SECULAR AND FAITH-BASED NGOS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PRIORITIES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF SOCIOLOGY

BY

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MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2012
Human trafficking is defined as “an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them” (UNODC.org 2011). For destination countries (the countries to which trafficked people are brought), trafficking women, children, and men into the sex trade is a source of significant revenue. In 2003, more than 720,000 Japanese men participated in commercial sex in Thailand, where there are between 200,000 and 325,000 sex workers; some workers were as young as six years old (Yokota 2006). Globally, the International Labor Organization has estimated that at any moment in time, 2.5 million people are being trafficked, generating $32 billion per year (Chuang 2006). While the emphasis is often on the tourists from America, Europe, Australia, Japan, and other countries that bring their business to brothels, men native to the destination countries also frequent these brothels further compounding the problem (Belk, Østergaard, and Groves 1998; Montgomery 2008; Pettman 1997). Aside from the violations of human rights that human trafficking poses, there are other dangers for the victims, their patrons, and the families of patrons in the form of sexually transmitted diseases. HIV/AIDS is prevalent in destination countries, but it is now also rising among foreigners who visited prostitutes. The international clients then potentially spread the disease to others—including their partners—back in their native countries (Belk, Østergaard, and Groves 1998; Leiter et al. 2006; McCamish, Storer, and Carl 2000; Yokota 2006).

There are, however, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are dedicated to combating human sex trafficking. These organizations are important because studies on victims of trafficking have found that victims are often reluctant to go to the police for
fear of repercussion and criminal justice authorities are not considered to be fair or 
trustworthy. As a result, victims are much more likely to turn to and trust NGOs which 
makes their role in these regions especially valuable (Goodey 2004). Unfortunately 
NGOs often face limited funding, training, and resources, making it impossible for just 
one NGO to address all the needs of the victims and potential victims of trafficking 
(Tzvetkova 2002). The result is that NGOs are forced to focus on just a few aspects of 
trafficking. While prior research has shown that NGOs often specialize in various areas 
(such as providing education for victims or offering shelter for those who have escaped) 
(Jordan, 2002; Pickup, 1998; Tzvetkova 2002), there has not been research conducted on 
the specific actions that individual NGOs take to fight against sex trafficking and how 
their activities may vary by distinguishing characteristics such as ideological focus and 
religious affiliation.

To explore the relationship among these distinguishing NGO features, this study 
examined the websites of 24 NGOs, all of which are headquartered in the U.S. The 
websites of the NGOs were studied through a content analysis to compare the priorities of 
secular and faith-based NGOs, as well as to see if there is variation between secular and 
faith-based organizations. Through this research, the international community will be 
able to better understand the relationship between religious affiliation, an NGO’s 
_priorities, and an NGO’s theoretical approach to combating sex trafficking.

_Literature Review_

_Sex Trafficking_

Prior research, which was conducted primarily through interviews, has examined 
several factors that influence the likelihood of an individual being trafficked. These
include emigration from one’s native country due to unrest, lack of education, and poverty as common experiences of women who were trafficked (Andrijasevic 2007; Chapkis 2003; Paul and Hasnath 2000; Pickup 1998). Many of these women, along with facing sexual abuse, also endure extortion and other forms of maltreatment (Jayasree 2004). Moreover, the victims of trafficking were at high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other STDs (Belk, Østergaard, and Groves 1998; Leiter et. al 2006). Typically, the women who are trafficked for sexual exploitation are from Southeast Asia or Eastern Europe, although women from all over the world are trafficked. Sex trafficking appears to have risen in Central and Southeastern Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall. As more vulnerable European populations were exposed, the Western European demand for Eastern European prostitutes has increased (Busza 2004; Goodey 2004; Haynes 2004; Kapstein 2006).

Sexually exploited children have been studied as well, including child prostitutes and children exploited through pornography (Flowers 2001; Montgomery 2008). Many children who are involved in sex work are also often from impoverished families and work as prostitutes to fulfill filial duty by providing financial support. They also lack access to education or health care and many child prostitutes do not believe that they are able to have a better jobs (other options cited were employment in sweatshops or begging) (Montgomery 2008). Sexually exploited children are also at risk for AIDS; psychological, sexual, and physical abuse; and substance addictions. As a result, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal behavior are common among child prostitutes (Flowers 2004).
The patrons of prostitutes have also been studied in the past (Belk, Østergaard, and Groves 1998; Yokota 2006). Both foreign and domestic men go to brothels in various countries; the most popular sex tourism destination being Thailand. Sex tourists in Thailand reported that brothels in there were cleaner and they preferred the Thai prostitutes to those in other countries. The patrons reported that despite the risk of HIV/AIDS, they were still willing to visit brothels. Furthermore, the anonymity provided by being in a different country is another motivating factor for sex tourists (Belk, Østergaard, and Groves 1998; Montgomery 2008; Yokota 2006). Both foreign and domestic men also stated that peer pressure influenced their decision to seek prostitutes—if their friends or colleagues decided to go to a brothel, they felt that they were expected to go along as well (Belk, Østergaard, and Groves 1998; Yokota 2006).

