Comparing Christian FBOs and Secular NGOs in Guatemala
A Qualitative Assessment of Individual Motivations and Organizational Effectiveness

by

Shane Glosnek

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ABSTRACT

COMPARING CHRISTIAN FBOS AND SECULAR NGOS IN GUATEMALA: A QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Shane Glosnek
University of Guelph, 2017

Adviser:
Professor Andrea Paras

This thesis is an investigation of Christian faith-based organizations and secular non-governmental organizations and their employees in the city of Antigua, Guatemala and its surrounding area. Differences between the two types of organizations are examined by detailing the motivations and beliefs of individual employees, and by examining the idea of a religious comparative advantage stemming from community embeddedness, cultural proximity, and employee resiliency. Qualitative interviews were conducted with employees of development organizations working in the Antigua area. This research revealed that development practitioners, whether religious or not, hold similar values that motivate them to work in development. It also revealed that religious employees emphasized relationships with aid recipients, established trust with aid recipients by relating to them through their faith, and relied on their faith to handle burnout. Non-religious employees maintained more distant relationships with aid recipients, experienced a “cultural divide,” and relied on the support of their peers.
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Chapter 1: Introduction
“I don’t know how you can see some of the stuff we see and deal with it without some kind of faith – without having something bigger that you’re to lean up against” (001, July 1st, 2016, Rainbow Café)

“I feel that religious organizations are there for whatever religion or church they represent, rather than the people they’re supposed to be helping. Giving out a bunch of Bibles isn’t going to feed them!” (009, July 21st, Cambio Language School)

This thesis opens with two opposing quotes. One may be able to guess that the former quote comes from a religious person and that the latter was said by someone who is noticeably less religious or not religious at all. Yet, both work for development organizations in the same city in Guatemala and both are originally from the Global North. Both intend to continue to work in development in Guatemala, and both work for an organization they have a high opinion of, but they both also seem to have an uncertain view of the other.

Is this uncertainty justified? Is a non-religious person working in development really lacking in resiliency, and are religious development practitioners sidelining development goals in favour of gaining converts, as these quotes seem to suggest? This uncertainty takes a more negative tone in the second quote, but this may stem from ignorance of the diversity of religious organizations that engage in development in the Guatemalan city of Antigua and its surrounding areas. Indeed, this participant was perhaps unaware of faith-based organizations (FBOs) that work quite similarly to her own secular non-governmental organization (NGO) and do not provide Bibles at all. Perhaps she was also unaware of those FBOs that engage in development work but also provide a spiritual component to their work that is appreciated by religious Guatemalans. Similarly, the first quote expresses an uncertainty that a non-religious person could work in development at all – yet there are numerous secular NGOs that employ atheists and agnostics in Guatemala. Some non-religious employees, indeed, struggle with the difficulty of their work and many have doubts about their future in their field, but others are committed to
work in development indefinitely. With these quotes, one gets the sense that some development practitioners feel as if their type of organization is more appropriate for development work or that as a religious or non-religious individual they are more equipped to be in the position they are in than the other.

This thesis seeks to engage with the debate posed by the introductory quotes. To what extent do FBOs and NGOs and their employees differ from one another when working in international development? How do their motivations differ? Can it be demonstrated that one has an advantage over the other? Does the religious factor matter in development? These are the central questions of this thesis, and they explore whether there is truth to the quotes that open this work. To better focus the thesis, these questions are further broken down into sub-questions that correspond with two analytical chapters. The first of these two analytical chapters, covering the topic of individual motivations, answers the following questions: what motivates an individual to work abroad in international development? How are religious and non-religious employees of NGOs and FBOs motivated differently? What values and beliefs do development practitioners hold that motivate them to work in development, and how do these differ between religious and non-religious participants? Are those working for secular NGOs motivated by a religious faith? If not, what motivates them?

As will be explained, a majority of those working for secular NGOs in Antigua described themselves as atheists, while others called themselves agnostic or “spiritual.” Regarding the previous questions, a pattern emerged where strongly religious participants were primarily motivated by their religious faith and values stemming from that faith such as charity, universalism, and solidarity. These values also inspired non-religious participants although without the religious factor. These values were formed or solidified in many cases due to
specific experiences or the example set by religious relatives, and participants spoke of finding personal fulfillment and feeling a sense of duty. This chapter will go into detail with these questions by providing the most insightful answers from participants. Readers should note that these sub-questions focus on the individual level of analysis, and that this sets the thesis apart from similar studies. Prior studies, for the most part, have examined the question of whether FBOs, as organizations, are distinct or have any advantage at the organizational level of analysis only.

The second analytical chapter, chapter six, resembles those prior studies in that it includes the organizational level of analysis while also continuing to use data specific to the individual. The primary sub-question for this chapter is as follows: to what extent is there a comparative advantage for FBOs working in international development? This question is complex and difficult to answer, so this chapter breaks this question down into further sub-questions that investigate specific ways that types of organization could have an advantage. Are FBOs more embedded in their target communities than NGOs? Does the expression of religious faith accelerate the process of building trust between organizations and target communities? Does religious faith promote resiliency among development practitioners? Do FBOs and NGOs differ in the methods they use to meet their development goals, and could this be the source of an advantage?

Principally the ideas of Clarke (2008) function as the basis for this chapter. His suggestions that FBOs may be more embedded in communities and are more easily able to build trust with religious members of their target communities are highly relevant, and more on this will be found in the literature review in the next chapter. To answer these questions, participants were asked about how involved they were with the culture of their communities and
whether they had deep connections with their targeted community. They were also asked about issues of trust and any sources of conflict with the communities. On the question of embeddedness and trust, a pattern did emerge that indicated that non-religious persons felt there was a divide between them in their community, partially stemming from the lack of a shared faith, and some participants felt that relationships with the community should be strictly business. Besides this, non-religious participants reported awkwardness between themselves and community members due to their lack of faith, but that this eventually subsided once trust was established over time. Faith was found to facilitate trust between development practitioners and aid recipients, but that non-religious practitioners were not prevented from building trust without faith. A second major section found that faith was a major source of resiliency for religious practitioners, and that non-religious practitioners instead relied on the support of their peers. A final section of this chapter will engage with the question of whether FBOs are distinctive in terms of their development methods. It will be explained that both secular NGOs and FBOs are subscribing to the same development paradigms of cultural sensitivity and participation to avoid being perceived as imperialistic. Such was the case for all the organizations studied.

The above chapters present and analyze the findings of this thesis. However, prior to this there will be several chapters that will aid the reader in understanding this analysis. First, readers will find that chapter two consists of a literature review. This literature review will serve several functions. For one, it will provide important background on religion and development by explaining its relevance to the field of political science as well as the field of international development. Subsequently, there will be an examination of the literature specifically discussing NGOs and FBOs working in development, including the literature on measuring religiosity within organizations and differentiating between them. Another section of this chapter is
included to provide readers with the historical and cultural context of Guatemala, and there will also be an important discussion of the present state of development within the country, demonstrating the need for FBOs and NGOs to continue working there. With this concluded, the third chapter will then describe the theoretical framework, including how organizations will be categorized and how participants are differentiated. The theory underpinning chapter five will include a scholarly discussion of values both religious and secular, and the theory for chapter six will discuss the scholarly ideas behind the potential religious comparative advantage. The fourth chapter will cover methods, and will include an explanation of the interview methods used, the reasoning behind case selection, and a description of the participants and the organizations they worked for. With this concluded, the next two chapters will present the findings of this thesis, as previously discussed, and a final chapter will summarize them, suggest future research, and explain the relevance of the findings.
Chapter 2: Literature Review and Historical Context
Taking Religion in Development Seriously

Academics across disciplines largely dismissed religion as an irrelevant factor for much of the twentieth century due to the influence of the “secularization thesis” which posited that as countries modernized they would gradually become less religious and more secular. This theory was supported by a number of sociologists, including Max Weber (Weber, 1976 [1930]), and Peter Berger developed the thesis further in 1967 with The Sacred Canopy. Yet, by the end of the twentieth century Berger had acknowledged its failure in The Desecularization of the World (Berger, 1999). Those who seek to analyze the contemporary world, Berger has argued, risk much if they choose to ignore religion (Ibid). Around the same time as Berger was admitting the inaccuracy of his own theory, scholars of international development studies (IDS) also began to take notice of religion as an influential variable in their work. As in most disciplines, many IDS scholars had dismissed the importance of religion as miniscule or even irrelevant. Indeed, professional development practitioners based in the Global North, whether working with governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), focused on quantifiable factors such as economics when designing development projects and have only recently begun to take cultural aspects into account (Marshall, 2001).

Published discussion of religion and development was virtually non-existent despite a 1980 special issue of World Development where Wilber and Jameson called for an examination of religion as a motivating factor for development, a social limit, and a factor in the evolution of development actors such as NGOs (p. 477). These arguments went largely unheeded for the next two decades; yet, by the turn of the century scholars were beginning to take the lack of scholarship on religion and development seriously – a scholarly phenomenon which Kurt Alan
Ver Beek (2000) called the “development taboo”. The reasoning behind this is complex, but now the twenty first century has seen a significant increase in serious study of the subject. Some of this renewed interest was sparked by the famous “clash of civilizations” thesis that predicted a cultural clash with Islam (Huntington, 1993). The thesis, although often dismissed, became increasingly pertinent at the dawn of the twenty-first century after religiously motivated terrorist attacks confirmed the thesis in the eyes of some. Subsequently scholars Thomas (2005) and Haynes (2007) have both argued that religion has experienced a resurgence in international relations and have explained its worldwide importance in their own works. Ferrara (2014) similarly has argued that religion has a place in most world events, both negatively as a source of conflict, but also as a potential tool to foster international cooperation. Other works have attempted to establish a theoretical framework for understanding religion as a source of political power (Fitzgerald, 2011; Haynes, 2012). Other examples are not difficult to come by, demonstrating that interest in religion has become significant among political scientists. This interest extends to scholars of the related field of international development studies (IDS) as well as to non-academic organizations that deal with politics and development.

**The Importance of Faith-Based Organizations**

There are examples of non-academic organizations, such as the United Nations, taking religion seriously at the end of the 20th century, further highlighting the importance of religion in politics and the rising role of FBOs. These organizations may work very similarly to an NGO in that they work in the same fields and attempt to address the same questions, but their objectives are coloured by the teachings of their religious faith. In some cases, this places them in opposition to some secular NGOs and thus they compete for both funding and influence. One
example is the influence of religious organizations at United Nations development conferences such as the United Nations Conference on Population in Cairo (1994) and on Women in Beijing (1995). With the Catholic Holy See represented as a sovereign state and many Muslim majority countries exerting their influences, abortion policy put forth by the conferences was influenced by religious viewpoints (Eager, 2004). In addition to the Holy See, Christian FBOs also had strong influence at the conferences, resulting in agreements on reproductive rights that were less firm on the right to safe abortion and contraception than they may have been had there not been religious influence (Haynes, 2014). A second example is the inception of the World Faith and Development Dialogue (WFDD), a not-for-profit organization that promotes closer cooperation between religious communities, FBOs, and secular development institutions. One of the results of this organization’s work has been the publication of articles and books which are now often cited in the religion and development field (Marshall and Marsh, 2003; Marshall and Keough, 2004). A final example is the strong advocacy of religious, and particularly Catholic, FBOs for alleviating debt in the Global South during the lead up to the Catholic Church’s “Jubilee Year” in 2000.

These examples, of which there are easily many more, demonstrate that FBOs have gained in prominence on the international stage, but some of the organizations referenced differ from those working on the ground in the Global South. As with NGOs, FBOs differ from one another by the type of the work they engage in, their objectives, and where they work. Here it is important to note that the organizations in the former example work in advocacy and could be described as “faith-based socio-political organizations” (Clarke, 2008, p. 25). The FBOs of interest to this thesis work with communities in the Global South on improving factors of development such as education, health care, and economic opportunity, and should be described
as “faith-based development organizations.” From this point forward, “FBO” will refer exclusively to faith-based development organizations, unless otherwise stated. Doing this specifies that the relevant organizations are not socio-political or advocacy groups, missionary groups, church congregations or other organizations that could also be called FBOs.

Faith-based development organizations need to be taken seriously as governments continue to fund their development agendas abroad (Brown, 2012). Some of this funding is channelled to development NGOs, and recent decades have also seen an increase of funding to FBOs, including from supranational entities such as the World Bank and the United Nations, (Thomas, 2004). Furthermore, religious institutions are themselves involved in development activities through funding, advocacy, or through their own FBOs. With FBOs competing for funding from individual, government, and supranational funding, both secular NGOs and FBOs should be studied in comparison. Yet, there is a point of contention within the literature as to whether FBOs differ substantially from their secular counterparts - whether they have a comparative advantage, or whether they offer a distinct alternative vision to secular organizations. Religion remains an important factor in the lives of those in the Global South who are often targets of development projects, as scholars have shown. Does this mean an FBO is more appropriate to engage with them? (Ellis & Haar, 2004; Marshall & Keough, 2004; Thomas, 2005; Clarke 2006; Benham Rennick, 2013). Assessing this is important for potential donors who would prefer to send their money to the most effective recipient, yet, the place of FBOs in the field of development “remains relatively under researched” (Clarke and Ware, 2015, p. 38).
Studying Religion and Development in Tandem

Provoked in part by the above examples, the need for studying religion and development in tandem has since been argued by a number of scholars. The reasons are manifold. Ver Beek, for example, argued that the work of development practitioners has been consistently flawed or incomplete due to this missing cultural factor (Ver Beek, 2000). Similarly, Marshall (2001) has written that religion is still a “vital force” for both individuals and communities and that the ignorance of this factor can potentially have disastrous consequences for development practitioners. Norris and Inglehart (2004) have pointed out that in the face of globalization, potential westernization, and western-led development projects, many in the Global South have returned to or reasserted their faith to stave off an “existential crisis.” Finally, Haynes explained in Development Studies that religious faiths are key to the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding – a factor which is key for proper development (Haynes, 2008). This list could easily be expanded.

Faith-Based Development Organizations

Most importantly for this thesis, numerous scholars have explored the important role FBOs play in international development and emphasize the long history of FBOs in this sector (Marshall and Van Saanen, 2007). There have been works on the development practices and development related values of non-Christian faiths such as Islam (De Cordier, 2009), but Christianity will be focused on for the purposes of this thesis. Gerard Clarke is one scholar who has paid special attention to Christian FBOs working in development. For example, Clarke has argued that FBOs play an important role in both the daily and political lives of the world’s poor (Clarke, 2006, p. 835). Indeed, Clarke is also clear on the key differences between FBOs and
secular NGOs. They “draw on elaborate spiritual and moral values” and “mobilize adherents otherwise estranged by secular development discourse” (Clarke, 2006, p. 845). Concerning these two points: it may be difficult for secular organizations to mobilize religious adherents in the same way as FBOs, but it is possible that many workers for secular organizations draw on the same spiritual and moral values if they are religious themselves. If this is true, it may narrow the perceived gap between FBOs and secular NGOs to a degree.

Still, many scholars have suggested that FBOs have a comparative advantage due to the two reasons given above. Some scholars are clear on their belief that FBOs are more efficient, motivated, concerned for the poor, and trusted by the poor (James, 2009, p. 2). In their discourse analysis, Heffernan, Adkins, and Occhipinti have seen that most scholars who take a positive view on FBOs write of similar characteristics as James – that they are more effective and relevant (2009, p. 6). Others have been more critical of the role of FBOs. Rakodi (2012), explains in her literature review that much of the scholarship on religion and development since 2000 was written either with the assumption that religion is a positive factor in development, or with the intent to prove that this is the case (p. 623). De Kadt (2011) has called this the “faith-based bandwagon.” Indeed, specific studies that engage with this question provide mixed results.

Lipsky (2011), for example, has developed an analytical framework to assess the comparative advantage of FBOs and applied it to the context of health services in sub-Saharan Africa. The most relevant conclusion she made is that FBOs gain an advantage due to their moral and ethical standing among the community they are serving – a key factor in building trust (p. 34). Leurs (2012) comes to similar conclusions when comparing FBOs and secular NGOs working in Nigeria. Yet, Green, Mercer, and Masaki (2012) found little evidence that FBOs
were either distinctive or more effective than their secular counterparts in Tanzania. Kirmani (2012) likewise did not find evidence that FBOs had any advantage. Other studies found the religious factor to have a negative effect; Bradley (2005), for example, found that the Christian worldview of the FBOs they studied hindered the organization from achieving its development goals. This partly depends on which faith the FBO is adhering to and whether it corresponds with the faith of those they are serving, a concept that Benthall (2012) calls “cultural proximity,” but it may be the case that the workers of secular NGOs gain this trust if they are religious themselves and openly express it to those targeted by their development projects.

