financial transparency must become a priority for the movement.

This paper addresses the financing of Gülen-inspired projects, based on interviews with business leaders in Turkey, as well as local businessmen throughout Turkey who constitute the financial infrastructure of the movement. In addition, the paper presents data from one local Gülen movement organisation in Houston, Texas, that collects thousands of dollars annually from local members, mostly students on small educational stipends.

The paper is framed sociologically in terms of organisational theories of commitment. Beginning with Kanter (1972;1977) and including subsequent major figures in the organisational field (e.g. Reichers 1985; Meyer and Allen 1991; Hall 2002; Scott 2003), scholars have demonstrated a positive correlation between sacrifices asked of members and degree of commitment to the goals of the organisation. Using this perspective, the paper argues that the financial contributions made by members in the Gülen movement both demonstrate commitment to the ideals espoused by Fethullah Gülen and generate commitment to the movement. The paper presents empirical evidence, based on interviews with financial supporters both in Turkey and the U.S., of how financial resources are generated, the initiatives being supported and the impact of financial giving on the commitment of supporters.

The Gülen movement is a civil society movement that arose in the late 1960s in Turkey, initially composed of a loose network of individuals who were inspired by M. Fethullah Gülen. As a state-approved mosque preacher, Gülen delivered sermons in cities throughout Turkey, beginning with a handful of listeners and gradually drawing tens of thousands of people. His sermons focused not only on religious texts but included a broad array of such topics as religion and science, social justice, human rights, moral values and the importance of education. Gülen repeatedly stressed the importance of educating the youth of society by establishing first-rate schools that expose students to the latest scientific knowledge in an atmosphere of moral values. The projects sponsored by Gülen-inspired followers today number in the thousands, span international borders and are costly in terms of human and financial capital (Woodhall 2005). These initiatives include over 2000 schools and seven universities in more than ninety countries in five continents (Yavuz and Esposito 2003; Baskan 2004; Tekalan 2005), two modern hospitals, the Zaman newspaper (now in both a Turkish and English edition), a television channel (Samanyolu), a radio channel (Burc FM), CHA (a major Turkish news agency), Aksiyon (a leading weekly news magazine), national and international Gülen conferences, Ramadan interfaith dinners, interfaith dialog trips to Turkey from countries around the globe and the many programs sponsored by the Journalists and Writers Foundation. In addition, the Isik insurance company and Bank Asya, an Islamic bank, are affiliated with the Gülen community. In 1993 the community also established the Business Life Cooperation Association (ISHAD) which has 470 members (Baskan 2004).

Questions regarding the financing of these numerous and expensive projects are periodically raised by both critics of the Gülen Movement and newcomers to the movement who are invited to Gülen related events. Because of the large amounts of money involved in these projects, on occasion people have raised the possibility of a collusion between the movement and various governments, especially Saudi Arabia and/or Iran, and including the Turkish government. There has even been suspicion that the American CIA may be a financial partner behind the projects (Kalyoncu, forthcoming). Aware of these criticisms, in a recent comment to a group of visiting followers, Fethullah Gülen indicated that a priority must be proactive financial transparency.

In this paper, we address directly the issue of the financing of Gülen inspired projects based on the little that is available in published sources, including an interview with Gülen himself, and supplementing that information with interviews with business leaders in Turkey who constitute the infrastructure of the movement. In addition, we present data from one local Gülen organization in Houston, Texas, that regularly collects over half a million dollars from local members, mostly students on small educational stipends. Our analysis is framed sociologically in terms of organizational theories of commitment. We argue that the contributions made by rank and file movement members, as well as by wealthier sponsors, both demonstrate commitment to the ideals of the movement and simultaneously generate commitment to the movement.

An analysis of Gülen-inspired financial contributions must include the ideological and religious motivations inherent in the concepts of *hizmet*, *himmel*, *sohbet*, *istisare*, and *mutevelli*. For an understanding of these concepts, we are most indebted to the superb work of Mehmet Kalyoncu whose study of the Gülen movement in Mardin, a city in southeastern Turkey, was very helpful both in understanding these ideas and in demonstrating their applicability to the financing of local projects in the city.