While it is important to study the perspectives of those who work in brothels and those who visit brothels, there has been a gap in the research. NGOs have not been as heavily researched. Counter-trafficking NGOs also need to be studied so that there can be research regarding what the NGOs’ priorities are, how their priorities may be affected by religious affiliation, and if religious affiliation also affects what approach of development the NGOs is likely to adopt. By studying the priorities of NGOs and the influence of religious affiliation, we can see what NGOs are currently doing, but also what aspects of counter-trafficking may be neglected by the organizations.

Role of NGOs

Previous research has shown that NGOs play a large role in serving the global community (Jayasignhe 2007; Smith, Pagnucco, and Lopez 1998; Tzvetkova 2002). In 2000, there were an estimated 26,000 international NGOs, although the actual number of
NGOs is expected to be much higher. Each NGO has a different purpose—some seek to improve water sanitation or health care, and others are only short-lived organizations to provide aid in a crisis (Jayasinghe 2007). Historically, the first NGO was established in 1839. It was Anti-Slavery International, which made abolition an important political issue. Other NGOs developed later on, taking on issues that the government was ignoring, such as women’s suffrage and the rights of workers (Davies, 2008).

As NGOs have grown and developed, so have international conferences, which bring both NGOs and governmental organizations together to discuss issues involving human rights. In the early 1930’s, the League of Nations and NGOs met at the World Disarmament to discuss peace. The League of Nations assisted NGOs by allowing them to participate in meetings, publishing the data that the NGOs collected, and sending representatives to attend NGO meetings. However, after 1933, there was a decline in NGOs. The Great Depression greatly reduced funding and WWII also diminished the number and capacity of NGOs. The decades following the war, however, saw a growth in NGOs. In the 1960s, environmental NGOs sprung up and in the 80s there was a new interest in development and providing aid to developing nations (Davies, 2008).

Following the 1980s more indigenous NGOs were rising up. This changed the way NGOs (both faith-based and secular) operated. Before the presence of indigenous NGOs, most Western NGOs focused on providing direct aid, either through funding or services. However, as those living in developing countries began to take control of their own development, Western NGOs began to focus more on working within institutions of the native communities. Instead of providing direct aid, outside NGOs began to offer more empowerment and support for local institutions (Ferris, 2005).
These organizations have become an instrumental part in combating sex trafficking, especially when victims are unable to reach out for help from the government. In countries where trafficking is prevalent, the law enforcement is also likely to be corrupt, making victims hesitant to approach officials (Goodey 2004, Tzevtkova 2002). Those who have been trafficked into another country lack proper documentation, which can lead to arrests or deportation. Additionally, many trafficking victims fear repercussions—including being tortured or killed—at the hands of their traffickers if they report what has happened (Leiter et al. 2006; Tzevtkova 2002).

However, many NGOs provide a sense of security for the victims. Some are able to provide shelter for the victims, although lack of funding can make it difficult for NGOs to provide long-term shelter. Counseling is also another service that is provided by many NGOs, allowing victims to share their experiences and to receive support from each other and the counselors. Victims may also be able to receive medical care or training in different skills that can help them in the future (Tzevtkova 2002).

Other organizations do not work directly with victims, but instead work toward raising awareness and preventing trafficking. For example, some NGOs send representatives to schools to educate teachers and advisors so that they can prevent their students from being trafficked. Another preventative measure that NGOs take is to provide literature and other materials for migrants, so they are aware of the ways people can be trafficked (Tzevtkova 2002).

Research has revealed that greater participation in NGOs by citizens (not just the workers at the NGOs) can also promote and protect human rights (Neumayer 2005). Nations that ratified non-binding human rights treaties, such as the International
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and had a greater participation in civil society (voluntary social organizations that are separate from the government, such as NGOs) saw an improvement in human rights protection. However, nations that ratified the treaties, but lacked citizen participation in civil society, did not see an improvement in human rights. In some cases, the violations became more severe. Some political scientists believe this may be because nations begin to believe that no one will interfere to end their human rights violations (Neumayer 2005).