There has been a trend in recent years where governments in the Global North have increased the amount of funding given to FBOs working in development internationally – at the very least suggesting that governments view them as just as credible and effective as secular NGOs. Some would suggest that what was once a “forgotten factor” is now being rediscovered (Tyndale, 2006) This tendency has been observed in countries such as the United Kingdom, where Clarke has observed a growing interest in FBOs working internationally by the Department of International Development since 1997, and in the United States since 2004 (Clarke, 2007). There has been some debate surrounding this suggestion in the Canadian context: Audet, Paquette, and Bergeron (2013) have concluded that FBOs, even those that proselytize, benefitted from funding increases under the recent Conservative government. In contrast to this, however, Vander Zaag (2013) has argued that although FBOs are key recipients of Canada’s foreign aid funding, government preference for them has not recently increased. Nonetheless, Christian FBOs working in the Global South do receive a significant percentage of funding. The question of whether there is a type of development organization which is more effective is especially important as foreign aid programs are continually criticized. Indeed, some
scholars advocate reform and others even advocate abolition (Moyo, 2009; Deaton, 2013). Thus, if there is a comparative advantage in favour of FBOs, the source should be discovered.

**Secular Non-Governmental Organizations**

Scholarly works have been written on the history of secular NGOs, pointing out that some began as FBOs, and it will be important to understand if these links still exist. For example, Black (1992) writes about Oxfam as an NGO which grew out of famine relief efforts during the Second World War, but also as an NGO with an early history characterized by a close relationship with Christian churches. Founding members of the organization spoke of “God’s purpose,” while Catholic Bishops and the Protestant British Council of Churches supported it financially through donations and by telling its story to their congregations (Black, 1992, p. 2-25). Although Oxfam would go on to distance itself from its Christian heritage, many of those who volunteered or worked for Oxfam during its early years had a Christian background (p. 56). This is perhaps not unexpected, as countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada (Oxfam opened its Canadian branch in 1963) had a high proportion of Christians in their countries (Malloy, 2011). Even still today, as the proportion of Christians in these countries shrinks (although remaining significant) the Christian heritage of countries such as Canada cannot be ignored (O’Toole, 2000). One of the NGOs examined in this thesis similarly began as a Christian FBO before transitioning into a secular NGO based on Christian values. This NGO is one of three secular organizations included in this study where faith still plays a significant role in its work, as will be explained in the fourth chapter.

The pattern is similar for other NGOs. In *Canada’s Global Villagers*, Ruth Compton Brouwer (2013) provides a history of the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), an
important Canadian development NGO. Like many NGOs, CUSO was founded during the 1960s - the United Nations’ first “development decade.” Unlike Oxfam, however, the founders of CUSO were keen to avoid explicit ties with Christian Churches from the start (Ibid). Despite this, however, Christianity was still highly influential: most of its volunteers admitted their Protestant or Catholic upbringings influenced them to join, and its first chairman was a practicing Catholic (Ibid). One of CUSO’s founding members, Bill McWhinney, corroborates Brouwer’s points in *Man Deserves Man*, an inside perspective of CUSO’s early years. McWhinney explains that while CUSO’s volunteers had avoided going into Christian mission work or work with newly founded Christian FBOs, they were still motivated by a Christianity-inspired altruism (McWhinney, 1968). Indeed, Brouwer has written elsewhere that by the 1960s large numbers of youth who a generation before would have gone into mission work were leaving Christian based programs in droves (Brouwer, 2010). Histories of development organizations today fail to explore this topic, so a pertinent question for this work will be whether the Christian influence on secular development organizations remains, and the question of personal motivations of development workers is one that has not been explored in depth. There is some literature on the topic, with Hippler (2009) calling for more empirical research on why employees of organizations (in Hippler’s research, not solely FBOs or NGOs, but also businesses) choose to expatriate. Oberholster, Clarke, Bendixen, and Dastoor (2013) found in their study on religious organizations, including FBOs, that Christian expat workers were motivated by Christian altruism, as were the CUSO workers just mentioned. In addition to the religious participants included, this thesis will also go into detail about the motivations of non-religious participants.
Categorizing FBOs and NGOs

Some of the organizations discussed above, and also some of the organizations included in this research, do not neatly fit into the categories of “religious” and “secular” - they require a much more nuanced understanding than this simple dichotomy would indicate. In their chapter in *Sacred Aid*, Paras and Stein argue that the boundaries between secular and religious NGOs are unclear because the boundary between the sacred and profane is permeable. Both types of organization sanctify human rights and view humanitarian space as sacred, though Paras and Stein would also argue that FBOs are more equipped to understand the connections between humanitarian issues and the political world (Paras and Stein, 2012, p. 211). Others have constructed theoretical frameworks for understanding the religious aspect of both FBOs and secular NGOs. Falk (2001) emphasizes the values and beliefs that characterize FBOs such as the obligation to serve, a belief in personal transformation through works, and a belief in justice. According to Falk, these values can be found clearly throughout the language used by FBOs. Anhelm (1999), suggests that FBOs follow the “Golden Rule” of religion, although it could be argued that secular NGOs may follow this rule just as well. Others have put forth that whether an organization is religious cannot be answered with a “yes” or a “no”, and that there needs to be a range of types to describe them (Sider and Unruh, 2004).

Julia Berger suggests that a key problem with identifying an organization as religious is that it is sometimes not explicitly admitted. Depending on where they get their funding, an FBO may downplay its religious background to secure funding from a secular source and the opposite may occur if their funding is sourced from religious donors (Berger, 2003, p. 17). Berger encountered this when she received vague answers while conducting qualitative interviews; in one case, when she asked whether an organization was religious, she was told that it would
“depend on one’s definition of religious” (p. 21). To get around this obstacle she proposes an analytical framework which aims to determine the “pervasiveness” of religion in an organization (p. 25). This is done by assessing the key factors of religious identity, organizational structure, strategic and service dimensions, with the latter two being shaped by the former (p. 23). Importantly, no organization which she studied fit purely into the secular or religious categories. Rather, Berger states that organizations must be measured in “degrees of religiosity” (p. 25).

In assessing the influence of religion on organizational aspects Berger is heavily indebted to Jeavons (1998), whose own analytical framework was proposed to measure the degree of “religiousness” in any organization (Jeavons, 1998, p. 81). Maintaining that organizations fall on a spectrum rather than fitting into the binary category of secular or religious, Jeavons uses the example of an organization which will not describe itself as religious yet appears to be devoted to religious purposes and maintains religious values and commitments to illustrate his point (p. 80). Should this organization be defined as secular due to its rejection of religious description, or religious, due to its adherence to apparent religious principles (p. 80)?

What is the importance of this issue? If the organization has distanced itself from religion and aims to be a secular organization, why would the religion of its members have any relevance? Audet, Paquette, and Bergeron, for example, have suggested that the level of religiosity of an organization can have wide reaching effects, creating “complex partnerships at all levels” (2013, p. 295). Levels include the organizational and individual levels, and understanding the ways religiosity affects an organization requires an understanding of where the religiosity is found. Clarke and Jennings, for example, refer to religiosity at the “programmatic level”, meaning religion’s influence on individual projects (Clarke and Jennings, 2008).
Ebaugh, Chafetz, and Pipes go deeper in their article on faith-based social service coalitions by identifying three primary ways in which religiosity can influence projects which can be measured and scaled: “service religiosity,” “staff religiosity,” and “organizational religiosity” (Ebaugh, Chafetz, and Pipes, 2006, p. 2259). The purpose of their article is to operationalize several of the categories theorized by Jeavons and divide his unidimensional continuum of religiosity in three (p. 2261, p. 2269). Service religiosity is how workers relate to clients (which would be the targets of development projects in the case of development organizations). Staff religiosity is how staff relate to one another and how they conceive of themselves, while organizational religiosity is the public face of the organization (p. 2270). This review of the literature on the religiosity of organizations demonstrates the difficulty of categorizing the NGOs and FBOs used in this study, but as the next chapter on theoretical framework will show, one typology in particular will serve the purpose of categorizing organizations for this thesis. First, however, this literature review will continue by examining the historical and cultural context of Guatemala. Readers should note that while the below explains the context this research was conducted in, the justification for selecting Guatemala is included in chapter four.

The Historical and Cultural Context of Guatemala

The following paragraphs are significantly indebted to The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics (Grandin et al., 2011) for the related information on Guatemalan history and culture. For the sake of space and focus, the information presented here will be limited to that which is most relevant to studying questions of development in Guatemala today. A brief survey of history and culture brings us to two relevant overarching themes: first, that of persistent
foreign influence and intervention beginning with the Spanish conquest, through American intervention, and to neo-colonialism today. The second theme is that of ethnic and cultural diversity and conflict, again prominent after the Spanish conquest and the subsequent division between Spanish colonials, Ladinos, and indigenous groups. This continues to be a division today, especially given the intensity of violence perpetrated against indigenous groups during the civil war and the continued racism and poverty those groups continue to face. As the editors of the *Guatemala Reader* put so aptly in their introduction, Guatemalan history is one defined by “colonialism, imperialism, and brutality” (Ibid., p. 3). Knowing this, there are several points of upheaval in Guatemalan history worth keeping in mind as this thesis continues. Prior to colonization, the area was inhabited by a complex and diverse society that we now call the Mayans. Little is known about their pre-colonial history because of the destruction of their written records by the invading Spaniards, but by the early sixteenth century the country had been fully conquered with a capital city being established at Antigua, the city where most of this thesis’ fieldwork took place (Ibid., p. 39). The indigenous Mayans were subdued by the colonial system of government, but Spanish rule was characterised by frequent revolts and eventually Guatemala won its independence in 1821, as did most other Spanish colonies in Latin America around the same time (Pollack, 2011, p. 101-102).

Soon after Guatemala had declared independence the United States began to assert its authority over the region, claiming all of Latin America to be within its sphere of influence and warning European powers not to operate there. This became known as the “Monroe Doctrine,” and its meaning has always been vague and shifting, but it has been called “the first step to universalize American values in order to influence other nations” (Colucci, 2012, p.45). Promising to defend American interests in the region, it played some part in preventing European
powers such as France from taking control of newly independent former Spanish colonies, such as Guatemala (p. 42). It was met with a mixed response across Latin America, and by the 20th century the American government considered justifying intervention in Latin America by citing the Doctrine. (p. 40). The United States did intervene after Guatemalans overthrew their dictator in 1944 to allow for democratically elected governments. These governments expanded the voter’s franchise, and most importantly, enacted labour reforms (Grandin et al., 2011, p. 199). Fearing the loss of their economic interests and the spread of communism, the American government decided to overthrow Guatemala’s democratically elected government in 1954 (Ibid).

The following decades of American-backed government were “corrupt and cruel” and turned Guatemala into a “laboratory of repression.” (p. 200). Yet, the 1960s were the first “Decade of Development” as declared by the UN, and the American government through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) invested heavily in large infrastructure projects and new agricultural techniques while changing global prices forced farmers into cities (p. 282). By 1960 civil war had broken out against the repressive government after several massacres were perpetrated against indigenous communities. The Mayans, often rural, suffered greatly during the civil war. During the war’s peak (1981-1983), government forces launched a “scorched earth campaign” that could only be compared in violence to the initial conquest of the country by the Spanish (Grandin et al., 2011, p. 5). By the time the civil war officially ended in 1996 with the signing of peace accords, over two hundred thousand Guatemalans had died and “the country’s social fabric had been ripped apart, especially in the rural communities” (p. 443). After the signing of the accords, NGOs and FBOs, both local and
from abroad increased in number to work on questions of development and social organization (p. 444).

An effective civil society has been difficult to develop, however, as the country that was “impoverished, traumatized by decades of war, and heavily armed” lacked a middle class to support it and lacked a formal widespread education system (Way, 2012, p. 184). Despite over two decades having passed since the signing of the accords, Guatemala remains an extremely unequal country and is still characterised by extreme poverty (p. 443). Violence is a feature of everyday life that is worse in cities but also prevalent throughout rural areas (p. 200). Of great importance is that woman suffer violence in high numbers and are more often than men subjected to cruelties such as rape and torture. Such incidents of violence against women have not ceased with the end of the civil war, as perhaps was hoped, and they often result in femicide (p. 201). This compounds a worrying trend of violence which has led Guatemala to have one of the highest murders rates in the world and one of the highest rates of violence against women. This is to such a high degree that violence against women has been called “pervasive” (Halvorsen, 2014, p. 425). This is the context in which the NGOs and FBOs of this study are operating – a context which continues to impact program design and delivery as they struggle to fill in the gaps left by government failure to provide adequate resources. With the lack of government initiatives, NGOs and FBOs numbering in the hundreds have worked in infrastructure, health, education, and economic projects, and have also served as a check on government abuses (Way, 2012, p. 186).

Another contextual aspect is that of Guatemala’s ethnic and linguistic diversity. In addition to the importance of Spanish, there are more than twenty Mayan languages of some importance such as K’iche’ and Kaqchikel (Grandin et al., 2011, p. 8). In terms of religion,
Guatemalans have had a complicated relationship with Christianity historically, given that it was a cultural force that gained much of its power from colonial authority, and in turn reinforced colonial authority (p. 40). Despite a complicated history, the majority of Guatemalans are today Christians and Mayan communities have adopted Christianity while maintaining many elements of their own culture (Ibid). Indeed, the 1950s saw the start of campaigns by the Catholic Church to enforce religious orthodoxy and stamp out Mayan syncretism, but this ultimately led to Catholic clergy responding to the excessive poverty they were confronted with by committing to solidarity with the impoverished. They also proclaimed the need to build a “just kingdom on earth” — a concept at least one participant in this thesis also believes themselves to be working towards as will be described later (p. 283). At the same time trying to gain converts and impose orthodoxy, Catholic missionaries began development work, including medical clinics and economic projects, that were also intended to display “the superiority of the modernizing Catholic ideology” (Melville, 2011, p. 295). The efforts to impose orthodoxy were not entirely successful, as any traveller in rural Guatemala is bound to encounter Mayan syncretic elements in Christian worship such as the belief in the Mayan folk saint “Maximón,” as one participant in this study pointed out. What is also important to note is that since the 1980s the Catholic Church has lost some influence because of the large numbers of conversions to Evangelical Protestantism, with many converts coming from Mayan communities (Grandin et al., 2011, p. 362).

The other large ethnic group aside from the Indigenous Mayans are the Ladinos, a group of mixed European and indigenous heritage (Grandin et al., 2011, p. 109). The term Ladino has changed meaning throughout history, but in the 19th and 20th century the term came to mean “non-Maya,” but occasionally Ladinos are Spanish speaking Mayans that have adopted Spanish-
Guatemalan culture or people of mixed descent (Paláez, 2011, p. 129). Historically they have been the ones who have held the power, and to an extent this is still true. Today, however, there has been a Mayan resurgence as they have gained political power in many rural areas and there has been a revival of traditional Mayan languages, customs, and spirituality (Grandin et al., 2011, p. 503). As is true of the historical context, the cultural context described above is of importance for development organizations in that it has a definite impact on development programming and delivery. Particularly, language differences in rural areas prevent less experienced organizations and workers from fully engaging with community members should they only know English or Spanish and other cultural differences prevent programming from being seamlessly used across different communities.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework
It now must be explained how the research questions outlined in the introductory chapter have been operationalized. With the contextual information of the previous chapter now accounted for, theoretical considerations are necessary for understanding how the transcripts of twenty-seven semi-structured qualitative interviews have been interpreted. To achieve this, this chapter will be broken down into subsections. The first subsection will focus on participants as individuals by categorizing them in terms of whether they view their work through a religious or secular lens. This will most closely correspond with chapter five, which deals with the individual level of analysis and personal motivations. Immediately after a typology for categorizing NGOs and FBOs based on how faith is utilized and/or expressed by the organization will be explained. This will be most useful for chapter six, which compares data at the organizational level of analysis. The subsequent sections will then deal with the theoretical underpinnings of the values and motivations that emerged in the findings, which will be important for chapter five, as well as the idea of the religious comparative advantage that serves as the basis for interpreting the findings of chapter six.

**Participant Worldview**

A key component of interpreting the findings, especially those of chapter five, involves categorizing the individual participants that were interviewed. Given that some of the central research questions of this thesis ask about the differences between religious and non-religious participants, it is necessary to develop a categorization scheme for understanding this difference. It is not enough to simply label those who work for an FBO as religious, or to assume that those who work for a secular NGO are going to be atheist or only nominally Christian. As the results of this study indicate, there are examples of Christians working for secular NGOs and examples
of atheists working for a Catholic FBO that holds mass and provides pastoral care for the recipients of its aid. As Berry et al (2011) have pointed out, the question of personal religiosity is complex. In their study of American religious groups, they found that merely having a participant self-identify as Christian or religiously unaffiliated failed to reveal a complete picture. For example, it was found that some of those who self-identified as religiously unaffiliated still had a belief in God which they considered important in their lives (p. 842). In this case, these participants often consider themselves “spiritual”, rather than religious, and this was a response which was given by some participants in the study used by this thesis (p. 845).