Theoretical Framework

Commitment to an organization or movement means “the willingness of social actors to give their energy and loyalty to social systems, the attachment of personality systems to social relations which are seen as self-expressive” (Kanter 1968). Simply stated, commitment involves identifying one’s personal fate with the success or failure of the collectivity. Commitment is typically examined in terms of the mix of personal and organizational characteristics which increase the willingness to exert high levels of effort, to remain a member in the organization, to accept its major goals and values, and to value the organization as worthwhile (Buchanan 1974). Rosabeth Kanter’s research in the late 1960’s and early 1970s on commitment within U.S. communes (Kanter 1972) remains a classic statement on organizational mechanisms that generate member commitment. She was interested in how groups maintain cohesion and she focused on the organizational requirements that influence individuals to feel that their own self-interest is indistinguishable from that of the group—their sense of commitment. She argued that a person is committed to a relationship or group to the extent that he/she sees it as expressing or fulfilling some fundamental part of himself and identifies group goals as nourishing one’s own sense of self. A committed person is loyal and involved; has a sense of belonging, a feeling that the group is an extension of himself or herself and he is an extension of the group. Through commitment, person and group are inextricably linked.

A major empirical finding of Kanter’s study of American utopias, and one that has subsequently influenced the commitment literature, is that for a community to survive, three basic challenges of commitment have to be addressed. First, individuals come to see their own interests as sustained by group participation (Konovsky and Pugh 1994; Rioux and Penner 2001); secondly, individuals feel an affective solidarity with the group (Van Vugt. and De Cremer 1999; Fine 1986; Jacobsen 1988) and thirdly, the individual experiences a moral, transcendent authority in the group (Hales 1993; Cetin 2006). These mechanisms can be summarized as strategies by which the group attempts to reduce the value of other possible commitments and increases the value of commitment to the group, in other words, processes both detaching the person from other options and attaching him to the community. In particular, Kanter’s research showed a positive correlation between sacrifice and investment in terms of generating commitment. The more costly the sacrifice, the greater the value placed by the individual on the goals of the group. Data in this paper support Kanter’s contention by showing that financial contributions to Gülen-inspired projects not only manifest belief in the goals of the movement but that the giving itself is a commitment mechanism for involvement in the group.

Organizational studies (e.g. Knoke 1981; Joireman, et.al. 2006; Axelrod 1984; Cardona, Lawrence and Bentler 2004; Van Vugt and De Cremer 1999) also show consistently that open avenues of communication in a group and decentralized decision making result in higher levels of member commitment than highly bureaucratized, formal decision making strategies. Members feel a stake in the group to the extent that they participate in setting goals and being part of affecting them. Likewise, establishing personal relationships that are high in trust on the part of group members is also characteristic of effective organizations (Nugent and Abolafia 2006; Cardona, Lawrence and Bentler 2004; Brewer and Kramer 1986). These trusting relationships are demonstrated by a high degree of consideration for one another in the group and generate a sense of shared communal goals. The fact that Gülen-inspired projects are always locally based and embedded in local circles of supporters locates authority and decision making within horizontal relationships rather than a vertical, bureaucratic structure. Being responsible for projects, not only financially but in terms of planning, decision making

and accountability, is also a powerful force in involving people in the movement.

Raising Money for Gülen-inspired projects

During his preaching years in mosques throughout Turkey, Gülen stressed education as the center of modernization and social progress. He emphasized continuously that peace, social justice and respect for diverse cultures and religions can be achieved by educated people who are grounded in modern science, strong morality and practical altruism. In his own words, Gülen maintained:

The main duty and purpose of human life is to seek understanding. The effort of doing so, known as education, is a perfecting process through which we earn, in the spiritual, intellectual, and physical dimensions of our beings, the rank appointed for us as the perfect pattern of creation (Unal and Williams, 2000:34).