While NGOs can promote human rights, they are limited in that they cannot punish those who have violated the rights of others. They are only able to document and report instances of violations to government organizations. Occasionally NGOs will be represented in global conferences (mostly large organizations with powerful members), though this can be dangerous, since some governments have threatened representatives in the past, accusing them of treason (Merry 2003). Even though representatives are welcome, most are not permitted to discuss their findings in an open forum during UN conferences. Despite their inability to sanction nations that violate human rights and the barriers that can prevent NGOs from expressing their concerns and discoveries, NGOs can provide useful research and information to the global community and other networks (Merry 2003).

However, not all NGOs have clear intentions or goals (or do not want to make their actual intentions known). Some NGOs located in countries where human sex trafficking is prevalent occasionally used instances of trafficking to raid brothels in forced rescues. Yet instead of being concerned with the well-being of those who had been trafficked, the NGOs allowed the sex workers to be arrested (even though many were
forced into the sex trade). The priority of the NGOs was co-opted by corrupt law enforcement and did not actually help victims of trafficking. Rather, the police force would often receive bribes from raided brothels (Busza 2004). As a result of the failure to meet the needs of communities, there have been arguments that NGOs need more accountability. Greater accountability is thought to increase the legitimacy of organizations, prevent abuses of power of funds, improve management and governance, and promote more effective development and aid. Strategic accountability, which would measure how well an NGO performs their mission, has been emphasized (Cavill and Sohail 2007).

Although there is information available on NGOs and their involvement in helping those who have been trafficked, much of the research still revolves around the victims. This study does not center on the victims, but instead focuses on the organizations themselves and examines how they present their missions and discuss their priorities. By examining NGOs, awareness of counter-trafficking efforts can be disseminated to those who have been trafficked or work to prevent trafficking. Additionally, the programs that are already available can be improved upon as more people become knowledgeable about anti-trafficking NGOs and their organizational strategies.

*Theories of Development*

The mission and goals of western NGOs can depend on which theory of development the NGO is based. The theories of development identify various causes of underdevelopment and related socio-economic problems. Three major theories of
development that NGOs adopt include the economic theory, the radical theory, and the capabilities approach of development (Peet and Hartwick 2009).

The economic theory maintains that the world is composed of haves and have-nots. Some have resources and wealth, others do not. Thus, according to the economic theory, development comes primarily from bringing money and resources to the impoverished and marginalized (Peet and Hartwick 2009). However, concerns that NGOs are primarily interested in generating financial resources have been raised in the international community. One main concern is that economically-minded NGOs become more like corporations, seeking efficiency and benchmarking. As a result, the NGOs may become distracted from their original values and goals of helping communities and even discard these objectives all together. Also, NGOs that become more resource-driven often disregard the culture of those they are meant to serve. Since NGOs depend on limited resources and their funding may be designated to certain projects, the NGOs may not be able to use money toward more culturally sensitive projects, which can lead to further alienation and oppression of the marginalized, since the organizations fail to understand and communicate with the people who need their aid (Murphy 2000).

NGOs that follow the radical theory may see poverty and injustice as being a systematic problem. Therefore, they believe solutions are brought about through creating new policies and modifying laws, not through direct contact with victims (Peet and Hartwick 2009). Some criticize victim-centered anti-trafficking efforts for losing sight of the big picture—the socioeconomic conditions that allow trafficking to occur; trafficking is, in a sense, only a symptom of a greater problem and treating trafficked victims would only lead to a temporary, incomplete solution. The main problem, according to some
NGOs, is survival migration, that is, individuals migrating away from conflict or poverty to regions where they lack power and resources to be successful (Chuang 2006; Pickup 1998).

Survival migrants are not searching for better opportunities, but are driven from their native countries due to political, economic, or social unrest. The majority of survival migrants are poor and female, whose rights are often unprotected in their destination countries. This leaves them vulnerable to traffickers (Chuang 2006; Pickup 1998). By only addressing the needs of victims, attention is not given to the migration, socio-economic, and political issues that feed trafficking. However, if NGOs are able to push for legislation that protects the rights of migrants and trafficking victims, trafficking can be eradicated more effectively (Chuang 2006; Jordan 2002; Pickup 1998).

The organizations that believe in the capabilities approach to development desire to give people the opportunity to lead a more fulfilling life; often these NGOs concentrate on providing education and health care (Peet and Hartwick 2009). Also, they place a greater emphasis on building relationships with the people that they are serving. Learning about their lives and culture is an important element, so that mutual trust and respect can be built between the people and the NGOs. Furthermore, these types of NGOs do not seek to solve the problems for the people, but want to work with the people to create solutions together (Murphy 2000, Peet and Hartwick 2009).