The term “spiritual” itself is a term which may be difficult to conceptualize, for as Koenig points out, spiritual is a term which has only recently begun to be used to refer to people, beliefs, and practices which lie outside what is traditionally considered “religious” (2008, p. 349). According to Smith and Denton (2005), the term spiritual was originally used to refer to the practice by those in Christian societies who were considered the most pious, such as members of the clergy, monks, or other ascetics (p. 175). Today, spirituality has been used in a myriad of ways and in many cases is subjective (Ibid). While a church attending Christian may still describe themselves as spiritual, there are now those who have abandoned structured religion and choose to label themselves as “spiritual but not religious” (Fuller, 2001). It is difficult to determine where to place these persons in a study due to the subjective nature of the term and the differences in beliefs and values, but we can conclude that the participants in this study who fit the term are not religious in that they claim to be Christian, attend church, or treat the Bible as the sacred word of God, although some do still profess a believe in a God or higher power. Similarly, the concept of religiosity itself is also a term which has no agreed upon method for explanation (Berry et al, p. 841).
Still, it is worth delineating between religious and non-religious participants. This is important due to one focus of this research being to determine whether those who work for secular NGOs are motivated at least somewhat by a religious faith or that they come from a religious background. Categorization is also important for assessing any potential advantage on the part of religious or non-religious participants, such as if one or the other proves to be more resilient in response to adversity in their work such as logistical problems within their organizations, or when dealing with communication breakdowns with Guatemalan aid recipients.

The next chapter deals with methods, and there the reader will find the general demography of the participants included, including their religious affiliations. This is information worth noting; however, it may be more useful to classify individuals based on how they themselves frame their work—especially those participants who do not consider themselves particularly religious or atheist. The reasoning behind this is that while a participant may be religious, they may not view their work in religious terms and instead frame it secularly. It may also be possible that someone who considers themselves non-religious in the sense that they do not belong to a particular religious group, still views their work in religious terms. Because of this, participants will be placed into three categories based on how they view their work. The first is the religious lens, and these participants view their work as doing the work of God, part of a religious calling, or as a required part of following the example of Jesus. The second group, the secular frame, will be those participants who view their work from a secular perspective only, and will likely include the atheist and agnostic participants. These participants draw their motivations and values from secular values and their own experience, rather than from religious belief. The third group, the mixed frame, will include those participants who view their work from both a religious and secular perspective, and may include some participants who are
religious and some who are not affiliated with a religion but may be agnostic or referring to themselves as spiritual. How each participant is categorized can be found in chapter five, along with examples from interview transcripts that illustrate more fully why they have been categorized this way. References to these three positions will be frequent in the findings chapters.

**Categorizing Organizations**

The term “faith-based organization” is one that needs qualification as it can easily be interpreted in a much broader sense than required for this research. Depending on the context, FBO can mean a church congregation, a missionary group with the sole goal of gaining converts, or an international organization that engages in development work in a similar way to secular NGOs. Further examples would not be difficult to imagine. Due to this, the definition of the term should be narrowed to only include those organizations that are relevant to this research. Problems arise when attempting to categorize NGOs and FBOs because of the sheer variety in both the types of work they undertake and to what degree faith affects their organization. The latter problem has been discussed in-depth by scholars who have attempted to craft typologies for assessing organizations across fields, and so an overview of a typology proposed by Clarke (2008) will now be presented in the context of this research. This focuses primarily on whether and how faith is utilized by the organization as a motivator and whether and how faith is used to relate to aid recipients, and is most important to demonstrate that the types of FBOs used for this research resemble their secular counterparts more closely than proselytizing organizations, which have not been included in this study.
Clarke (2008) suggests a four-point scale to describe how an organization utilizes faith in their activities which are as follows:

- **Passive** – the teachings of the faith (or sub-faith) are subsidiary to broader humanitarian principles as a motivation for action and in mobilizing staff and supporters and pay a secondary role to humanitarian considerations in identifying, helping, or working with beneficiaries and partners.

- **Active** – Faith provides an important and explicit motivation for action and in mobilizing staff and supporters. It plays a direct role in identifying, helping, or working with beneficiaries and partners, although there is no overt discrimination against non-believers and the organization supports multi-faith cooperation.

- **Persuasive** – Faith provides an important and explicit motivation for action and in mobilizing staff and supporters. It plays a significant role in identifying, helping, or working with beneficiaries and partners and provides the dominant basis for engagement. It aims to bring new converts to the faith (or a particular branch of the faith) and/or to advance the interests of the faith/sub-faith at the expense of others.

- **Exclusive** – faith provides the principal or overriding motivation for action and in mobilizing staff and supporters. It provides the principle or sole consideration in identifying beneficiaries. Social and political engagement is rooted in the faith, or a branch of the faith, and is often militant or violent and/or directed against one or more rival faiths (p. 32.)

Typologies are not without their problems, and Clarke points out that his own has several pitfalls. For one, it is often the case that an FBO does not fit neatly into one of the above four categories. In fact, Clarke argues that a policy or project put in place may indicate that the FBO is passive or active with its faith, while another policy implemented by the same FBO may indicate that the FBO belongs in the persuasive or exclusive stances (p. 33). Additionally, branches of the same FBO engaged in different activities can similarly be categorized differently. Therefore, only the branch of the FBO this researcher encountered will be assessed using this scale. How each organization fits into this typology will be explained more fully in chapter six.
Motivations and Values

It was expected that when asking participants about their motivations for working in development that they would explain or at least hint at a value system that underpins their worldview. It was also expected that religious participants would explain this value system as having come from their religious faith, and it was of great interest to discover how non-religious participants impart meaning onto their work through a secular system of values. Indeed, values stemming from religion are thought to motivate adherents to live their lives in a certain way or carry out specific actions (Devine and Deneulin, 2011, p. 60). While religious values can inspire people to carry out negative, even violent acts, the values important to this study inspired participants to work in international development and are an important source of motivation. Religious values can dictate “what is permitted and not permitted, what is desirable and what is not desirable, and what is good or bad behaviour” (p. 62). These are thus important, for they have the potential to be utilized by development as a motivating and positive force (Appadurai, 2004). In his own study, Harold Koenig explains that in addition to religion, spirituality and the secular are all “possible sources of human moral values, positive character traits, and positive mental states such as meaning and purpose in life, connections with others, peacefulness, harmony, well-being, and hope” (Koenig, 2008, p. 349). Thus, it will be essential to discover whether those who frame with work religiously share the same values as those who view it from a secular perspective. With this in mind, the next section will suggest some potential values that participants may hold that motivate them to work in international development.
Biblical Values

One can easily find examples of Jesus’ teachings regarding the poor in the Bible. There are multiple instances across the Gospels, for example, where Jesus feeds crowds with bread and fish, and Jesus is typically found associating with the poor throughout the Gospels. Furthermore, there are a number of Biblical verses which encourage followers of Jesus to endure personal sacrifice and hardship, such as Matthew 19:21 which states: “Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” This verse historically has been one that has inspired ascetic monks throughout history, and it may be one of many which inspires modern development workers who give up a life in their home country which would likely be more materialistically rewarding to work in a foreign country which is poorer and less safe, and to work in a field which is usually not financially rewarding.

The Book of Matthew has several examples of Jesus encouraging his followers to ensure the welfare of their fellow human beings. Another good example to reference is Matthew 25. Speaking about his second coming, Jesus proclaims that humanity will be separated based on their deeds in life: “for I was hungry and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me.” (Matthew 25: 35-36). When his followers expressed bewilderment, for they had done no such thing for Jesus, he responds with: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25: 40). If reading this passage for the first time, a reader could envision a Christian as someone who helps those in need when they come across them – it is not a great stretch to imagine Christians using this passage to motivate themselves to take this work beyond those in need in their own communities and to work abroad.
Plant and Weiss (2015) explore this topic from a theological perspective. As international development as we know it today has only arisen in the twentieth century, Christian theology has had to rely on new “reasoned reflection” while also turning to previous theological ideas and concepts which have received great attention historically, and Plant and Weiss point to charity and justice as prime examples (p. 56). By engaging with historical theological perspectives on these two topics, we can attempt to understand some of the impetus behind the work of Christian FBOs and we can then see if this lines up with the responses given by Christian participants. After surveying numerous Biblical examples on the subject, the Plant and Weiss were primarily able to point to the concept of charity.

Indeed, the Biblical examples from Matthew described above in this thesis seem to merely suggest that Christians need only give to others, and that may help explain why FBOs are able to rely on the donations of congregations, but may not be as useful in explaining why Christians are working in development. Plant and Weiss suggest that this emphasis on charity, rather than improving welfare generally by rooting out poverty at its source, is a product of the context in which the Bible was originally written (p. 57). When the New Testament was written, the idea that poverty could be eradicated was simply not considered and the plight of the poor was “accepted as a fact of life” (p. 57). As Bradley (2005) found in her study, this idea has been at least subconsciously kept by some Christians working in development. She explains in her work that the Christian workers she observed were highly motivated to help their target community, but made no real strides in alleviating the problem. Bradley concluded that this was due to how the poor are presented in the Bible – as a factor of life that will always be present. The workers in Bradley’s case were simply doing what they felt the Bible commanded them to
do, and solving the problems which led to the poverty in the first place was not necessarily a part of their goals.

Examining the Bible in this way reveals some potential values such as compassion, charity, solidarity, and justice. Yet, as Devine and Deneulin (2011) point out, the way a value is “lived and expressed in social practices varies greatly across societies and time” (p. 63). Chapter five will explore whether these Biblical values are held by religious participants (and non-religious participants) and how they are expressed in their work in development.

**Solidarity**

Another value that may motivate someone to work in the field of international development is solidarity with the poor, a concept that has been the centrepiece of religious movements but is not necessarily exclusive to religious persons. Katheryn Anderson, a scholar who has completed several works on Canadian church involvement in Guatemala, found one of her participants to state that solidarity “is a response to a spiritual yearning within human beings” and that it is a “deep longing for justice, fairness, and harmony. This longing begins with the needs of our own lives, and gradually extends to other members of our family, tribe, and nation. In today’s world we have begun to see all people everywhere as our brothers and sisters.” (Anderson, 2003, p. 202.) This is an idea that may be expressed by participants, but it has also received some scholarly attention. Daniel Groody, for example, argues similarly that the forces of globalization have deepened human connected to the point that the world has indeed become a “global village” (Groody, 2008, p. 253). Indeed, the concept of solidarity is one that is prominent within the history of both Guatemala and Latin America generally through the theological positions of the Catholic Church. As was described previously in the brief history of
Guatemala found in the methods section, Catholic clergy in Guatemala oriented themselves towards solidarity after witnessing the immense poverty experienced by rural indigenous communities (Grandin et al., 2011, p. 283). Christians living under oppression regimes likewise implemented the concept of solidarity to stand united in their faith against government abuses while the Church, previously an instrument of oppression, came to stand strongly against it (Ibid). Additionally, Mayan communities are not unfamiliar with the concept, as various Mayan groups across the country unite in solidarity with one another in the face of exploitation by foreign resource extraction companies (Vásquez, 2011, p. 539).

**Secular Values**

The above values may not be exclusive to those who are religious. There is also something to be said for the cultural transition countries of the Global North have been experiencing; as Taylor (2007) has argued, many countries have now transitioned from a time where a religious faith was a given to a time where having a faith is merely an option among many others. This has been gradual and over the course of centuries, and the development sector changed in this sense during the twentieth century, but religious organizations have long been involved in development, whether as missionaries, colonists, or modern FBO workers (Deacon and Tomalin, 2015, p. 68). Not only was this true abroad, but religious organizations and religious people have been heavily involved in similar activities in the countries of the Global North for centuries as well – think medieval hospitals run by religious orders or the Salvation Army in more recent centuries (Ferris, 2005). With increasing numbers of non-religious persons across many countries in the Global North, and the advent of a secular development culture after
the Second World War, secular NGOs and non-proselytizing FBOs became options in addition to the missionary groups that were previously the primary development actors.

This is not to say that the countries participants come from are no longer significantly religious, and even some of the most secularized countries are undoubtedly still influenced by their Christian past. Speaking of the Canadian context in particular, Benham Rennick (2013) argues that “voluntary initiatives based on social justice, social welfare, and a missionary and ‘civilizing’ agenda have a long history in Canada. They are tied to nationalistic values growing out of a Christian heritage concerned with mutual responsibility and the interrelatedness of human and divine concerns (p. 23.) It may be a stretch to declare that any secular values that participants hold sprang directly from the Christian heritage of their country, but it will be important to understand the source of these values and whether there is a connection to Christianity.

The Religious Comparative Advantage

Finally, chapter six will be guided by the literature on the potential religious comparative advantage. The idea that an FBO may have an advantage over their secular counterparts in development is one of the main debates within the literature, with Clarke (2006) suggesting that FBOs are more embedded in their communities and may be more trusted by the communities that they are working in due a shared or similar faith. These points are interrelated and are worth exploring in light of many communities in the Global South being strongly religious, and the questions related to these two points were what originally served as the impetus for the writing of chapter six. With regards to Clark’s second point, the literature on the subject suggests that it is possible that aid recipients are more likely to agree to work with an FBO rather than a secular
NGO due to shared faith. Adding to this, Marshall (2005) points out that recipients of aid in the Global South in many cases have grown tired of the perceived or actual failures of secular development programmes. Secular NGOs, while perhaps well meaning and even on par with FBOs in terms of funding, logistics, and technical skill, often underestimate the importance of religious faith to a community in many cases, causing some degree of friction (Tyndale, 2001, p. 3). Thus, what should then be paid attention to is the specific world view of a community, a world view which often has religious faith at the centre (Dalton, 2013, p. 168). Accordingly, it has been suggested that “religious efforts for development are often supported by communities of faith. Participants see their development work as part of a sustained commitment. It is an outgrowth of religious faith” (p. 168).

This factor may be due to Benthall’s (2012) concept of cultural proximity, where an organization that is closer culturally to the community they are aiding will be trusted more easily. Although the organizations included in this study are all from the Global North, and therefore more culturally distant than an local organization, the expressed Christian faith of FBOs and religious employees may be an advantage in that it allows them greater cultural proximity to aid recipients. Further still, some scholars have suggested that in comparison to secular NGOs, FBOs have had an established presence in communities that require development programs, and that their established networks, their contextual knowledge give them an edge (Rivlin, 2002, p. 157; Bradley 2005). Indeed, secular NGOs may be founded comparatively recently on average while FBOs have a somewhat longer history that in some cases can be traced back to missionary activities of decades and centuries past (Levine, 2007; Barnett, 2011). In this sense, FBOs may be more embedded in the communities that they are working in. However, Lewis (2009) points out that organizations which utilize foreign staff often do so with short term contracts of two or
three years. The problem with this, he argues, is that within this relatively short time frame it is
difficult for foreigners to reach their full potential, a potential which would require extensive
knowledge of their new context acquired through lengthy experience in that location (p. 34). It
will be important to understand how long-term the intentions of development practitioners are.
Bradley (2005) has touched on this topic previously, with her data indicating that FBOs display a
greater level of long-term commitment to specific communities stemming from a belief in the
Biblical concept of compassion. Couple this commitment with shared faith, and they may be
more trusted as a “legitimate moral voice” (Occhipinti, 2015, p. 332). Chapter six will seek to
add to the above literature by attempting to answer the questions of whether FBOs are more
embedded in communities and whether they have an easier time building trust with target communities.

Another angle by which the idea of a religious comparative advantage can be tested is by
examining the individuals within particular organizations, and thus studying the individual and
organizational levels of analysis together. FBOs and some NGOs that encourage the expression
of individual faith may employ more religious persons, as we shall see, so it is important to
examine how faith is affecting individual employees in their working context. Importantly,
religious faith has been found to act a promoter of resiliency in the face of distress and adversity
in a wide range of contexts and experiences that are sources of stress (Brewer-Smyth and
Koenig, 2014, p. 252). Religious faith has been found to be a positive factor for individuals
involved in diverse stressful scenarios such as the experiences of immigration (Georgiades,
2016) and unemployment (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2009), and it also has been claimed to be a
powerful psychological tool for those coping with addictions (Magrini, 2015). Finally, it has
been a source of “hope, meaning, and comfort” for those experiencing stress in a general sense
(Brewer-Smyth and Koenig, 2014; Pargament and Cummings, 2010). As will be discussed in chapter six, working in international development can itself be a highly stressful career choice, and NGOs and FBOs are at risk of having a high turnover rate because of it. Knowing the conclusions of the above studies, chapter six will examine whether faith promotes resiliency in participants.