While Gülen did not limit education to the formal instruction that schools provide for the youth of society, he advocated the establishment of schools, especially high schools, that would provide the best scientific training along with solid moral values. He realized that the building and maintaining of these schools would require people who believed in the value of education and who could provide financial and human resources. This would require sacrifice and commitment from many different people including dedicated teachers, principals with a strong vision for the schools, politicians and local officials, and local businessmen who were willing to contribute the finances to build and support the schools.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s in mosques, town squares, public conferences, and anywhere people would listen, Gülen advocated first for the establishment of dormitories where students could live and study together under the tutelage of sincere, dedicated teachers. The next step would be sponsoring college-preparatory courses that would enhance students' chances to attend university. Finally, Gülen promoted the establishment of secular, private schools that would offer state of the art education, thus preparing students for the annual university entrance exams (Cetin 2006). His listeners were mostly low-to middle-income businessmen, with a small number of wealthy ones, and university students who would soon be sponsors of and teachers in the Gülen movement's education network (Kalyoncu 2007).

By 1982 the first two goals were realized with dormitories and college preparatory courses being offered in many cities throughout Turkey. In that same year, the first two private secondary high schools opened in Izmir and Istanbul, followed by another in Ankara. These projects were envisioned and financed by circles of local businessmen in each of the cities who set up educational trusts that supported the projects until they were able to raise their own revenues through school fees. Some schools were completely built and funded by businessmen in the local communities who established trusts for this purpose while others were joint ventures between the state and the trusts. In some instances, the state provided the building, electricity and water while the trusts provided the teaching staff and all educational materials and resources (Woodhall 2005). Some of the schools are eventually totally funded by student fees that are deposited into non-profitable trusts and invested back into the school to support teaching materials and new facilities such as labs, gyms and residence halls (Woodhall 2005).

In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Gülen also encouraged the opening of schools in the Central Asian countries that gained independence during the disintegration of the Soviet Union. He convinced his followers to go to these countries to encourage the religious

enlightenment of their fellow Turkic speakers who were dominated by atheism for over 70 years of Soviet rule. In Kazakhstan, for example, the Gülen community built one university, 28 secondary schools and one primary school. In Uzbekistan, they established 18 secondary schools (Baskan 2004). Many of the students in these schools, like students in Gülen-inspired schools in Turkey, compete successfully in the International Science Olympics and score very highly in the national university entrance exam. The host countries usually provide the buildings for the schools and modest fees are collected from students. However, Turkish businessmen, many of them with interests in these countries, cover the majority of the costs.

In November, 2004, Gülen was asked by a reporter “where the water for this mill comes from,” a Turkish expression meaning what is the source of all the money behind the Gülen inspired projects. Gülen admitted that he has been asked this question many times by Turkish people who assume that there are self interests or hidden plans behind the movement’s projects. He says that there are many people who would not give you a cup of tea without guaranteeing that they will get two cups of tea from you in return. However, Gülen contrasts these people with those who are devoted to supporting the good works inspired by his teachings. Of them, he says, “Those are our people who give and give. You could say they are addicted to giving. If you say ‘not to give’ to them they will be sad and unhappy.” He goes on to tell the story of a retired man to whom he spoke before a fundraiser. The man could not give anything because he had very little. When Gülen was leaving the building, the man caught him on the stairs and handed him a set of keys and said, “These are the keys of my house. I don’t have anything to give other than that house, please take these keys.” Gülen gave back the keys and told him not to worry but to give when he had something to give. Gülen went on to praise the people of Anatolia as miraculous people who support projects that they see as worthwhile and that help to solve the problems of the world and the future of their nation. He commented that the leaders of Turkey have not been able to use this potential in their people.

Gülen himself has never had personal wealth to be able to sponsor projects. Gülen was so poor that for a number of years he lived in a corner of a local mosque with barely enough space to lie down. In addition to never having any personal wealth, he prayed for his relatives to remain poor so as not to raise any suspicions of gaining from his influence (Aslandogan and Cetin 2006). He has appeared at many fund-raising dinners and visited wealthy individuals to try to convince them to support excellent and modern education. Apart from encouraging people to donate money, Gülen has remained distanced from all financial involvements and instead has encouraged those who sponsor projects to oversee the use of their contributions. This stance has built trust and confidence in Gülen’s honesty and integrity (Aslandogan and Cetin 2006).

The success of Gülen projects relies on the numerous circles of businessmen in Turkish cities, towns and rural areas. Many of these businessmen are very successful, hence the Gülen movement is known as the richest religious community in Turkey (Baskan 2004). These circles typically consist of businessmen and professionals from the same line of business who meet together once a week to share ideas, discuss the works of Gülen and consider local projects that they might sponsor. As one businessman explained,

“Being in the same type of business means that we have a strong basis for coming together and understanding one another. We also network and refer customers among us. Then we have a basis for discussing projects that need doing in our community and how we can help with these projects. We also see the results of our efforts which encourage us to be even more generous.”