The feminist theory of development has five subcategories, including women and development; women in development; gender and development; women, environment, and development; and postmodernism and development. The women and development position is that for development to occur, the division of labor between men and women
needs to be eliminated. They argue that because women are kept in roles separate from men (such as being a housekeeper), women are prevented from being a part of the economic sphere and are made to serve men. To achieve development, including greater protection of human rights, women must be integrated into the economic sphere and move into more positions of power. As women assume more powerful positions, their interests and rights can be better protected.

Women in development suggests that development comes from when women are actively participating in development and work in development projects concerning “women’s issues” such as maternal mortality rates. By having women determine and control their own development projects, women are more likely to gain access to better health care and education, which in turn helps women contribute more in society overall, increasing development for everyone.

In gender and development, the focus is on changing the structure of patriarchal society. Women, environment, and development has seen parallels between men dominating the environment and men dominating women. To change how men hold power, women have begun to strive to protect the environment and change how men treat the environment, which has in turn changed who holds the power. By preventing environmental degradation, women have been able to prevent exploitation of both the environment and people as they combat forces that disregard culture or environmental sustainability for the sake of economic production. This allows for women to prevent exploitation of themselves and for them to seek their own forms of development.

Postmodernism and development is not actually truly development. Rather, it is the position that no one outside of an underdeveloped nation can understand the needs of
the people in that nation, so outsiders should not interfere and impose development upon the Global South (Peet and Hardwick, 2009).

While NGOs do not typically explicitly state which theory of development they maintain, most NGOs follow either the economic, radical, feminist, or capabilities theory of development. Adopting a theory shapes the priorities of an NGO and how the NGO functions.

*Faith-based NGOs*

NGOs also differ due to religious affiliation. Often faith-based NGOs focus on a holistic form of development, meaning that such NGOs seek to serve both spiritual and non-spiritual needs of those they are helping. On the other hand, secular NGOs do not include spirituality in their work (Bornstein 2005; Jantzi and Jantzi 2002). However, the extent to which faith-based NGOs address spirituality depends on the individual organization and has at times become a point of controversy (Bornstein 2005; Clarke 2007; Harris-Curtis 2003; Hofer 2003).

Over time, faith-based NGOs have become more prominent and have seen more influence in international public policy—many have begun to join forces, even those of different religious affiliations. Historically, Monasteries and Catholic orders were places of refuge, healing, and education. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Mission societies were created to serve as evangelical tools and provided humanitarian assistance; furthermore, missionaries would bring awareness of global issues back to their native countries. In the 1950s, Christian NGOs were reported to have supplied 90 percent of the postwar relief (Ferris, 2005). There are NGOs based in other religions as well. Islamic NGOs also do development work, although they work in a much smaller area, since in many Islamic
countries, such as Jordan, they are forbidden from being involved in politics. As a result, Islamic NGOs focus on providing social services, but do not lobby or work on policies (Wiktorowicz and Farouki, 2000).

Faith-based NGOs vary in the extent to which they express their religion. Some do not explicitly mention religion or discuss their faith with those they are serving (Bornstein 2005). For example, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) does not seek to proselytize, or to work towards converting people, although the MCC partners with many other Christian groups. Instead of promoting religious ideology, the MCC concentrates on demonstrating values. In particular, the MCC is concerned with social justice and peace, although the organization has numerous programs and forms of aid (Dicklitch and Rice 2004).

Others believe that proselytizing is a crucial element in their mission, but they too differ in their methods. Some faith-based NGOs asked communities to convert upon the organizations’ arrival with humanitarian aid, a method which has been criticized for being unethical. NGOs may also provide aid and attempt to build long-term relationships with the community in hopes that they may convert in the future. A third method of combining proselytization and humanitarian work is to select a community to serve beforehand, who may be more responsive to conversion (Jayasinghe 2007).

Knowing how faith-based organizations are driven by their religious affiliation is important in this research because their priorities may be affected by religious motivations. Secular NGOs do not have religious motivation, so their goals may be different. For example, faith-based NGOs may prioritize evangelizing, but secular NGOs would not have that priority.
While there have not been many studies on the differences between secular and faith-based NGOs, research has examined the differences between secular and Christian businesses. Many of the Christian businesses held devotions or readings of Scripture for the employees and made sure that the values of the company were visible to customers. The companies also stressed the importance of integrity. The Christian businesses in the study had more loyalty from customers than the secular companies, which has been associated with a strong organizational culture and good rapport with clients (Ibrahim and Angelids 2005). Additionally, researchers have examined the effect of culture on organizations. One facet of the study looked at culture of religious groups and how it affected organizations. Islamic organizations were highly concerned with sharing and less concerned with ownership, while the opposite was true for secular organizations. Culture was shown to affect the values and decision-making of organizations (Baligh 1994).