One final section in chapter six will determine whether the NGOs and FBOs included in this study are subscribing to the same development paradigms. Without the added factor of an explicit belief in religious superiority that historical missions had, FBOs and NGOs have historically operated under the assumption that the methods and knowledge of the Global North were inherently superior (Barnett, 2011, p. 130). Subsequently organizations have been accused of being “cultural imperialists” (Porter, 1997, p. 367). The response to this problem, which the organizations included in this study appeared to be so keenly aware of (or wished to portray themselves as such), has been the idea of “participation” (Barnett, 2011, p. 219). Mikkelsen (2005) suggests that participation typically means “voluntary contribution by people to projects, but without their taking part in decision making,” or where “the person or group in question takes initiative and asserts the autonomy to do so,” or a continuous dialogue between practitioners and locals, among other definitions (p. 53). With this in mind, chapter six will examine whether the FBOs and NGOs included subscribe to these paradigms. If there are differences, there will be a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of each approach.
Chapter 4: Methods
Case Selection

From the inception of this project it was decided that a case-study approach would be utilized and that fieldwork was to be conducted. The choice of country case selection is one that requires some consideration, as there was no specific country in mind when first approaching this question. Indeed, there may be other countries that could have been selected in the Global South; as Tomalin (2013) suggests, there is relatively little scholarship published on this subject, so researchers have a wide choice as to where they conduct their study (p. 213). Still, each context is different and case selection can easily alter the questions that should be asked. As was pointed out in the introduction, a sub-question for chapter six on the potential religious comparative advantage relates to the concept of cultural proximity (Benthall, 2012). As was discussed in an Islamic context by Benthall, the idea behind cultural proximity is that a potential religious advantage may be affected by how similar an organization is culturally to their aid recipients. To clarify: if this research was conducted on Christian FBOs working in primarily Islamic or Buddhist communities, the answers to questions such as whether they build trust more easily could be decidedly different. A Christian FBO could have a more difficult time building trust, and the comparative advantage may more likely go to Islamic FBOs who are more easily trusted in Muslim communities, or Buddhist FBOs working in Buddhist communities.

For this reason, it was decided that the country selected had to be a majority Christian country with Christian FBOs and secular NGOs working within it, with Christianity having been chosen as the religion most familiar to this researcher. Having done this, the scope of the research focused on Christian FBOs working with Christian communities. Cultural proximity can extend to denomination, with Guatemalans mostly being Evangelical or Catholic, and Christian participants being either Catholic or of a Protestant denomination. Needing to choose a
Christian majority country, Guatemala was then chosen for several reasons. One was the relevant historical context as described in chapter two, especially the long history of foreign influence, including the influence of religious and development organizations. Important also is that a high number of both FBOs and NGOs work within the country. Additionally, there was a convenience factor as this researcher knew of contacts in the country willing to help with the research process. Relying on these contacts, and with some further research, it was determined that the city of Antigua would be a suitable base of operations as it was a relatively safe area with a significant tourism sector – ideal for a first-time researcher with little knowledge of the language. Another important factor to consider was that Antigua is host to a large number of both NGOs and FBOs in a small area, allowing much of the research to be conducted in the area without having to factor in excessive travel time.

This, of course, affects the case selection of organizations and employees as life in Antigua is relatively comfortable, and it seemed especially so for expats and when compared to life in rural areas, so it may be the case that participants who only work in Antigua may be motivated differently or are less resilient than potential participants who work long-term in rural villages. However, some of the NGOs and FBOs encountered did have operations in more dangerous and less developed rural areas. Furthermore, some participants were interviewed who worked in the capital Guatemala City, a city with significant crime, poverty, and pollution problems, so there is variety in terms of where participants work and what kind of work they do.

Data Collection

The method employed to find potential NGOs, FBOs, and interviewees for my semi-structured interviews was the snowball method. It took some time to network enough to find
participants, but many NGO and FBO employees frequented Antigua’s numerous café’s, restaurants, and bars. Using this method, I learned of numerous potential participants that I met or emailed, but many did not respond or did not follow up. Many of these potential participants were employees of FBOs, and it is unknown why they did not respond when others did; any explanation on my part would be mere speculation. Eventually twenty-eight interviews were conducted, with each varying in length, with the average length being around half an hour. Only one of these was discarded due to lack of usefulness. Every participant consented to having their interview recorded, and the interviews were transcribed from these recordings at a later time.

The interviews were conducted at a variety of locations. For example, the interviews conducted with employees of Education NGO 1, Education FBO 1, and the American Governmental Organization (these organizations will be explained in the next section), were conducted at the headquarters of their respective organizations. Many other interviews were conducted at the popular local restaurants Rainbow Café and Reilly’s En La Esquina (where a private room was provided generously by the owner). Additional interviews were conducted at other cafés, restaurants, or offices as chosen by participants. The names of participants have not been used, as per the consent form each participant signed, and each participant has instead been numbered in the order they were interviewed. When a quote from an interview is referenced, an in-text citation will have the following format: (Participant #, Date Interviewed, Location)

Questions were asked about participant’s personal backgrounds, including their upbringing and personal faith, their work duties, their opinions of the development sector in Guatemala, their personal motivations, development methods, and their relations to Guatemalans. In the findings chapters, each sub-section will correspond with one or more specific questions, and these will be described there.
Participant Demography

The number of participants in each category is in bold.

Gender: Male (8); Female (19)

Age: Under 25 (6); 25-29 (9); 30-34 (7); 35-39 (3); 40+ (2)

Country of Origin: United States (16); United Kingdom (4); Canada (1); Germany (1); Spain (1); Guatemala (4).

Religious Denomination: Catholic (7); Evangelical Protestantism (3); Episcopalian (2); Seventh Day Adventist (1); Agnostic (4); Atheist (10).

Using the data above, we can conclude that the participant pool skews female and American. In terms of religion, participants are divided between religious and non-religious nearly equally. Among the religious, there is a roughly equal divide between Catholic and Protestant denominations. However, differences in answers appear to be determined by whether participants viewed their work in religious terms and by age to some degree. Four Guatemalans who worked for development organizations were interviewed for the purposes of comparison with expats and to get the local perspective on the work of development organizations. It will be clearly highlighted in the findings chapters when their contributions are being discussed.

The NGOs and FBOs

Many of the NGOs and FBOs utilized for this research were specific to Guatemala. Only one organization was international in nature, and its work was limited to several countries in Latin America. What this means is that none of the very large international organizations, such as the secular Oxfam or the Catholic Caritas, are included in this study and it is acknowledged that the data may have been different had they been. Questions about employee compensation were not asked to participants, but given that many these organizations are relatively small and
rely heavily on grants, donations, and sometimes volunteers, it is unlikely that this work is financially lucrative. Had they been included, it may have been that a different kind of participant would have been included, perhaps one that was paid somewhat more and thus likelier to stay with the same organization and the field of development altogether for a longer time.

The participants that agreed to take part in this study worked for twelve different organizations. It must be said that one of these organizations is governmental (United States), rather than non-governmental as all other included organizations are. The decision to include this governmental organization is justified by the fact that the work that the organization engages in is very similar work to that of the other organizations and the answers provided by participants are not significantly different from the others. In fact, their answers follow the same patterns that emerged from the answers given by the participants working for non-governmental organizations and the data from two Guatemalan employees of the organization provides additional depth to the answers to the research questions of this thesis.

Overall, three of the organizations were Christian FBOs and six were secular without a significant faith factor. The remaining three were secular, including the one governmental organization, but had faith manifesting within them in significant ways. How faith manifested itself in the organization is explained below along with a summary of the type of work each organization carries out. The participants that work for each organization are in bold and in parentheses at the end of each description. Organizations are given pseudonyms as it was stated that this would be done in the consent form signed by participants to maintain their anonymity. The pseudonym consists of the type of work the organization engages in as well as a number. There are four general types of work that these organizations are involved in: education (four
organizations), health care (three organizations), and economics (1 organization). The final group has major projects related to two or all of the previous categories, and may have projects tackling other development problems. Additionally, the primary international connections of each organization are listed to give a sense of where in the Global North these organizations are based out of and draw much of their fundraising from.

The information in the below summaries of each organization’s work comes from the interview transcripts and the websites of each organization – no other literature, such as information pamphlets, were included in the data.

**Education Organizations:**

1. Education NGO 1: A secular NGO providing education to over five hundred underprivileged children in the Antigua area since 2009. Three schools are operated in surrounding towns. Employs a mix of expats and Guatemalans. This NGO also operates a significant volunteer program. International connections are primarily in the Netherlands and the United States. (Participants 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10).

2. Education NGO 2: A secular NGO that was founded in 1986 as a Christian FBO. The primary focus is education, but also provides some help with housing and medical care for students and their families. This NGO serves eleven thousand people in communities around Antigua and Guatemala City. Both expats and Guatemalans are employed and a volunteer program is also run, primarily to raise funds. Although the NGO now considers itself a secular NGO, its website emphasizes that it was founded on “Christian ideals” such as forgiveness, compassion, and service. According to the two participants interviewed that worked for this organization, many employees are Christian and employees from all faith backgrounds are welcome. The organization encourages employees to “develop their own spirituality,” and Guatemalans and some expats regularly engage in religious activities such as group prayer while working, although this is not mandated by the organization. International connections are primarily in the United States. (Participants 14 and 17).

3. Education NGO 3: A secular NGO that provides support for a government funded and operated school in a small village just outside of Antigua. This NGO primarily provides support for teaching English by hiring its own teachers for the English language program, but also provides some funding and supplies for the school. Despite the school being government run, the website of the NGO states that it was sorely lacking in even basic supplies when it was chosen as the NGO’s target for aid, demonstrating that the government is not always effective at
providing education. International connections are primarily in the United States (Participant 13)

4. Education NGO 4: This secular NGO founded in 1999 provides education for impoverished children and adults living inside of the Guatemala City Dump. Mostly indigenous and living in extreme poverty, the community inside the dump subsists by garbage picking. This NGO aims to provide general education and English classes to break the cycle of poverty. Currently they educate five hundred and fifty children and over one hundred adults. The NGO has both permanent employees and volunteers and also runs community tourism projects. International connections are in the United States. (Participants 4 and 12).

5. Education FBO 1: A Catholic FBO founded in 1954 in Mexico by an American priest. The Guatemalan based operations were founded in 1996 in a town twelve kilometres outside of Antigua. The primary focus of the FBO is to provide education for impoverished children, many of which are orphans. The organization has its own large complex where children are housed, fed, educated, and otherwise taken care of. Expat workers and volunteers are each assigned a group of Guatemalan children to take care outside of school hours. The FBO is Catholic and children attend Mass. There are also religious education classes and expat workers provide spiritual counselling for the children. However, participants pointed out that children are not required to be Catholic or Christian, and neither are volunteers. International connections are primarily in the United States and many European countries. (Participants 22, 23, 24, and 25).

Health Care Organizations

1. Health Care NGO 1: This secular NGO founded in 2000 provides medical care and dental surgery for women and children in rural areas of Guatemala. Based out of Antigua, this NGO sends out teams of doctors, nurses, and surgeons to villages in areas of high need such as northern Guatemala and the Western Highlands. They also provide support for local medical professionals. The NGO makes extensive use of American medical volunteers and has some permanent expat employees living in Guatemala. The organization labels itself as a secular NGO, but the participant interviewed explained that faith plays a part in their operations in that volunteers and employees all have a faith and that they openly express this faith together. International connections are the in the United States. (Participant 1).

2. Health Care NGO 2: This secular NGO founded in 1999 provides medical care for mostly for rural indigenous Guatemalans and specializes in reproductive health care, including family planning, for both women and men. This NGO was founded by an American woman, but is primarily staffed by Guatemalans. International connections are in the United States. (Participant 15)

3. Health Care NGO 3: This secular NGO founded in 2008 provides dental surgery for children with cleft palates, speech therapy for post-op children, and psychological counselling. The main facilities and operations are in the Antigua area, but the NGO does send out medical teams into rural areas to find children in need of surgery. Problems with cleft palates and lips appear to be relatively common in Guatemala, but parents do not often seek out treatment for it as many see it
as a curse from God according to the NGO. International connections are in the Netherlands. (Participant 3)

4. Health Care FBO 1: This Christian ecumenical FBO founded in 1991 aims to improve the “physical, spiritual, and economic” conditions of the poor in Guatemala by providing surgery, medical care, and dental care to the Antigua area and rural areas throughout Guatemala. The FBO makes extensive use of volunteers but also has permanent employees. The FBO is ecumenical and accepts volunteers and employees from all denominations, and will also accept those from other religious faiths as well. Faith plays a role in their work in that the organization provides pastoral care and spiritual care to religious Guatemalans who are undergoing treatment. International connections are in the United States. (Participant 2).

Economic Organizations

1. Economic NGO 1: This secular NGO founded in 2009 provides economic opportunities for small-holder farmers and cooperatives that primarily grow coffee in Antigua and San Miguel, among other areas of Guatemala. They work in capacity building and facilitating economic connections with coffee purchasers in the United States in Canada. They also provide access to micro-loans and aim to ensure farmers have a sustainable livelihood and an increasing quality of life. The NGO also makes use of volunteers and runs a community tourism project that generates part of their funding. (Participants 11, 16, 19, and 20).

General Development Organizations

1. General Development FBO 1: This Evangelical Christian FBO founded in 2004 focuses on several areas of development including education, health, nutrition, community development, and technology. The participant interviewed worked in the technology branch of the FBO that operates in rural communities installing Canadian made water filters. Other branches of the FBO focus on spiritual training and ministry for Christian Guatemalans or those interested in learning more about Christianity. International connections are in the United States and Canada. (Participant 18).

2. American Governmental Organization: Founded in 1961 (Guatemalan operations founded in 1963) and focusing on health care, youth development, and agriculture. The Guatemalan headquarters are in a town 12km outside of Antigua, but projects are found throughout the country. Employs both expats and Guatemalans and makes extensive use of volunteers. The organization is secular, but the faith of employees is acknowledged as an important aspect of their lives and they are encouraged to openly discuss their faith with others in the organization. (Participants 25, 26, 27, and 28).
Data Analysis

Analysis of the qualitative interview data was done by coding and recoding the interview transcripts by hand with paper, a pen, and highlighters. The method of coding analysis used was a mix of thematic coding and emergent thematic coding. With regards to the former, thematic categories were preformulated before analyzing the transcripts where the answers of participants could be compared, such as how participants first became involved with an NGO or FBO. Other themes, such as the presence of a universalistic worldview, were formulated as the coding process continued. Themes correspond with the subsections of the findings chapters, and will be addressed there.
Chapter 5: Findings: Individual Motivations
This first findings and analysis chapter focuses on the individual by exploring personal motivations. The central research questions of this chapter include: what motivates an individual to work in development in Guatemala? How are religious and non-religious employees of NGOs and FBOs motivated differently? What values and beliefs do development practitioners hold that motivate them to work in development, and how do these differ between religious and non-religious participants? Are those working for secular NGOs motivated by a religious faith? If not, what motivates them? Why, today, do people working for FBOs and NGOs choose to work in the field of international development – a relatively low paying work that often includes leaving family and friends behind in a materially wealthy country for a country that is more impoverished? It was anticipated that those working for FBOs were mostly religious and at least partially motivated by their faith, and this was largely supported by the data collected. Still, it is worth exploring more in-depth what this means and in what ways their faith motivates them.

This also leaves the question of those working for secular NGOs. Are they religious, as many of the Canadians in Brouwer’s work were in earlier decades? Or are they now motivated by secular values?

With the goal of answering these questions the first task of this chapter will be to categorize participants using the scheme described in chapter three. The subsequent sections will present the findings. What was found was that for the most part, those working for secular organizations were not religious and were not motivated by a personal faith. The exception was three secular organizations which employed numerous religious persons and encouraged the expression of personal faith (Heath Care NGO 1, Education NGO 2, and the American Governmental Organization). Many of these non-religious workers came from religious families and were raised religiously, but no longer professed a belief in any faith and now describe
themselves as atheist, agnostic, or spiritual. Rather than imparting meaning on their work with personal religious belief, they have done so with belief in values that for them are secular, and they view there work through a secular lens. The values of participants will be compared, with some attention being given to the value of solidarity, a value explained in chapter three that transcends all participant categories. From the Christian participant perspective, there is a belief that all humans are deserving of being saved both spiritually and materially because they are all children of God. Non-religious participants drop the spiritual factor, leaving a secular belief that all humans deserve to be saved materially for their own sake. The value systems are similar and have led participants to similar positions, albeit with somewhat different organizations. How, then, did non-religious participants develop such a similar value system? In some cases, the value system of religious parents or grandparents served as inspiration for non-religious participants, and they are now utilizing the values of their family members without the underlying faith. Others without religious family members to transfer those values point to specific life experiences as one of their principle motivating factors for living out their values. It is with the explanation of value formation that we can get to the underlying source of motivation.