Every school has its own independent accounting system and accountants who manage the

budget and financial books. They are all accountable to the local and state authorities, as well as to the trust's sponsors. The local sponsors are knowledgeable about the status of the ongoing projects at any given time, for they are personally responsible for many of them, either as construction contractors, accountants, serving on the board of directors, teachers, principals, etc. It is quite easy, therefore, for them to monitor how the donations are used, thereby achieving transparency in financial issues. Moreover, as one businessman explained, "First of all, I want you to know that people in the Gülen movement have gained the trust of people in every strata of life. People who support the activities of this movement do not worry about whether the support reached its destination, they don't chase it. However, if we want to look at it, all kinds of information is available in every activity, we can be sure by looking at them." Likewise, a local businessmen in Houston who finances Gülen related projects commented, "Even if I don't know the details of their activities, I know these people very well and I trust them. Therefore I make donations knowing they are well used."

In Mardin, for example, a circle of local businessmen met over a three year period (1988-1991) and came to realize that the state was unable to provide the necessary education for students not only in their city but throughout southeastern Turkey to compete on university entrance exams. Most of the businessmen had been attending Gülen's public sermons, in which he emphasized the importance of education and called for the building of modern schools. These businessmen were inspired by the success of the Gülen schools in Izmir, Istanbul and Gaziantep in distinguishing themselves from their counterparts by their research-based education and unprecedented success in international science competitions. During visits to these schools, the men witnessed that the people who donated to the schools included not only businessmen, but also workers, teachers, and civil servants.

Upon their return to Mardin, they reached out to more and more people with whom they shared the educational vision and whose help they solicited in sponsoring the schools. Some pledged money, some promised to seek individuals who would pledge to contribute money, others offered to procure construction materials and equipment as donations from their suppliers, and still others committed an amount of physical work in the construction effort. Currently in the Gülen-movement schools in Mardin, every teacher supports the monthly expenses of at least one secondary or high school student (Kalyoncu, forthcoming).

In a focused interview with a dozen businessmen involved in the small textile industry in Ankara we heard many stories about how the businessmen first became involved with Gülen-inspired projects. For example, in 1985 an imam came to a local mosque and asked the businessmen there for help to open a school for children in the city. After he left, the men gathered together twice every week to discuss the matter. The group made a commitment to assist with the building of the school. Some gave money, others solicited pledges of financial support from other businessmen in the city and others provided goods and services such as concrete, desks, and even volunteer labor. Within a short time, Samanyolu College opened its doors to the first high school class. The group of businessmen continued to meet routinely, to monitor the needs in the school and to initiate additional projects that they supported. For example, in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a massacre in Azerbaijan. People there needed help. The Gülen community in Ankara responded; 18 businessmen from different parts of Ankara went to Azerbaijan to deliver money and goods that they had gathered from Gülen-inspired people in Ankara. As one of the businessmen said in the interview,

"That was an important trip for me. I learned a lot from those people in our group. They were very different people, most of them were not educated like me, but they all affected me in their understanding of Gülen's teachings and in their lifestyles. Since that trip I am very involved in the

Gülen movement.”

Another businessman in the focus group told a story that typifies the way in which many people get involved in the movement. One day in 1988 he met a law student who was being financed by one of the businessmen that he knew in his living complex. He asked the businessmen to introduce him to some of these underprivileged law students who could not afford law school. Several days later a group of law students showed up at his store. However, they did not ask for money but talked about country and world problems. A few weeks later they invited the man to their house where there were 10 law students gathered from all over Turkey, most of them from poor families. Still there was no talk of money. Some of the students again visited his store and met his son who was having difficulty in school. They offered to tutor the son whose grades improved dramatically with tutoring. There was still no talk of money. The man, after a year of knowing these students personally, initiated scholarships to help them complete law school. He continues since 1988 to provide such scholarships to needy law students.