The next section will feature several themes that emerged from the interview transcripts that need to be explained to flesh out participant motivations. Primarily participants point to a sense of duty or obligation, the desire for personal fulfillment, and in some cases (often younger recent graduates) who simply did not know what they wanted to do with their life but had the desire to do something that involved helping others. Most of these participants could also trace their motivations to a moment in their life, such as a service learning trip, that ultimately sparked their desire to get into the field which for some has become a passion. For religious participants,
motivations are similar in that they feel a sense of duty, but that this stems from their personal faith, while others felt a religious calling.

**Participant Categorization – Individual Religiosity**

With the information related to participant demography found in chapter four, we can answer one of the research questions for this thesis. Are those working for secular NGOs primarily motivated by a religious faith? Nine of the participants included declared themselves to be atheists, while a further four did not adhere to any religion while still considering themselves spiritual. All of these participants worked for secular NGOs, and their motivations will be explored more in-depth in the coming sections, but it can be concluded that the majority of participants working for secular NGOs included in this study are not motivated by a religious faith.

For the other questions of this thesis, the categorization scheme described in chapter three deals with how participants view their work. Do they view their work through a religious, secular, or mixed lens? The results are as follows:

**Religious:** The key with this group is that they view all or most of their work activities as directly connected to or as part of their religious faith. They feel as if they are called by God to their work and are trying to live by the example of the Biblical Jesus. An example of someone fitting into this category is Participant 002 who explained that when working with medical patients she often reminds herself that she “does not believe that God has given up on [her patients]” (002, July 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2017. Rainbow Café) (Participants 1, 2, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, and 28. 10 out of 27 Participants)
Secular: Atheist participants fit into this category, and they view their work entirely through a secular lens. They do not believe that their values come from God or a religious faith, and they believe that they do not need God or a religious faith to provide them with moral guidance. They most often speak of duty or personal fulfillment and simply believe that what they are doing is necessary for the sake of humanity, rather than for the sake of God. Participant 013 belongs in this category, having said “You either behave and you do good in the world, but you don’t do it because you think someone’s judging you.” (013, July 28th, 2016, Rainbow Café) (Participants 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 19. 9 out of 27 Participants)

Mixed: These participants described themselves as religious, agnostic, or spiritual. They view their work in more muted religious terms and hold a belief in secular values as well. They may believe that their values are inspired by a religious system or come from God but religious faith does not permeate their day to day life or work. Participant 005 is an example of this, having confirmed that while they believe in God, feels as if they have been affected by Christian values, but feels as if he does not need a specific religion to “distinguish between what is right and what is wrong”. Another example in this category is participant 025. Considering themselves Christian and saying that “in some ways” they are “living a mission of service, the way of Jesus,” but also emphasizing that “it is not something I pay attention to on a regular basis” (025, August 19th, 2016, Santa Lucia Las Milpas Altas). (Participants 3, 5, 6, 7, 14, 15, 20, and 25. 8 out of 27 Participants)
Biblical Values

What motivates someone to work in international development? Most participants point to their values, and those viewing their work through a religious lens draw their values from the Bible, as described in the chapter on theory. The source of the values of religious participants is much easier to trace than those without the religious lens, even across denominational differences, as many participants pointed to the teachings and life of Jesus Christ as an example of how they should be living their life when asked what inspired them to work in this field. Indeed, one can easily find examples of Jesus’ teachings regarding the poor in the Bible, as was pointed out previously. Participant 018, for example, is a religious Guatemalan man who views his work religiously, and he had this to say about the values motivating his work: “I believe that Jesus and social justice are not different things, they’re the same thing. If we are Christians or followers of Jesus, we have to care about injustice in the world” (018, August 4th, 2016, Rainbow Café).

Expat workers viewing their work religiously spoke with similar language. Participant 017 spoke of the Biblical concept of “sowing and reaping” and explained that she had faith that God would allow what she was sowing for the poor in Guatemala now to benefit future generations (017 August 4th, 2016, Cookies Etc.) Another participant with a religious lens on their work, Participant 002 emphasized that she “always preferred the Gospel of Luke to the other ones – it’s the one they call the Social Justice Gospel. It has the most “blessed are the poor” passages and talks of solidarity with the poor in a really strong way (002, July 4th, 2017, Rainbow Café). In this quote the reference to solidarity must be noted, as it proves to be a concept that stretches across the transcripts of many participants. Those with a mixed lens could still inspired by the life of Jesus, but were less specific in pointing out Biblical examples besides
acknowledging that Jesus spent time with the poor. Responses from Participant 025 illustrate this: “I’m not really into the Bible, but I do feel that Jesus was a man of service. Through his example … I don’t think that’s necessarily Biblical. Just in the image of Christ we live in” (025, August 19th, 2016, Santa Lucia Las Milpas Altas).

Universalism and Solidarity

References to the Bible above were important to those viewing their work through a religious lens. Yet, when answering the same question asking about their values, most participants revealed a universalistic worldview that was a key piece of their value system regardless of whether they were religious or not, or whether they viewed their work through a religious lens or otherwise. Many participants made statements that implied that they believed the entire world was deserving of development regardless of religion, culture, or other factors. This idea was used by some to justify why they had not remained in their home country to conduct work with marginalized communities there. Participants with the religious lens were more explicit in their statements, and chose to frame it in religious terms. A good example of this is found in the answers of Participant 001 who said: “I believe we are all children of the same father. How do you look into the eyes of a brother or sister and say no? Especially when you know there is something you can do to make their life a little better, and that motivates me” (001, July 1st, 2016, Rainbow Café). This particular participant was an American Episcopalian, a denomination not well represented in Guatemala, yet she had no qualms about helping any Guatemalan who was in need of it, regardless of their background.

This universalistic language can be connected to the idea of solidarity, a concept touched on in the theory chapter that involves viewing all humans as deserving of justice and fairness.
This can be a religious concept, but is also often a value held by those who view their work from a secular frame, as evidenced by the points made by the participants of this research. In addition to the point that “we are all children of the same father,” the need to view the world as a “global village” was stressed (001, July 1st, 2016, Rainbow Café). Both religious and non-religious participants in this study made comments that indicated that they had a duty to stand in solidarity with the poor. For them, solidarity included taking action by working in development. These are some of the most prominent values that participants seem to share – the next section will now seek to explain how values that are religious for some have come to function as secular values for others.

**Origin of Secular Values**

From the above we can conclude that some non-religious participants hold values that for others are religious in nature. From where do these values stem? Clearly, those participants who have described themselves as non-religious would argue that their values come from somewhere other than religion. Indeed, some participants were willing to admit that growing up in a Christian household, or a historically Christian country such as the United Kingdom, had some sort of influence on their choice to enter the field of development. Yet, most were dismissive of any suggestion that their values were primarily influenced by any sort of religion and rejected that idea that morality and values had to be connected to religion. A prime example of this was a participant working for a secular education NGO who was raised in a Catholic family, did not consider himself religious, but did profess a belief in a God that was not specific to any religion. When asked whether he felt Christianity had any influence on him, he responded with “Well of course, you are exposed”. He was then asked a probing question about whether this influence
extended to his decision to enter the field of development, to which he responded with: “No. To me it’s more related to my personal values and beliefs. I don’t think you need to be a religious person to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong … I knew I wanted to take a different path” (005, July 21st, 2016; Cambio Language School).

Participant 008 revealed that they felt culture played a role in drawing them to development and felt it was true for others as well, pointing to “our western culture” when asked why they felt so many expats had moved abroad to work in development. Can this be narrowed even further? Participants for this study primarily came from three countries – the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom – each a country with a Christian heritage but is now experiencing a religious decline (the United States to a lesser degree). Has the Christian heritage of these countries played a part in motivational force that has drawn so many from these countries to work in development? With the data collected it can be argued that values of service and charity have been transferred from religious relatives to participants, but that these participants are no longer viewing these values through a religious lens. An interesting example is that of Participant 007. Still considering themselves religious, the participant explained that faith was playing less and less of a role in their life and so described herself as a “cafeteria Catholic”, or someone who “picks and chooses” what they believe (007, July 21st, 2016, Cambio Language School). She ascribed her choice to work in development somewhat to her faith, and viewed her work only weakly through a religious lens, but felt that the true influence was her grandmother:

“I really learned how to be a Catholic from my grandma because she’s the one who lives it, and she’s my living example. My grandma was always focused on trying to give people opportunities when people don’t have them. She’s super active in the community, she tutors children, and education was really important to her. So I think seeing my grandma and everything that my grandma does is motivation by her faith, that’s my
inspiration, so for me it’s like a degree of separation. So it’s not my faith it’s my grandma” (Ibid).

Such is the case for many participants who view their worth through a mixed lens or secular lens; unable to point to a personal faith as influence, but quick to point to the service culture and values of a religious parent or grandparent. However, this idea becomes more complicated when considering the data of participants from the United Kingdom. With these participants, it was difficult to trace any religious influence at all, as they described themselves as atheist and “raised atheist.” One participant even came from a family with atheist grandparents. It is difficult to place their values down to influence from a Christian grandparent or society, and all had the attitude that religion was not required for good values: “Religion did not influence me at all to get into development. My idea is you behave and do good in the world, but you don’t do it because you think someone’s judging you. If that’s your perspective then there’s something wrong with that” (013, July 28th, 2016. Rainbow Café). If the transfer of values from Christian relatives took place at all, it must have taken place generations ago for these British participants. The pattern that did emerge is that with these participants that were “raised atheist,” the primary impetus seemed to be the specific experience – the service learning trip or the exposure to world poverty via education – and not the example of someone religious. These participants, without faith, have developed their values and a sense of duty by being exposed to world issues. We can see how participants describe how these values have motivated them in the section below.

Motivational Experiences

It will be worth investigating how these participants – many of whom were raised in religious families – construct meaning within their work. This will shed further light on what motivates them to work in international development. Most participants with the secular lens
spoke of personal fulfillment as a key factor in their motivation, and many also had had experiences in other fields which were negative, pushing them to find another line of work which was more satisfying. To demonstrate this, it is appropriate to go into greater detail with the stories provided by some of these participants, starting with participant 010, a young atheist from the UK who described having pulled out of a graduate program in political science after having a crisis of doubt. Previously he had been disillusioned with an internship at an MP’s office, and he could now claim that he had “found everything [he] was looking for in politics in NGO work” (010, July 21st, 2016. Cambio Language School). This is at the heart of this chapter’s objective – what was he looking for? This participant puts it down to a “sense of duty” and “usefulness” (Ibid). Can we detect any potential religious influence, or has this participant, and others like him, constructed a secular system of meaning that utilizes similar values for similar goals?

Despite being atheist, both of the parents are practicing Catholics, a fact the participant says makes him “culturally Catholic.” The meaning behind this likely differs from person to person, but this participant points to his religious education as having some effect on him: “I can quote nearly anything from the Bible,” he pointed out (Ibid).

If this participant considered himself Christian for his childhood and much of his teenage years and is educated in the theology of that religion, one has to wonder whether his values were inspired by it. Did the lessons within the Bible affect him in a similar manner to how they have affected religious participants? The participant had this to say when asked: “I don’t think so, I don’t know … it was maybe more the family and parents. Maybe guilt … like a good Catholic, guilt, sin, repentance – this is how my mind works still.” (Ibid). Although admitting that his Christian upbringing had some impact on him, he still did not think his sense of duty came from religion but rather from parenting: “My sister and I, we grew up the same way and both have that
sense of duty … but she has had much less of the religious influence and the same parental influence that I did. I wouldn’t say it comes from religion, no. If it is it’s more subtle than I can see’ (Ibid). In this case, the religious influence is now a generation removed, and this participant is now able to live out values inspired by his parents (which may have been religiously inspired) without the religious belief. This participant views his work entirely through a secular lens.

Information about his parents, both of whom were described as strongly religious, is thus important to understand these values. His father in particular was described as very committed to the Roman Catholic religion, having been ordained in a monastic order, while his mother was also said to be practicing. As religious people, religious values such as charity may have been instilled in their children, but another aspect of this participant’s upbringing may have been far more influential. “Both my parents were from working class backgrounds … both from immigrant backgrounds. They grew up in very poor, very rough cities. Both eventually ended up in medical school and are doctors and lived very comfortable and I was given everything” (Ibid). It would be premature to put this down to Catholic “guilt” in that he felt guilty for having been given “everything,” although this may be part of it. Rather, his sense of duty to give back can be explained most convincingly in his own words: “I always had all the opportunities I could want or need, and I see my duty to repay that to humanity, to society, in a way, because my parents worked every second. They had to claw themselves out of poverty in order to give me and my sister a life of comfort. … There’s no way I’m ever going to be in need for work or for money. I’m never going to be struggling for that. So I might as well use that freedom and opportunity to be able to give back to the world, either within an organization or on a societal level to help people make a similar jump that my parents did” (Ibid). This need for “giving back” did not necessarily stem from his Catholic upbringing, but rather from the inspiration of
his parents who brought themselves out of poverty through sheer work ethic. While Christians view their sense of duty as inspired by the example of Jesus, or the teachers of their specific Church, this atheist participant is propelled to spread his own material good-fortune by the example of his parents.

The experience of another participant echoes the above. An atheist Canadian, Participant 012 spoke on the topic of moral inspiration, stating that she always felt working in development “was a responsibility” (012, July 24th, 2016, Rainbow Café). As with participant 010, she felt obligated to do this sort of work because of the privileges afforded to her by where she was born and the economic status of her parents: “being a Canadian especially; I always felt incredibly lucky growing up in Canada, and just knowing again that there have to be jobs out there that are more about helping people as opposed to solely making profits … so I guess there’s a moral component to it, but I don’t think of it as a moral component. I think of it more as a responsibility, and more as a privilege to do this” (Ibid). Again, we can attempt to trace why she felt such a responsibility in the first place. Still mirroring Participant 010, she explained that she was raised in a Catholic family despite now being a declared atheist: “my parents raised me Catholic, baptised, went to Catholic school … we went to church every Sunday … prayer before meals, all that kind of stuff … my mom’s aunts and uncles and all my grandparents were nuns and priests – Jesuits – all from a traditional background” (Ibid).

Following the pattern of the previous participant, she did not feel as if her Catholic upbringing influenced her decision to work in development abroad. Participant 010 and Participant 012 both are atheists, and both have religious and hard working parents, and both would not engage with the possibility of Christian values having been imparted on them. “No, I don’t think [that being raised Catholic had any influence]. I think my parents have always been
giving people and that really rubbed off on me a lot” (Ibid). As with many other non-religious parents, she stressed that she did not need religion to do what was right: “I do sometimes have a problem with the idea that the only reason for doing something is to get into heaven … I just don’t understand why people need an extra reason to be caring or good people. Just be good” (Ibid). It may be true that this participant’s parents did not need Christianity to “just be good,” but it is interesting that she pointed out that she was influenced by how giving her parents were while they raised her. Charity is a key Christian value that partially inspires Christian participants to work in this field, yet this participant holds onto the value of charity without the need for faith. Her parents may have encouraged by their faith to be charitable, but their daughter has since lost that religious impetus, and is constructing meaning and living out a value system without it. This non-religious participant is also viewing their work entirely through a secular lens. Indeed, it is still possible that Christian values of relatives played some role in their decision to work in development, but a participant’s individual experiences cannot be ignored as the true catalyst for their decision.

Other non-religious participants can trace their sense of duty to a specific experience in their life, often during their adolescence. Usually this event was a service learning trip abroad as a volunteer for an NGO, or an experience of volunteerism in their home country. Typically from this experience onward, the perspective of the participant was radically changed and oriented towards volunteerism, service, and a career in international development. It was during these experiences that participants realized that work that involved helping others was fulfilling to them, and others felt a new sense of obligation having been exposed to world issues such as chronic poverty. Take Participant 008, for example. Having taken a gap year prior to university for the sake of personal development, she began volunteering internationally as “a selfish
thing” to add to her resume (008, July 21st, 2016. Cambio Language School). She was adamant that at this point it had nothing to do with development, but it did start her on a path that led to her position working internationally for an NGO. She explained that it was not until after the trip that her perspective changed. While studying business she realized that it had “stopped making sense” to her and she found herself consistently asking questions such as “how is this making a difference?” and “how is this helping people?” (Ibid). With this changed perspective, she completed education in development studies and has since worked for various development NGOs in multiple countries with no plans to discontinue.

Another participant put their “passion” for development down to learning about the Live Aid concert held in 1985. Learning about this in 2004, participant 019 was surprised and dismayed to find out that there was still poverty in Africa. From that moment on, the participant developed a “passion to see poverty eradicated … to work and help the lives of people … people should not be experiencing [poverty] on a day to day basis” (019, August 10th, 2016. Rainbow Café). Couple these experiences with time spent abroad, and this participant has since maintained desire to work in the field. Other participants did not need any experience internationally to develop their passion for working in development, as one participant described what led them to the field this way: “It was strange. My first job I had when I was fifteen was work experience at school. I worked in a school for mentally and physically disabled children. It was amazing, I loved it. It was like the feeling, part of it is you’re doing something to help someone else. At the same time it feels good, definitely makes you get out of bed in the morning. I just loved the feeling of being able to help, even though I was only fifteen and probably wasn’t much help. It did inspire me” (013, July 28th, 2016. Rainbow Café). Similar to other participants, this quote reveals that much of what can drive someone to continue doing this
kind of work are feelings of personal fulfillment. The feeling this participant gets from helping others is clearly highly motivating, and in this case their motivation appears to match even the most religiously motivated participants. “Long term, this is what I came here to do … being on the frontline and helping as much as I can” (Ibid).