The above story typifies actions of Gülen himself in the 1970s and 1980s when he lived on or near university campuses throughout Turkey. He served as a teacher for a time and spent many years supervising students in high school and university settings. In Bursa we interviewed a gentleman in his 60s who, along with his brother, shared a house with Gülen while he was attending university in the 1960s. He recalled the many university students who would visit Gülen in his second story apartment for tutoring and encouragement. He commented that, in his opinion, this cadre of university students who gathered around Gülen was the beginnings of the Gülen movement in Turkey.

We asked the group of a dozen businessmen in Ankara whether each of them contributes financially to Gülen-inspired projects and, if so, approximately how much they give each year. Each of the 12 men said that they contribute as they can to the movement projects. Amounts of contributions varied from 10%-70% of their annual income, ranging from \$20,000-\$300,000 per year. One man, in particular, said he gives 40% of his income every year which is about \$100,000; however, he said he would like to give 95% but is not able to do so and still maintain himself and his family. Another man said, “We wish we could be like the companion of the Prophet and give everything we have. But it is not easy.” This group of businessmen consisted of older men who have been together as a group for many years and have accomplished numerous Gülen-inspired projects in Ankara as well as in other countries. Currently, each of them has managers in their stores who carry on the daily business affairs. The business owners spend 2-3 hours in their stores every day and then come together almost every day to discuss issues related to the projects they are supporting. The group, therefore, provides a tight community of like-minded individuals working for common causes. Cetin (unpublished dissertation) maintains that

“the solidarity of the group is inseparable from the personal quest and from the everyday affective and communicative needs of the participants in the network... Yet, it is epiphenomenal, not the ultimate aim or end in itself, by itself, but it accompanies action naturally as a result of the accomplishment of the service projects.”

Another very successful businessman in Istanbul whom we interviewed provided insight into the sums of money being contributed by the supporters of the Gülen Movement to local projects. He is 48 years old and is in the textile business. He contributes 20% of his 4-5 million dollar yearly income to movement-related projects. 80% of his good friends are also members of the movement and contribute as they can to projects. He says he has established

very sincere and fortunate friendships through participation in activities in the movement. He learned of the movement when a friend in 1986 invited him to a sohbet where people come together and have discussions, both about Gülen's writings and about local projects that need support. Asked what benefits a person gets from supporting Gülen inspired projects, he replied,

"I do not get any worldly benefit by supporting the Gülen Movement. If I receive anything in the hereafter, we will see that over there. I hope that I will be able to please God through these activities and the time that I spend with these beautiful people. Other than this, neither I nor other volunteers have any other expectations. After giving your heart to these charitable activities, God never leaves you in trouble. We give and he gives more back to us. He multiplies what we have in our hands. I don't think my contributions are big and enough, however, in the sight of God, there is nothing small and valueless if you do that for Him and for humanity."

The 48 year old businessman in Istanbul had this to say,

"People in the Gülen movement turn their ideas into projects, they tell how they accomplished their success. People trust them, if they ask for a project, they expect it from the Creator, not from creatures, and that's why I believe they reach success. If anybody from the movement comes to my city and asks for help, I try my best to help them and I encourage my friends around me to do the same."

He went on to say that such giving is done in a spirit of serving the Creator by serving his people and that often a result of such giving is that strong ties are developed among the givers. As Cetin (unpublished dissertation) maintains,

"Participation in services takes relatively permanent forms of networks. Individuals come and go and replace one another but the projects are always there and continue. Individual needs and collective goals are not mutually exclusive; they are one and the same thing. These two and the action of the Gülen Movement coincide and interweave closely with one another in daily life... The participation in services around a specific goal and the tangibility of the products yield and strengthen solidarity."

Aymaz (2006) exemplifies the connections between individual and collective goals in the following way:

"The multiple, mutable, and overlapping relations of belonging to service projects form the basis, solidarity, cohesion and continuity of the Gülen Movement. In these network relations, belongings, individual needs and collective goals, and individual and collective interests, are constantly negotiated and served. Individuality and collectivity are not mutually exclusive, they are one and the same thing... people commit themselves to service projects both within leisure time and committed time. The continuity between leisure and commitment, by presupposing a close connection between self-fulfillment and participation, expresses and enhances a great deal of feeling and meaning, forms the basis of material and immaterial resources and their utilizability in collective action."

Through the networks of relationships in the Gülen Movement, individuals feel part of a common unity, a social coherence and cohesion.

Financing Projects in the Institute for Interfaith Dialog, Houston, Texas

There are numerous local groups in the United States that consist of individuals who are inspired by the teachings and life of Gülen. These groups are independent organizationally

even though members across groups may know another and share ideas and projects informally. The Institute of Interfaith Dialog for World Peace, Inc. (IID) was established in August 2002 in Austin, Texas. One year later the headquarters moved to Houston. IID organizes activities in more than 16 cities in the southern states, including Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arkansas and Mississippi. The purpose of the nonprofit institute is to promote interfaith dialogue and understanding.

To achieve this purpose, the institute organizes and supports numerous activities in each of the cities in which it has members. These include an annual Ramadan interfaith dinner, a yearly award dinner to honor people in the local communities who make major contributions to interfaith dialog, workshops throughout the year, an annual retreat and numerous interfaith trips to Turkey. These activities are supported financially by contributions on the part of members committed to the institute, most of them Turkish Muslims who are inspired by the teachings of Gülen. Many of them are Turkish students attending universities in the southern United States, even though there are a handful of businessmen and professionals who are also involved.

Based on the Turkish model of local circles that support Gülen-inspired projects, a large percentage of IID's budget is provided by relatively small contributions on the part of over 500 Turkish and Turkish-Americans in the southern states of the U.S. who support projects of IID. About half of these supporters are local students. In terms of financial donations IID collects over half million U.S. dollars every year. Numerous graduate students, many of them on small stipends from Turkey or from their American universities, pledge \$2,000-\$5,000 every year even though such pledges means great sacrifice on the students' part. It is not unusual for a student on a \$1500 per month stipend to give \$100-150 per month to IID which amounts to roughly 10% of his/her income. Some of the students also work in second jobs in order to contribute some money to the activities of IID. And many of them look forward to graduating, having good jobs and being able to contribute more of their income at that point. As one student said, "Being a graduate student it is hard to donate big amounts, but hopefully after I graduate, I will be able to make bigger and better donations."

Approximately 50% of IID members are professionals and businessmen in the community, many of whom have completed education in the United States and have opted to work there for the time being. It is the contributions of these individuals which constitute the largest proportion of IID's income. One local businessman, for example, who is an engineer and has some real estate investments, said that he gives \$50,000-\$70,000 every year to IID which is 40% of his income. He single-handedly finances an Iftar dinner each year. In 2006 he also paid for the tickets for twelve Americans to visit Turkey in an interfaith trip sponsored by IID. He regrets that his busy schedule prohibits him from greater involvement with IID activities; however, he feels he can make an impact in IID projects by providing substantial financial support. In addition, he joins friends every week at sohbet (group meetings) to discuss the ideas of Gülen and how to operationalize them in local projects.

Direct financial contributions do not capture the full picture of donations to Gülen projects. Followers donate time, talents and food to the various activities sponsored by IID. For example, dinner and luncheons are frequently organized by IID. Women in the organization are continuously asked to prepare Turkish food for these gatherings, both small and large, and neither the cost of the food nor the labor involved in preparing it is financially compensated. The design and maintenance of websites, designing fliers and brochures, creating videos related to the activities of IID, organizing events, leading interfaith trips to Turkey, hosting

people from other faith communities into their homes during Ramadan and networking in the interfaith community are done by volunteers of the movement. It is not unusual for many IID members to spend 20-30 hours a week in Gülen movement activities, and many of these followers are full time students in local universities. If these activities were outsourced or calculated in terms of costs, the donations from IID members would be well over a million U.S. dollars a year.

Islamic Concepts Underlying Movement Projects

To fully understand and appreciate the financial structure of the Gülen movement projects, it is imperative to locate contributions within the Islamic concepts of: *hizmet*, *himmet*, *sohbet*, *istisare* and *mutevelli*. These are the religious, Islamic ideals that provide motivation for member contributions, including not only financial giving but also involvement of time, energies, volunteer work on projects, etc.