To briefly summarize, there appear to be several avenues of experience that secular participants are motivated by to become involved in development work. The most prominent seem to be the desire for personal fulfillment and a sense of duty or moral obligation. Most of these participants felt that their values did not come from any personal faith, although most of them were exposed in some way to Christianity while coming of age, and some were brought up in Christian households and attended religious schools. There is likely some degree of influence here, as the parents and grandparents were in many cases very religious and had their own traditions of service and charity that may have stemmed from their religious beliefs. Still, this is now a generation or more removed, and at this point these participants have constructed their value system without religion. It must also be acknowledged that some of these participants were raised atheist, and it is thus difficult to theorize that values arising from Christian influence led to them becoming involved in international development.

**Personal Motivations – Religious Participants**

Having now touched on values both religious and secular and having traced the motivations of non-religious participants, it is now important to explore the motivations as explained by religious participants. How are religious participants motivated to work in international development, and to what extent do these motivations differ from non-religious participants? Of course, it would be easy to simply say a religious person is motivated by the
faith, but it is worth going into more detail as there are differences of note between religious participants who view their work solely through a religious lens and those who view it through a mixed lens. For example, something that most differentiates those who view their work religiously is why they chose to work in Guatemala. Religious participants explained that they felt a “calling” specifically to Guatemala, but those who view their work from a secular perspective or a mixed perspective appeared to choose Guatemala by chance, only driven by a desire to work in the field and to help others internationally, but without any motivation to help any country in particular. This can be traced to the religious feeling of the “calling”, as described by the participants below.

One of the most strongly religious participants, Participant 017, explained that her entire life revolved around her faith and that it was her faith that had kept her in Guatemala working for both NGOs and FBOs for decades. She was the participant who spoke most strongly about her faith as a motivator, tracing her motivation back to both God and the faith of her parents who originally brought her to the country when she was a child. She described her work in Guatemala as a “calling,” just as it had been with her father (017, August 4th, 2016, Cookies Etc.). “[her father] woke up one night and felt he was told that if he obeyed then his whole family would have the heart for Guatemala. I’m the oldest of five and we’re all committed … [our] hearts are here. I fell in love with the people and I’m excited about the potential in Guatemala. I believe there are a lot of reasons as to why Guatemala is important in the history of the world and in the future of the world. There’s a prophetic call on Guatemala from a faith perspective” (Ibid). This participant has been in Guatemala for decades now and stated that they had no intention of leaving – their religious faith appears to be a very strong motivator. This is a great difference participants who spoke of Guatemala as something of a random choice.
Religious Guatemalan participants spoke similarly. Participant 018 stressed that faith motivated everything he did, but he was also able to point to a specific moment in his life that oriented him more firmly towards development work, and it is worth quoting in full:

“A mom came to me one time, holding a little baby, and because she knew we were working with the church she came to me and said “I just want you to pray for my baby, he is sick.” I looked at the baby, and it was obvious the baby was malnourished … I could tell she had tried everything she could to take care of her baby. She was holding to the last thing she had, her faith, and she came to me to pray for the baby. I said “I’m sorry I cannot pray for your baby, prayer is not what it needs, it needs medical attention, so I am not going to pray for you but I will drive you.” On the way to the hospital I thought “what am I doing?” Should I be singing Christian songs and giving people toys when kids are dying from malnutrition? It’s my role as a Christian not to memorize Bible verses when kids probably don’t have enough food in their tummies. The whole time I was driving I was questioning my faith and everything I had learned and was asking myself … what is my role? Is it to pray right now? How can I be the answer to these people’s prayers? She needs someone to show to her who this God who we believe in is. The world is full of people trying to prove God exists, and just a few people showing who God is. The Bible says God is love, and is generous. When you are generous you share God … if I call myself a Christian, I should be the one responding to social needs” (018, August 4th, 2016, Rainbow Café).

Non-religious participants could often point to a single experience that led to them to their work, and such is the case here. However, this experience was interpreted through the lens of his Christian faith – the plight of the woman and her baby provoked him into living out his faith differently. He speaks of “sharing God” by responding to “social needs” – certainly there are many Christians who live out their faith this way and the case for this can easily be made from the Bible. Expat workers too saw development work as a way to live out their faith. Participant 002 concurred with this idea when she said that joining her FBO was a “chance to be conscientious of my faith in a way I hadn’t before in my work” (002, July 4th, 2016, Rainbow Café).

Although we have now described some religious participants whose motivations are undoubtedly strong, it must also be noted that there were participants whose motivations were
decidedly more muted – the religious who viewed their work through a mixed religious and secular lens. As with some of the non-religious participants, there were religious participants who were less committed to Guatemala specifically, although undoubtedly are still religiously motivated. For example, Participant 024 decided to leave her job as an ER nurse in the United States to work as a nurse in rural Guatemala because she was suffering from burnout. As is described in the potential religious advantage chapter, burnout was something many participants spoke of while working in development – Participant 024’s response says something about the intensity of emergency nursing in her home country that she saw working in development as a less stressful alternative. When asked about why she chose development work, she said “I knew I wanted to do something like this … I knew I wanted a Spanish speaking country. I wanted to learn Spanish. I wanted to give back, I felt God had given me a lot in life, and I felt the skill he had given me, nursing, needed to be used to give back” (024, August 18th, 2016, Parramos). Aside from the mention of God, her response was similar to many non-religious participants who felt a moral obligation or sense of duty to work in a field where they could help others. Participant 021 felt the same way about working on the educational side of the same NGO as the above: “I hope this is going to be a permanent thing. Anything else would feel so empty. I’ve had this experience with these kids so I have to help other ones too … these kids come from nothing and there’s not a lot of government programs helping them” (021, August 18th, 2016, Parramos). Again we find a need for personal fulfillment and a feeling of obligation. The religious participants who spoke less of faith as a motivator (while still pointing to that as a part of the equation), were younger. Older religious participants spoke more assuredly of faith as a the primary or one of their primary motivators.
Conclusion

The primary conclusion to be made from this data is that both religious and non-religious development workers are motivated by a similar value system, but what underpins this system differs between the two. While religious participants are more specifically motivated by the Biblical example of Jesus and thus express the feeling of a religious calling that motivates them, non-religious participants are inspired by the example of an immediate family member or by being exposed to the issue of world poverty. A primary aim of this chapter was to determine whether those who worked for secular NGOs were motivated by a personal faith; it was found that those who work for these organizations were for the most part not motivated by a religious faith and viewed their work through a secular lens. From this we can conclude that at the individual level of analysis there are some differences between secular NGOs and FBOs in that motivations differ, but that what must be highlighted is that employees across the religiosity scale are operating with a belief in the same values of charity and solidarity with the poor, stemming from a universalistic worldview that allows them to view all of humanity as worthy of aid. Having concluded this, the next chapter will now explore differences at both the individual and organizational level of analysis by engaging with the specific question of development effectiveness and exploring whether FBOs have a comparative advantage.
Chapter 6: The Religious Comparative Advantage
With chapter five having focused on the level of analysis of the individual, this chapter will now transition to looking at how difference between secular NGOs and FBOs manifest themselves in specific ways at both the individual and organizational level of analysis. Regarding the organizational level of analysis, the first section of this chapter will present how it was found that each organization fits into the typology as presented by Clarke. In this sense, we can get a better sense of what kinds of organizations we are discussing here, and this will be especially important when considering FBOs. Secondly, one of the primary goals of this thesis is to explore the idea that FBOs have an advantage over secular NGOs in the development field, and how this may be apparent in how faith is utilized by individuals, how faith is expressed at the organizational level, and how secular and religious organizations operate differently. As explained in chapter three, there have been a variety of scholars that have theorised this. Most relevant for this thesis, Clarke theorised that FBOs would be both more embedded in their communities and able to gain the trust of those communities more easily (Clarke, 2006). These points may be interrelated, and it may be the case that an organization that is more embedded in a community gains the trust of that community. By asking questions of participants related to their levels participation with the local culture, the relationships they formed with aid recipients, and how they felt aid recipients perceived them (specifically in terms of trust), a pattern emerged in the data. Those that viewed their work through a religious lens and worked for an organization that allowed this faith to be expressed, it was found, were the most engaged in community culture, emphasized their relationships with aid recipients the most, and spoke of their faith as a trust facilitator. Additionally, questions were asked about the commitment of participants to their specific communities, their NGO, and development in general. A pattern also emerged here where those viewing their work through a religious lens spoke most
emphatically about their commitment to their specific community, while many non-religious participants were uncertain about their future.

A third section relates to whether faith is a significant factor in promoting employee resiliency. As explained in chapter three, a religious faith has been found to be an effective coping mechanism when dealing with diverse difficult situations. This section seeks to see if such is the case here. Given that high employee turnover is a potential problem for development organizations, a resilient and committed staff may be the source of a comparative advantage for one type of organization over the other, especially if religious faith is often expressed within an organization and amongst employees together. To answer these questions, participants were asked about the difficulty of their job, and every participant responded that at times they felt overwhelmed by the immensity of their organization’s long-term goals or demoralized by the problems of poverty they were witnessing. All spoke of suffering some form of burnout, and one even spoke of becoming jaded. How participants dealt with this burnout and what kept them going in the face of demoralization differed depending on how religious they were. As was expected, the most religious participants relied heavily on their faith, and those who had no personal faith instead turned to the support of their peers. Organizations where there was a significant religious presence, whether an FBO or NGO, have religious employees building relationships with one another based on their faith. However, it was only among religious participants that relationship building extended significantly to Guatemalan employees. Finally, a fourth section will touch on the question of development methods to determine whether there are any major differences between FBOs and NGOs and whether this contributes to any advantage.
The Clarke Typology

Using the typology, the organizations utilized can be placed as follows. Most secular organizations are labelled as passive as any element of faith – such as on the part of some employees – is secondary to humanitarian principles. However, what should be made special note of is that there are three secular NGOs in the active category. These are especially interesting cases, for although they label themselves as secular NGOs and do not claim to promote a particular faith, faith manifests within them in significant ways. In each case, personal faith is allowed and encouraged to be expressed, and religious employees relate to each other through their faith and participate in faith activities, such as prayer, together and with aid recipients. More information on how faith is expressed in these three cases is found in the methods section where each organization is described. The organizations are classified as follows:

Clarke (2008):

Passive – 6 (Education NGO 1, Education NGO 3, Education NGO 4, Health Care NGO 2, Health Care NGO 3, Economic NGO 1)

Active – 5 (Education FBO 1, Health Care FBO 1; Health Care NGO 1, Education NGO 2; American Governmental Organization)

Persuasive – 1 (General Development FBO 1)

Exclusive – 0

Another important conclusion that can be made by using this typology is that this thesis did not include organizations of the exclusive type, meaning that none of the organizations excluded aid recipients of a different faith or denomination and they did not engage in aggressive proselytizing. Only General Development FBO 1 seemed to have a proselytizing component, but it was not the principle focus of the programming I encountered.
Embeddedness and Trust

One of the principle sub-questions for this chapters asks whether FBOs or NGOs are generally more embedded in their target communities. A second asks whether one or the other is more easily able to gain the trust of the community members they are working with, both of which are provoked by the suggestions of scholars such as Clarke. Regarding the first question, those interviewed worked for organizations concentrated in the Antigua area, a relatively safe tourist city with a high expat population, so this sub-question becomes altered in that workers are not necessarily forced to engage with their target communities. As this researcher discovered quickly, the expat community is large in Antigua, and one can navigate the city relatively easily with only the most basic Spanish and there is no shortage of people speaking English. To understand whether the workers of organizations were embedded in a community, and by extension to shed light on the question of trust building, questions were asked of all participants about how they engaged with their communities. Answers of course differed due to where the organization operates and how they operate. For example, the medical organizations that send teams into the comparatively dangerous Western Highlands had operations that were temporary, returning only every few months or annually. It might be a stretch to label these organizations as “embedded” in their communities, but it will be detailed below that members of these organizations did build lasting relationships with community members and participated in cultural activities as they returned time and time again.

In order to explore the above, participants were asked a variety of questions about how they interact with their aid recipients such as whether they are invited to participate and then participate in community events or are invited to participate in community cultural events or activities (attending church services, for example, was common for religious participants).
Participants were also asked with whom they spent their time outside working hours, and whether they felt they built lasting relationships with aid recipients – questions that can all shed light on whether participants were embedded in their community and/or had built trust with their communities. Additionally, questions were asked to garner information about potential conflict or frustrations with aid recipients and whether and how they were overcome. All of this is, of course, from the perspective of the research participants who were expat workers, so the information described here should be read with this in mind, as it says more about how expat workers perceive their relations with community members than vice versa.

It should also be noted that many of the NGOs and FBOs utilized for this research were specific to Guatemala. Only one organization was international in nature, and their work was limited to several countries in Latin America. What this means is that none of the very large international organizations, such as the secular Oxfam or the Catholic Caritas are included in this study and it is acknowledged that the data may have been different had they been. Questions about employee compensation were not asked to participants, but given that many these organizations are relatively small and rely heavily on grants, donations, and sometimes volunteers, it is unlikely that it is financially lucrative. Had they been included, it may have been that a different kind of participant would have been included, perhaps one that was paid somewhat more and thus likelier to stay with the same organization and the field of development altogether for a longer time.

Although this work relies on self-reporting, and therefore it is possible that the answers of participants do not provide a complete picture, patterns did form along the lines of how participants viewed their work and what organization they worked for. This is apparent in the answers given in response to questions about participation in local community culture and
forming friendships with community members. Those who were most religious often spoke of a seemingly deeper connection with the Guatemalans who benefitted from their programming, although in some cases this may be the result in differences between programming design. For example, the four employees of Education FBO 1 all reported that they formed strong friendships with the children they were working with. This may have been because each employee is responsible for watching over and building a relationship with a cohort of children. This made it more likely that the cohort would become familiar with the employee, and trust and friendships then formed. However, trust was not immediately established in any of the four cases, despite any idea of a shared religion. All four participants described intense difficulties with establishing themselves in the community, with the process of establishing trust taking a period of several months to one year. Much of this stemmed both a language barrier as well as cultural differences, which can be summarized in the following quote from one participant: “I love living here … but [the first month] was a hard month to adjust to. I thought I was giving my time - I was on my high horse. I thought they had to appreciate me, but if they don’t like me, that’s fine. It was one of those things where I had to earn their respect, love, and trust. I had to work for it. That hit me hard. I knew it was going to be hard, but it was a lot harder than I thought” (021, August 18th, 2016, Parramos). As of the time of the interview, the participant had been living in the community in excess of one year, and she felt that these initial problems had all been overcome.

Once trust was established and the employees were accepted as members of the community by their cohort of children, participants described instances of connection being built based on their shared faith. As Participant 021 mentioned, she was “reaffirming [her] faith in the sense that [she was] helping [them] to reaffirm theirs” (Ibid). Besides their regular duties,
employees were expected to aid the children in their spiritual growth by praying with the children, attending Mass with them, and fielding any spiritual questions which are given to them. With that said, it is also important to note that none of this is compulsory – the children under the care of this FBO are not forced to take Communion, and any spiritual decision is left up to them. In fact, some of those living at the complex did not consider themselves Catholic, or even Christian, and the FBO also utilized non-Christian volunteers, again indicating that the line between FBO and NGO is often blurred. Even while this organization is explicitly religious and Catholic, the organization cannot be classified as exclusive when using Clarke’s typology because of this, and is instead classified as active in its faith. An exclusive FBO would require its aid recipients to be either already Catholic or be working toward conversion. Still, given that the majority of aid recipients in the case of this FBO were said to be Catholic, it can be said that the FBO is still working in close cultural proximity to their aid recipients. Based on the answers of the four participants, this appears to be how they build trust with community member – through an exploration of their faith together.

While non-religious participants occasionally built long-lasting relationships in aid recipient communities, religious participants were often more easily able to form and maintain these relationships. Participant answers such as the above indicate that sharing faith may be a part of this. As with Education FBO 1, other FBOs typically provided some form of pastoral care (emotional and spiritual support based on their Christian faith) to the community. Participant 002, working for Health Care FBO 1 and views their work through a religious lens, describes how specially trained individuals provide pastoral care for patients who need surgery: “We take care of patients beyond just being a patient on the surgical table and we also play a big role. [Pastoral care], particularly in the surgical context can be quite necessary” due to the level
of anxiety and fear patients and their families feel leading up to surgery and during periods of uncertain recovery (002, July 4th, 2016, Rainbow Café). Given that the vast majority of Guatemalan aid recipients are either Catholic or Evangelical Christian, pastoral care may be a key component in building trust and the reputation of organizations that are close in cultural proximity. Secular NGOs which have little or no faith component in their work, lack this tool to connect and built trust with aid recipients, and are thus more distant in terms of cultural proximity.