Hizmet is an overarching concept that denotes service to one's fellow human beings and is rooted in the Islamic belief that every individual will be held accountable for the way he or she has lived in this world. In Gülen's words:

Therefore, the worldly life should be used in order to earn the afterlife and to please the One who has bestowed it. The way to do so is to seek to please Allah and, as an inseparable dimension of it, to serve immediate family members, society, country, and all of humanity accordingly. This service is our right, and sharing it with others is our duty (Unal, 267).

Gülen frequently recalls meetings during the time of the Prophet Muhammad who praised his companions for their passion for giving. Gülen reminds his followers of the examples of the first two caliphs, Abu Bakr who donated everything he owned and Omar who donated half of his material goods to support those in need (Kalyoncu, forthcoming). One of the Ankara businessmen commented that

“commitment and dedication in this movement is very unique, that's why the movement is successful. And also sincerity, people in this movement do not do things for themselves, they do it for others and most importantly to please God. We have a saying in Turkish: 'Service to people is service to God-Halka hizmet, Hakka hizmettir'-that's what this movement is doing.”

Sohbet is the medium through which the need for *hizmet* is shared among individuals. It is a structure where individuals find the opportunity to socialize, chat, and exchange ideas about their projects, either educational or business-related, but devoid of politics and divisive subjects. The *sohbet* meetings reinforce the Gülen's movement's philosophy and educational vision that permeates the practical projects that are discussed. The Gülen movement seeks to use the *sohbet* forum to cultivate a sense of community, address common needs and goals and communicate the necessity of *hizmet* or service for the good of others.

The *sohbet* is usually organized according to the participants occupation or place of residence; for example, public servants, health care workers, dentists, teachers, businessmen or construction contractors. The purpose of such groupings is to facilitate commonalities among the *sohbet* meetings' participants so that they can better socialize and network with each other in terms of potential business partners, customers or suppliers. Participants often study passages from Gülen's works and relate them to needs in the community. It is the *sohbet* meetings that afford the platform to discuss projects and ways to sponsor them.

Gülen emphasized the doing of good deeds through collective action. He encouraged men

and women to meet together to build communal ties and to plan and execute good works (Ozdalga 2000). Hizmet, he argued, like all such religious duties conscientiously performed, also has secondary beneficial effects on the individual and the community. This is especially true for education which was always a primary concern and goal for Gülen. As he said in one of his sermons, “Education is vital for both societies and individuals” (Unal and Williams, 2000, p. 306).

Istisare, the collective decision making that occurs within the sohbet in regard to collective projects, results in each person’s taking responsibility for making sure that the projects are funded and executed. It is this structure that enables the movement to operate horizontally rather than vertically or bureaucratically. Every institution that is established, whether in Turkey or in the ninety other countries that now have Gülen schools, is a corporate nonprofit entity that is independent of the others and is managed by those people who are supporting the school. The only connection among these institutions is the exchange of ideas that arise from a commitment to the same goals (Tekalan 2005).

In addition to establishing schools, the many other Gülen-inspired projects are organized on the same model of grassroots support from people in the Gülen movement. Typically, before the movement launches its educational and cultural activities in a new country, the people in the movement identify and make contact with local figures through personal visits. These local figures are influential people, such as bureaucrats, civil servants, clerics, intellectuals, and businessmen. The purpose of such visits is to solicit help from people who have an ability to mobilize their society and access resources, both human and financial. Also, these contacts build trust with the local authorities (Kalyoncu forthcoming).

The *mutevelli* is essentially a board of trustees or sponsors who have volunteered to take on more responsibility, whether overseeing more projects or donating more money than others. What is important is that the mutevelli circle is open to anyone who consistently carries out the responsibilities that he or she takes on.

Finally, *himmət* refers to one’s personal commitment to carrying out whatever needs to be done to better one’s community. In this sense, commitments of money, time or effort identifies one with the movement and the project at hand. Himmət often turns into a passion for giving for those who have willingly taken on the responsibility not only to donate but to procure resources from others. In an interview in Bergama, a wealthy industrialist who is a major sponsor of local Gülen schools commented that people should not be afraid to approach wealthy individuals to support worthwhile projects. Approximately eight years ago, he was approached by members in the Gülen movement, all who were strangers to him, for financial assistance in establishing the first local school. He began attending their meetings, was inspired by the altruism of the group, was convinced of their sincerity regarding education and offered to finance the first school until it could become self sufficient. Today he is helping to fund schools in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan and commented that the more he gives, the better his businesses seem to thrive. He believes that wealthy people want to do their share in helping to create a better world and are looking for projects that they see as being influential in that direction.

We asked a number of businessmen and professionals whether financial contributions to Gülen-inspired projects is part of zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam. We were told that zakat represents the minimum expected of Muslims in order to help their needy neighbor. Those committed to the Gülen movement routinely give many times over the required 2.5% of their yearly earnings. This type of giving is called *sadaqa*, or voluntary charity, and is

based on an individual's needs and excess wealth. The above five concepts provide the motivation for going above and beyond this minimum contribution, something that characterizes millions of people in the Gülen movement around the world.

Conclusions

Based on the scant literature that exists on the funding of Gülen-inspired projects and our own interviews conducted with members of the Gülen Movement both in Turkey and in Houston, Texas, it is evident that the money behind the movement is provided by millions of people the world over who are committed to the ideas and ideals promoted by Gülen. The basic money-raising strategy in the movement consists in the establishment of local circles of businessmen, teachers, principals, professionals, and students who meet together regularly to discuss the works of Gülen and consider how his ideals can be applied in their local communities. In the course of initiating and building Gülen-inspired projects, the group evolves into a tightly-knit community where individuals find meaning and support. In Kanter's conceptualization, the goals of the group become fused with one's own sense of purpose and meaning in life. Group goals nourish one's own sense of self and the group becomes an extension of oneself, thus inextricably linking person and group, thus meeting the first of Kanter's basic challenges for group survival and success.

The affective bonds that evolve in the group in the course of working together on meaningful projects fulfill Kanter's second organizational challenge. The fact that many local circles are based on individuals who share occupational or business interests further adds to the solidarity created in the group. The more closely an individual is integrated into a group, the greater will be the degree of his/her participation (Klandermans 2006). Participation is an expression of belonging to a certain social group and receiving individual rewards for being part of the larger collective. Also, the more intense the collective participation in a network of relations, the more rapid and durable will be the mobilization of a movement (Melucci 1999). The Gülen Movement facilitates and thus increases an individual's willingness to get involved in service projects through his/her relationship with other like-minded, similarly intentioned people.

The third challenge, the experience of a moral, transcendent authority in the group is provided by the continuous discussions of Gülen's teachings as well as sharing readings from the Qur'an and the *hadiths* of the Prophet. Thus, the goals and motivations behind the service projects are more than just helping other people. Rather, they are rooted in the notion that they are part of Allah's continuous creation and caring for his people.

Kanter argues that a further mechanism for individual commitment to group life and group goals is that of sacrifice. The giving of one's time and resources to the group not only indicates commitment to the group but also creates that very commitment. As people in the Gülen movement give of their personal resources to group life and group projects, the very act of giving has the consequence of intensifying commitment to the group and its ideals.

The five basic Islamic ideals (i.e. *hizmet*, *himmət*, *sohbet*, *istisare* and *mutevelli*) that motivate members of the Gülen movement to contribute time, energy and financial contributions to Gülen-inspired projects function, simultaneously, to build strong commitment on the part of individuals to the movement. A major strength of the local circles is the constant discussions of these concepts based on the Qur'an and the works of Gülen. The circles, therefore, provide the spiritual motivation for giving and remain far more than simply money raising venues. Whether consciously or not, the structure that has evolved within the Gülen

movement is rooted in sound organizational principles and is reflected in the growth of the movement worldwide.

Yilmaz (2003) foresees an impact of the Gülen Movement not only within Turkish society but also on a global level. As a matter of fact, he states that changes are already happening in Turkish society in regard to certain issues in the direction of what Gülen has been advocating. The Gülen Movement sets an example in the Muslim World not only with its activities but also how it generates financial support for these activities. Usage of the five basic Islamic ideals (i.e. *hizmet, himmet, sohbet, istisare and mutevelli*), and examples from the lives of the companions of the Prophet, strengthens the Gülen Movement's position and impact within the Muslim World. Even though the movement started in Turkey within the Turkish population, in a short time it has grown in other parts of the world within non-Turkish populations, not only with educational projects but also in terms of interfaith dialogue activities.