Yet, some NGOs, while not expressing faith as an organization, allow or encourage their employees to express their faith, and it is in these cases that the advantage in trust and relationship building that FBOs have due to their cultural proximity is also held by NGOs with religious employees. The best example of this is Education NGO 2, originally founded as a Christian FBO but is now secular as an organization. Having worked for this NGO for many years, Participant 017 spoke of how they “shared faith on the job … we would often pray in the hallway, we wouldn’t force anyone to do that. We would often do it in the parking lot too. There were Catholics and Evangelicals who really wanted to grow in their faith.” (017, August 4th, 2016, Cookies Etc.). What is the importance of this? Recalling Benthall’s study of Muslim FBOs from chapter three, these kinds of practices go beyond material well-being and provide additional levels of “spiritual, emotional, and ontological” security for aid participants (Benthall, 2012, p. 84). Although in the cases above the answers came from expat workers, is it not the case that someone whose worldview is permeated by religious belief facing precarious surgery, for example, would prefer to have spiritual support from someone who has an understanding of their faith? The answers given by participants in this study would indicate yes, but further research that incorporates a fuller picture of the views of aid recipients is needed.
In contrast to this were non-religious workers who were uncomfortable when aid recipients expressed their faith or invited them to participate in religious activities. Indeed, some participants reported cases where aid recipients still attempted to include participants in the local religious customs, despite knowing the participant was less religious or atheist. Although not referring to an organization included in this study, one participant provided an example of this through a story about their mother who worked in development in Honduras. Pressured to participate in the baptism of a newborn child and to recite a prayer affirming belief in God, the participant’s mother, an atheist, resisted until the word God was removed from the prayer. While this could have been a point of contention between the worker and the community, they had already established a high level of trust which allowed the worker some flexibility (004, July 20th, 2016, Rainbow Café). With this example as evidence, it would appear that as far as personal relationships go, even being an atheist with lower cultural proximity did not seem to affect the ability of participants to form relationships with aid recipients and to build trust.

“Usually they don’t ask [about religion] until we’re already in a good place,” said Participant 004, further explaining that many foreign volunteers admit to be atheists and continued to build friendships anyway (Ibid). Interestingly, however, this participant also noted that she felt like she gained a higher level of respect when she said she enjoyed going to church. What these examples demonstrate is that while sharing a faith with aid recipients can be a way to build trust and establish oneself in the community through participating in the community religion, it is not necessarily the only way to do so. Less religious participants mostly reported that they were still able to gain trust within their communities despite initial awkwardness, but we cannot discount the value of even a small advantage that closer cultural proximity garners.
There are others who avoided the subject of religion almost entirely, and avoid connecting with aid recipients entirely, except through their work. Participant 013, working for the entirely secular Education NGO 3 and viewing his work through a secular lens, explained that while he knew the community was religious, he did not encounter it on a day to day basis (013, July 28th, 2016, Rainbow Café). Furthermore, he explained that any relationship he had with aid recipients was strictly business – not because there was a cultural or religious divide, but rather because he believed there is a “boundary that has to be respected” and because he was wary of practicing favouritism (Ibid). Outside of work, however, he was “proud to say” he had a wide range of friends across cultures (Ibid). In these interactions, religion rarely, if ever, came up. This situation was not exclusive to this participant, as other non-religious participants spoke of a similar boundary. Another atheist participant initially had qualms about living in Antigua – a “tourist paradise” – rather than in Guatemala City where she worked (004, July 20th, 2016, Rainbow Café). She admitted that this meant she was not immersing herself in Guatemalan culture, and that it also placed a barrier between herself and her aid recipients in Guatemala City. She did not build friendly relationships with Guatemalans who were of the same socio-economic class as the aid recipients working with her NGO, but rather spent most of her time outside of working hours with foreigners and a small number of Guatemalans who were of the same socio-economic class as herself.

As with secular participants, participants in-between the religious and secular worldviews, even if they were religious themselves, gave answers similar to those who were entirely secular. For example, Participant 025 explained that her and her family do participate in local Christian events, but found it difficult to become involved with the local churches due to the high time commitment required (025, August 19th, 2016, Santa Lucia Las Milpas Altas).
This is in contrast to those who view their work religiously and thus saw deep involvement with local churches and building relationships built on faith as a requirement. Although Participant 025 worked for the American Governmental Organization included, an organization which encouraged the expression of personal faith, she did not view her work with the organization as something which is religious in nature. Thus, it seems she ran into similar problems of connecting with local Guatemalans as her strictly secular counterparts. Likewise, Participant 003, a Seventh Day Adventist, felt that her faith was somewhat important to her as she continued her work, but she found attending church and making Guatemalan friends to be difficult due to “cultural differences” (003, July 19th, 2016, Rainbow Café).

Again, this can be contrasted with the participants viewing their work religiously who built stronger relationships within the communities they worked in - despite those cultural differences which the participants described above struggled with. Having already mentioned those working for the FBO where participants lived with the children they were educating, the other most strongly religious participants participated more fully in the local culture and built friendships. “The mass is the mass is the mass”, said one participant, “it’s really hard to hide us in a church; there’s much respect for the faith both ways I think. It’s a commonality, it just helps” (001, July 1st, 2016, Rainbow Café). Speaking of the medical team, she described forming close bonds with those she cared for:

“So you see these kids year after year after year for more surgeries, and if you see the same little boy, little girl, from six months old to twelve or fifteen, you get to know the parents, siblings, grandparents. So, it is like a big old honkin family reunion wherever you go, especially if you’ve been in that village before, you’re gonna see people you’ve worked with before.” (Ibid.)

Stories such as these were common coming in the answers given by those with the religious lens, while being noticeably absent when speaking to those without it. From the data it would appear
as though those viewing their work (and thus their place in Guatemala) religiously formed deeper personal relationships with their target communities and participated more fully in community culture, and in this sense it can be said that they are more embedded than the secular NGOs included in this study. One should be cautious in concluding that this alone makes them more effective, so we must continue to examine this question from other angles.

One aspect regarding the question of embeddedness relates to the length of commitment that organizations and individual employees have to specific communities that they work in. We can recall the study by Bradley (2005), who stated that FBOs tended to be more committed to long term work. From an organizational standpoint, both FBOs and NGOs worked with the same communities for a sustained period – those working in education worked with the same schools helping the same communities, for example, while medical organizations returned to the same communities to perform treatment and to conduct follow-up appointments. This is good for organizational embeddedness, but there should also ideally be long-term employees as well. However, many of the younger participants, whether religious or not, were uncertain about their place in the field. Some were under contract with a set expiration date and were unsure what the future held afterwards. “I’m just kind of playing it by ear”, said one participant, “I think [it will be long-term]. Right now I’m looking at NGOs in DC. I’m looking at NGOs based in my community because I think community based NGOs have the potential to affect change because they have a deeper understanding of what’s going on” (007, July 21st, 2016. Cambio Language School). Based on these interviews, these participants affirmed their commitment to working with NGOs as their career, but were debating whether they would be more effective in their home country. This deliberation was echoed by other participants, including one who admitted that she was working internationally, rather than nationally, for “selfish reasons”. “I wanted to
travel, I wanted to experience a new culture and I wanted to be more worldly and speak another
language. It also seemed like there was more need here rather than at home… I thought maybe
I’d get experience in other countries and then I can come home and make a difference, but I also
This participant too was heavily considering returning home to find an organization in the United
States carrying out similar work. This was a common theme found among non-religious
participants, and some religious participants as well. Many of them felt very strongly that they
would like to continue working in development, but felt their skills may be better utilized in their
home countries. Such was the case even with some participants who viewed their work
religiously. While knowing they wanted to work in development in some capacity, they did not
assert that they felt called to Guatemala for the long-term, although this remained an option.

Still, when interviewing participants who were at least somewhat older (typically over
twenty-five years in age), participants became more sure that this was what they intended to
spend much of their life doing. Non-religious participants would typically describe it as a
“passion” that developed from previous experiences, as is detailed in the chapter of this thesis
which deals with personal motivation. Given the problems presented by Lewis (2009) regarding
short-term development work, the question of work longevity is important. The passion of
workers may keep them working in development, but the data collected from participants in this
study points to turnover still being a potential problem for some organizations, especially those
employing young recent graduates who are uncertain about their desire to remain with the
organization or even the desire to continue in the same line of work. This problem seemed to
extend beyond to other organizations with older employees with more experience. Although
these employees were more certain of their desire to continue working in development, there still
appeared to be a high turnover rate. This problem may also be particularly worrisome for those organizations utilizing volunteers, a practice that appeared to be widespread. In fact, every organization utilized for this research made extensive use of volunteers.

FBOs, too, made use of shorter term contract employees, but overall the participants who worked for them were more certain about their desire to continue working in development and often with the same organization. What is worth noting, however, is that the younger religious participants who were recent graduates expressed similar sentiments as those non-religious participants who were uncertain about continuing a career in international development. Those working for the American Government Organization seemed the most certain about continuing their work, but this may be due to the higher pay scale available in combination with the personal motivation of the employees.

**Burnout and Resiliency**

Another aspect of the research question was developed after the first few interviews took place because when asked about the difficulty of their job, almost all participants responded that they had suffered from significant burnout at some point. Recalling chapter three, religion has been found to be a source of resiliency for people in a wide variety of stressful situations. This section seeks to answer whether this extends to people working in international development, and will shed light on whether this is a potential advantage for certain organizations. To what extent is faith used by development practitioners to deal with burnout and related problems? How do those without a faith deal with these issues? As discussed in the previous section, both FBOs and NGOs should ensure they have employees who intend to work for them for the long term, and so it will be important to discover whether religious faith helps development
practitioners stay committed to their work. Questions were asked to participants to shed some light on these questions. They were asked about specific situations that caused them stress and how they dealt with this stress. They were asked what kept them going in the face of adversity. After analyzing their answers, it was found that burnout is especially acute for those working in health care, but answers varied depending on how participants viewed their work and what type of organization they worked for.

As might be expected, those who are most religious and viewed their work through a religious lens turn primarily to their faith as a source of encouragement to continue their work. Those who viewed their work through a secular lens instead relied on the support and encouragement of their peers, or reminded themselves about their values and motivations for getting into the work in the first place. For example, when asked about specific challenges they faced, the religious Participant 017 described incidents of betrayal on the part of Guatemalans that tested her resolve: “I had an assistant, he was a star student. He was invested in and believed in, but as soon as he graduated he broke in and robbed at knifepoint one of our volunteers, and then proceeded to harass me and I still have a restraining order against him” (017, August 4th, 2016, Cookies Etc.). Speaking in Biblical language, indicating that she viewed her work as part of her religious faith, this participant maintained her resolve using Christian forgiveness and “turning the other cheek” (Ibid). “We have to forgive,” she explained. “There isn’t another option or else we don’t get forgiveness” (Ibid). Other participants who viewed their work religiously expressed similar sentiments.

All religious participants spoke of relying on their faith to some degree and other similar examples could be given, but having a faith does not necessarily guarantee that someone in the field will maintain their will to continue indefinitely. Participant 017 spoke of great pressure and
a series of failures during her work across several decades, and she lamented that the Christian American man who hired her, in addition to many other foreign Christian workers she knew eventually “ran out of hope” (Ibid). Similarly, entire organizations have left the country because of incidents involving theft among other frustrations (Ibid). Knowing this, it cannot be said that faith keeps all religious persons working in development indefinitely. As with the other sub-questions throughout this thesis, this may depend on how a participant views their work. The religious employees just mentioned who gave up on their work were not interviewed for this study, so we cannot ascertain whether they viewed their work solely through a religious lens. However, the participant who referenced them, had vowed to continue despite any obstacle, and she had made it clear that she viewed her work as a religious calling.

While seeing her colleagues falter in their resolve, Participant 17 spoke of how she believes that “change is coming” and that “the kingdom comes” (017, August 4th, 2016, Cookies Etc.). The belief in the Kingdom of Christ is decidedly religious in nature, but what can be gathered from this statement is that the participant is viewing her work as a long work in progress, and that she is not so focused on short term success and failures as her colleagues whose hope was “so based on what they did that day” (Ibid). Another participant working for a medical FBO agreed that development work was “very overwhelming to work in”, and that resources were especially limited. Getting cancer in Guatemala is like “getting cancer in the 1950s” and the likelihood of dying is much higher than in the Global North due to expenses (002, July 4th, 2016, Rainbow Café). Yet, prior to working in a new community there is always a “moving experience” which involves group prayer with both workers and patients (Ibid). Knowing that not every patient in need will receive treatment, this participant stressed that she had to remind herself daily that she does not “believe that God has given up on these people”.
The nature of the situation still led her to often “get burned out and overwhelmed and frustrated and pissed off with God” but that a “belief in a higher context” keeps her going (Ibid).

Those who did not view their work religiously, especially young participants, appeared to have a tougher time in this regard. Speaking to young participants produced some transcripts which displayed a level of jadedness or uncertainty about the field that can be connected to feelings of burnout. Despite having initial passion when their work began, some of these participants seem to have lost this passion and were considering leaving the field. Admittedly, this may not be simply because these people are not religious, but rather because the pool of participants is somewhat skewed towards the young and non-religious. The information obtained may have been different had this researcher found a greater number of older, more experienced non-religious participants or a greater number of younger less experienced religious participants. Nonetheless, the data is worth discussing.

Participant 012, an atheist, came to the interview with several years’ experience working for both FBOs and NGOs and explained that they felt the non-profit sector was ill-suited to tackle the challenges that Guatemala is facing. This participant had run into a form of burnout which was not so much related to the overwhelming nature of development challenges, but to a feeling of frustration with the operations of organizations she had worked for. Describing them as “antiquated,” she complained that she “had seen a lot of money wasted” and “a lot of things done poorly” (012, July 24th, 2016, Rainbow Café). One of the most striking problems she pointed to was the way FBOs and NGOs utilize their workforce. Having employees or volunteers who are in most cases highly passionate about their work has allowed NGOs to exploit them and push them too hard too fast, leading to early burnout, inefficiencies, feelings of bitterness and high turnover rates, a problem mentioned earlier. She also complained about the
heavy focus on finding grants and donations, although an examination the websites of the organizations included in this study – and indeed many non-profit organizations globally – will reveal that most FBOs/NGOs are putting a greater emphasis on programming over fundraising. However, the participant felt this was still a glaring problem in the industry, so much so that she described herself as “jaded”, and had decided to leave the non-profit sector and utilize her passion for development issues in the corporate sector where funding was less uncertain and employee pay was higher.

This was the only case where burnout led to the participant planning to leave work in the non-profit development sector. A majority of participants spoke of problems within the development sector but never viewed the situation is totally hopeless, and a majority also felt that NGOs/FBOs were well suited for their task. For some, challenges were overcome by drawing on the encouragement of their peers and a positive work environment. This was most evident with the participants from Economic NGO 1, a relatively new NGO which works with local coffee farmers. The team based out of their Antigua office consisted entirely of participants between the ages of 25 and 35, were all from the Global North were all non-religious. When asked about challenges specific to them and burnout, one participant referenced incidents related to specific “difficult people” (020, August 17th, 2016, Reilly’s En La Esquina) which led to feelings of incompetence. What kept her going in this situation was the support of her colleagues who reaffirmed her as a member of the team and encouraged her not to take these incidents personally. Similarly, a male participant from the same NGO felt his greatest challenge had been building trust with new indigenous communities that they sought partnerships with who were weary of foreigners taking advantage of their resources (019, August 10th, 2016, Rainbow Café). Once partnered with a community, meetings with community leaders did not go smoothly, with
one meeting ending in the participant being accused of being ineffective at his job and being “just another gringo” (Ibid). This incident was highlighted by the participant as deeply troubling and demoralizing – resulting in a feeling of being “punched in the stomach” (Ibid). Being an atheist, he could not turn to religion and instead relied on the confidence of his colleagues and his own personal reflection. Through reflection, he was able to turn to his ability to empathize with the position of the Guatemalans who were “living out a frustrating situation” and that some of this was bound to be “directed at the organization and at [the participant]” (Ibid).

The above situation does not appear to be uncommon among those working for secular NGOs. With the participant being called “just another Gringo,” it is likely that this community had been promised improvements before. While the participant mentioned that he understood the situation of the community was “frustrating”, organizations in development may do well to maintain an awareness of the historical context of their work, as pointed out by scholars mentioned in chapter three. Issues such as this may be corrected by maintaining a long-term presence in specific communities to learn about each community’s specific cultural and historical context. With volunteers, new employees, and new organizations engaging with communities it is difficult for them to have a complete knowledge of the situation without having been working in the community for some time.

All four of the participants from this NGO said they intended to stay with the organization for the foreseeable future and hoped to stay in the international development field for much of their life, and this will enable them to gain a more complete understanding of the cultural and historical context that they are working in.
Development Methods

When Jones and Peterson (2011) reviewed the literature on religions and development, they found that there was an assumption in the literature that FBOs provided a distinct alternative to the secular visions of development represented by NGOs. This final section will engage with the idea of the religious comparative advantage from one final angle – the methods they employ. To what extent do the development methods of FBOs and secular NGOs differ? Should there be any major differences, it may be the case that one or the other is more appropriate or advantageous. However, the data for this research found that in this sense, the FBOs and NGOs included are very similar. All the organizations studied seem to subscribe to the same development method paradigms of participatory development and cultural sensitivity. The overall methods of the FBOs studied were not substantially different from that of the secular NGOs, both on an organizational and an individual level. This can be seen on the websites and in the literature of both types of organizations, as well as in the transcripts of conducted interviews. It becomes clear that all the included organizations focus on, or at least demonstrate an awareness of, a perceived or actual need to place more of the responsibility for development goals in the hands of aid recipients. In addition to this, participants and organizations highlight a strong desire to respect the culture of those aid recipients. Most of the organizations appear to espouse this same ideology, an ideology where development objectives are supposedly directed by Guatemalans and development workers are keen to avoid any transgressions against their culture.

Some organizations continue to use the terms as explained by the scholars in the theoretical chapter, such as participation and sensitivity while others use related terms or are at least sure to point out that their projects all feature the input of Guatemalans. For example, one
participant explained that “[their organization] makes sure that the program is run by local Guatemalans as well. [We] make sure we teach [teams] to sit back and observe and listen to the locals rather than charging in and doing what they thought was best.” (017, August 4th, 2016, Cookies Etc.). When analyzing the transcripts of the interviews conducted as well as assessing the websites and literature of the FBOs and NGOs associated, it was found that the organizations in the Antigua area are heavily focused on participatory methods of development to ensure the Guatemalan perspective was included so mistakes of the past could be avoided. Participants mostly spoke of the need to be sensitive to the culture they are working within and that development needed to be mostly in the hands of local Guatemalans. For example, a secular NGO highlights participation as one of their core values: “active participation ensures that the people with whom we work are the ones determining the needs to be addressed. It’s a partnership that involves both communication and dialogue, in which we work with our partners and address their needs” (Our Mission, 2017). Another defines a core value as: “respect for local culture, knowledge, and autonomy – our role is to help, not control” (Who We Are, 2017). A third states they aim to “respect and honor the rich cultural heritage of all people” and to “encourage participation by doing only that which people cannot do themselves” (Mission and Values, 2017). The pattern is similar across most of the secular NGOs.

Interestingly, the websites of FBOs were less clear on this matter. None of the FBOs mentioned the word participation on their website, although they often did mention at least a respect for culture. Despite this, interview transcripts reveal that religious participants still highlighted similar ideas. One of the most strongly religious participants lamented the “justly deserved” reputation of the “ugly American” that their countrymen had received. “You can’t impose American values on another culture … when you’re here you’re not in America
anymore, you have to find out what their needs are and how you can help them in their country in their home, what’s best for the people, not what makes you feel good” (001, July 1st, 2016. Rainbow Café). From this quote, it can be garnered that participation means Guatemalans at least have input into how FBOs engage in development. This was a theme found across the transcripts, although overall some religious participants were less insistent on it; non-religious participants working for secular NGOs were almost always clear in their support for these methods. For example, the director of one NGO stated that “my plan is to have only Guatemalan employees in the end and have a Guatemalan replace my position.” (013, July 28th, 2016, Rainbow Café). Others spoke of “long term partnership” or their projects being “community driven” (014, August 3rd, 2016, San Juan de Obispo; 020, August 17th, 2016, Reilly’s En La Esquina).

The Guatemalans interviewed for this thesis were the most enthusiastic of all participants about the use of participatory development and the necessity of cultural sensitivity. To avoid cultural imperialism, Participant 15 felt it was of utmost importance that organizations hire as many locals as possible and to give them leadership positions – an answer along the lines of what the organizations studied claim to already be doing. “It’s a million percent important,” she explained, as “a local will know these are the cultural norms and this is the problem … instead of assumptions.” What, then, is the solution, if there is one? One participant believed strongly that the FBO he was working for was heading in the right direction. First, he explains, those who work in the field must have the correct mentality: “you’re not a hero. Guatemala does not need short term heroes, it needs long term partners. Also this means personal growth, you’re here to learn and be open” (Ibid). Second, target communities need to take ownership of their own problems:
“our goal as non-profits is to draft a model of development that teaches communities how to solve their own problems using assets they have. One of the definitions of poverty is the lack of opportunities. When you take the opportunity from a community to solve their own problem, you are making the circle of poverty even larger. So our goal is to involve them and to have realistic expectations. What is community development and what does it look like? Many foreigners have the idea that a community should look like a community from the United States or Canada, where they have a big house and two cars in a garage. Here it won’t look like that” (Ibid).

Conclusion

The websites and literature of FBOs and NGOs reveal that they’re committed to the development strategies advocated by Guatemalan participants, so in this sense, religion does not seem to be a factor of difference. Still, we should refer to how these organizations fit into Clarke’s typology; one has to wonder whether the answer to the question of how development methods differ would change if exclusive FBOs were included. With regards to the sub-questions asking about embeddedness, trust, and resiliency, the most striking differences were between those participants who saw their work through a religious lens and those who viewed their work from a more secular standpoint, or an entirely secular standpoint. Those with the religious lens worked for FBOs, but some also worked for NGOs that are classified as “active” in the expression of faith, allowing any advantage that FBOs have to be gained by religious employees. Further differences were found not along any religious line, but rather between those who were the youngest participants and those with more experience.

The most effective NGOs or FBOs will have a long-term core of employees that are able to maintain their passion for development in the specific community that their organization is working in – long enough to gain extensive knowledge of the community they are working in and to be fluent in the required languages. This prescription applies no matter the religious affiliation of the organization. That being said, the data indicates that religious participants have
somewhat of an easier time dealing with the toughest instances of burnout and appear to be more involved in the communities they are working in. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that future research is needed to more completely investigate this topic; the study would need to be somewhat larger to gain a more representative sample and a valuable addition would have been interviews with Guatemalan aid recipients in their local language. The latter would have shed light on the Guatemalan perception of outsiders may have more fully answered the research questions of this thesis. Non-religious employees often spoke of awkward moments or a divide between themselves and Guatemalan’s due to their differences in belief – but did Guatemalan recipients view it this way? Was their awkwardness perceived as something deeper by Guatemalans? Or was it something that mattered little, or not at all? It would be beneficial to hear more Guatemalan opinions on this matter, and it will be the task of future researchers to investigate this further. Still, the data does provide an interesting pattern that indicates the most resilient participants to be those who viewed their work through a religious lens, and these participants worked for FBOs or NGOs that encouraged the expression of religious faith. They spoke of the most difficult situations and pointed to their faith as the source of their resilience, and they also emphasized that they built lasting relationships with aid recipients that included a faith component. On the other hand, less religious and non-religious participants were uncertain about their interactions with Guatemalans or preferred to keep their relationships at a distance.
Chapter 7: Conclusion
We have now viewed the question of difference between FBOs and secular NGOs from two separate levels of analysis – the individual and the organizational. With this we are brought to the conclusion which will be structured as follows: first, there will be a summary of each chapter and a review of their key findings. Secondly there will be a discussion of possible avenues for future researchers before a final section explains the overall significance for development practitioners and policy makers.

**Summary of Findings**

Chapter five examined levels of difference at the individual level and asked whether personal motivations differed greatly between a religious and non-religious person. Why are participants working in development? The majority of participants who view their work through the religious lens placed an emphasis on their personal faith as the primary motivator for them to first begin working in development and to continue working in development. Participants often referenced the life of Jesus as an example to follow and pointed to his engagement with the poor as inspiration; it was these participants, the most strongly religious participants, that appeared to be most committed to Guatemala particularly as a place to continue working in development. There were non-religious participants who were committed to development work as well, but many were uncertain about their place in the field and none expressed commitment to Guatemala particularly, but some did express that they planned to work in development long-term. Some religious participants felt it was their calling to work in development, and others explained that it was their religious duty to follow the example of Jesus. Non-religious participants similarly expressed ideas about duty, but they were not looking at the life of Jesus as their primary example. Many had the idea of service impressed upon them from a young age by the example
of their parents and grandparents; many of these relatives were themselves religious, but these non-religious participants had no taken on the idea of service – the duty to help others – without an explicit religious faith. The Christian service culture for these participants had transformed into something secular. These participants had come to similar conclusions as their religious peers but had begun to draw meaning and belief from this world, rather than from a religious belief – they view their work through a secular lens. Often this was sparked not by reading a religious text and then feeling a religious calling, but rather from engaging with marginalized communities in their home country, while doing a service learning trip abroad, or being exposed to world problems of poverty through their education. Religious persons expressed feelings of solidarity with the poor and had universalistic ideas of how all people are children of God; non-religious participants felt similarly, but had dropped the idea of God from their motivational impetus – non-religious participants simply felt that today one does not need a religious moral code to know that helping others, and in their case helping others by working in development, was the right thing to do. It would be interesting to note whether thirty years from now which participants are still working in development in Guatemala, which are working in development elsewhere, and which had moved on to another field. It would also be interesting to see if the number of non-religious employees of development NGOs increases or decreases as time goes on.

Chapter six looked at both the individual and organizational unit of analysis and examined how they interacted. The chapter more specifically engaged with the question of whether FBOs had a comparative advantage in development, as had been theorized or even assumed by some scholars. This was part of the reasoning behind choosing the majority Christian Guatemala as a case country, as the idea of cultural proximity is of some importance.
What this means is that the answers would be drastically different had this research studied Christian FBOs working in a non-Christian country, where it may be the case that a Christian FBO may have no advantage in building trust or community embeddedness. Thus, the generalizability of these findings can only extend to other contexts where Christian FBOs are working within Christian communities. Indeed, it was found that in some cases there did appear to be an advantage for FBOs over secular NGOs, although this advantage was not profound enough to warrant donors more heavily focusing on FBOs. This is because one of the primary manners in which this advantage is theorized to manifest itself is an ease of building trust. Non-religious participants did, in fact, point to incidents of awkwardness or a barrier between themselves and Guatemalans due to a lack of shared faith, but they all felt that they were eventually able to establish trust. Religious participants did feel as if their religion helped them relate to members of the communities they worked in and that this helped them establish trust relatively easily, although it did still take some time. A key difference is that religious persons participated in community culture, such as by going to church, and built lasting relationships with Guatemalans on the basis of faith, indicating that they were embedded in communities. Non-religious participants, on the other hand, were more likely to view their relationships with aid recipients as strictly business, and some participants had to work to justify to themselves not working more closely in communities. Additionally FBOs provided some form of pastoral care, a practice which participants stressed as important for religious aid recipients, especially those working with medical FBOs. The overall conclusion of this chapter, with the above in mind, is that FBOs do have a slight advantage in that faith does facilitate the building of relationships, in turn facilitating the building of trust and the embedding of an organization into a community. In terms of development methods, it was found that FBOs and NGOs did not differ substantially.
Further Research and Research Questions

This research has engaged with the question of whether an FBO or NGO is more effective in its development work. Having concluded that in some cases, as had been previously theorized, FBOs are more embedded in their communities as evidenced by how participants from both FBOs and NGOs described their work and relationships with Guatemalans, there is still a piece of the puzzle that is missing. Further research should be more in-depth and more extensive in that there should be a much greater emphasis on the opinions of Guatemalan beneficiaries. How do they perceive the work of FBOs and NGOs? Do Guatemalans have a preference for a religious or non-religious development practitioner?

The sixth chapter of this thesis explains that all the FBOs and NGOs included believed in the value of participatory development and culturally sensitive programming. Scholars hoping to engage with this question further could design a study that goes deeper into how these organizations conceive of these concepts. While participants from all organizations and the organizations themselves via their websites and other literature were keen to highlight the need for these methods, another study could see how these ideas manifest themselves in practice. Again, interviews with Guatemalan aid recipients would be beneficial as they would be able to describe how these organizations were including them in the development process. It would be significant for researchers to explore whether there are differences in how these methods are put into practice between FBOs and secular NGOs.

Another question relates back to the idea of cultural sensitivity. In this case, it was found that even the Christian FBOs that were active or persuasive on the Clarke scale were hesitant to try and convert Guatemalans to their brand of Christianity. However, an important note to make is that the majority of Guatemalans are already Christian. Indeed, many are either Catholics or
Evangelicals, with some communities having extensive Mayan syncretic elements within their Christianity. While there may be FBOs working in Guatemala actively trying to convert Guatemalans from one denomination of Christianity to another, or working toward eliminating Mayan syncretic elements, employees of the FBOs studied were not of this kind. Further research should study whether similar FBOs place the same emphasis on cultural sensitivity in countries that are not majority Christian.

Finally, as was demonstrated by the use of the typologies in the methods section, this thesis did not include FBOs that engaged in overt proselytization. This was not entirely by design, but rather depended on who responded to research inquiries. Further research questions could be developed and included in a new study that compares FBOs that would be categorized as “exclusive” in their programming and had an overt proselytizing component to their development work. Do these organizations also highlight participatory development and cultural sensitivity; and if yes, how do they reconcile this with their goals of proselytization? What motivates an employee of an FBO that engages in proselytization? Do they too feel a “calling”? If they do, is that calling to engage in development or obtain converts to their particular denomination? How do these proselytizing employees relate to aid participants? Do they seek to build deep relationships, and are they entirely based around faith?

**Significance and Final Word**

This research will be of particular use to donors and development funding organizations that have recognized the role of FBOs in the field of development. For donors, this thesis is revealing in that it describes a type of FBO that in practice differs little from their secular counterparts, and in some cases have a slight advantage over them. All actors involved with
development must continue to recognize the fact that for many billions in the Global South, religion has not decreased in importance, and that religion will continue to be a factor in their lives. Although the advantage is slight, development actors should not discount it, especially in cases such as emergency surgery or in instances of extreme poverty. In these cases, the factor of spiritual familiarity adds a level of comfort and eases the process of building trust. This is not to say that because of this advantage, a Christian FBO should always be given preference for funding if they are working in a Christian community. As this research has shown, secular NGOs only suffer a slight impediment to building trust but are less likely to make extensive efforts to embed themselves more deeply into a community. In many cases, secular NGO employees felt that relationships with aid recipients should be mostly business, and this led to feelings of a cultural divide between themselves and their recipients.

This is not to say for sure that an organization should always work to culturally embed themselves in the way these FBOs have, but this knowledge may be helpful for secular NGOs that are currently hesitant to partner with FBOs. While an economic equity secular NGO, such as one included in this study, may be effective in partnering with organizations in the long term, employees explained that it was difficult to build trust and could have benefitted from advanced knowledge of the cultural context. The knowledge that there are FBOs that are more culturally embedded, working long-term and with greater cultural proximity but are not working to overtly proselytize opens up the opportunity for secular NGOs to partner with them without going against their principles of participatory development and cultural sensitivity. It may even be beneficial for secular NGOs to have some religious expat employees on their staff who may facilitate trust building more efficiently with communities; although they may too be seen as “just another gringo”, attending church services or participating in other cultural communities
may aid in convincing hesitant communities that they are not there to exploit them, as it helped some religious participants interviewed.

Similarly, those looking to work in development that are concerned with problems related to neo-colonialism or insensitivity may not need to skip over applying for positions with FBOs. Not only do the FBOs discussed hire non-religious persons and take them as volunteers, without trying to convert them, they all are keen on implementing development in practice using similar methods to secular NGOs. Current employees of secular NGOs should also be aware of this information, given the misconceptions that some participants had about the intentions of FBO employees. A survey of their motivations reveal that they are not primarily motivated by a desire to convert people, but rather to follow the example of Jesus without discrimination.

Guatemala is still suffering from the effects of its civil war, among other developmental problems, meaning that the job of FBOs and secular NGOs is far from finished. Employees from most of these organizations predicted a time where they were replaced entirely by local employees. For now, that time has not come, and these organizations are relying on the skills and commitment of employees from the Global North. Their motivations and how they construct the meaning of their work differs, but their intentions and methods do not vary greatly. Moving forward, it is unknown how the demographic of development employees will change. Should numbers of religious employees decline, the non-religious may be able to fill the gap with motivations that are similar without the divine impetus. These non-religious employees should recognize, however, that the issue of faith is not one that will disappear anytime soon in Guatemala, and that it should not be ignored but rather understood.
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