This study analyzes variances between secular and faith-based NGOs, as articulated in their websites to see if there is a relationship between religious affiliation, the priorities of an NGO, and the approach of development that an NGO assumes.

Regional Differences

In order to understand the application of these four theoretical models, it is important to understand the regional and cultural and context. The mission of an NGO can also depend on the location of the organization. According to one study, more developed countries, also known as the Global North, had NGOs that reported that they desired to promote or protect the rights of specific groups or organizations. A smaller percentage of NGOs from less developed countries (or Global South) reported the promotion and protection of rights as being a primary goal. Rather, organizations in the
Global South viewed strengthening the capacities of NGOs, professionals, national courts, and human rights commissions as the main objective. Southern NGOs also tended to have a greater range of goals and were more interested in working through national institutions than Northern NGOs. Furthermore, NGOs from the Global North were statistically significantly less likely to report frequently working to promote economic, cultural, and social rights (Smith, Pagnucco, and Lopez 1998).

The study on regional variation provided insight as to how researchers coded and measured items in a comparison of NGOs. Yet the NGOs did not concentrate on the area of human trafficking, but varied in interests. The research I conducted similarly compared the priorities of NGOs, but instead of concentrating on regional variation, will study religious variation. By conducting such a study, we can learn if religious affiliation affects the priorities of NGOs, if there are aspects of sex trafficking that have not yet been addressed by NGOs, and if these issues of neglect appear to be related to either having or lacking religious affiliation.

The various theories, regional locations, and possible religious affiliations all influence the work of an NGO. The vastness of the problem of trafficking also forces NGOs to prioritize, because it is impossible to tackle all aspects of trafficking. Since prior studies have already examined the variation of location and the mission of NGOs, I chose instead to focus on religious variation. In my study, I want to explore the links between religious affiliation, the priorities of NGOs, and the theory of development that an NGO adopts. The importance of researching the relationship of religious variation, the priorities, and the theory of development an NGO follows is that the global community gains a greater understanding of how NGOs serve, the differences in how they serve, and
what needs have not yet been addressed by the NGOs. For example, the secular NGOs may have a common priority that is neglected by faith-based NGOs, and vice-versa, or there may be a problem that none of the NGOs address.

Data and Methods

Population and Sample

The population for the current study is the NGOs throughout the U.S. that are involved in fighting sex trafficking. The sample for the study is 24 NGOs from various states around the country. A typical NGO will have a board of several members and have paid staff, although there will also be many volunteers at the NGO as well, although the exact number of volunteers may not be known. While the NGO may have one main goal, there may be various ongoing programs and services that the NGO provides. For example, a counter-trafficking NGO may have a program available for youth and a different program for adults. The organizations also typically have ways for the public to help, such as donating to the NGO or using resources to become better informed about the issue of trafficking.

This study examines 14 secular NGOs and 10 faith-based NGOs. Twelve of the NGOs work only within the U.S., while the others also work internationally. Not all of the NGOs focus solely on human trafficking. Eight of the NGOs had other areas of interest as well, such as aiding immigrants or women who may not be involved in trafficking. The majority of the organizations in the sample were selected because they are among the most well-known NGOs in the nation, as identified by humantrafficking.org.
I chose humantrafficking.org for a list of NGOs because it was reputable and has been supported by organizations throughout the world. Humantrafficking.org is a project that began when the Asian Regional Initiative Against Trafficking met in 2000. Participants included both governmental and nongovernmental representatives from countries all over the world, including the U.S. and the Philippines, who co-hosted the meeting. The participants decided to create cooperation networks to combat human trafficking, which became humantrafficking.org, a site has been supported by the U.S. Department of State. As part of humantrafficking.org, the members of the Asian Regional Initiative Against Trafficking featured lists of NGOs, which were organized by country and region.

There did appear to be some bias in the list, since most of the organizations listed were secular NGOs. This could be due to the fact that since governments were involved in creating humantrafficking.org, they did not want to be so heavily influenced by religious groups, although some religious NGOs were listed. To achieve balance between the number of secular and religious NGOs in the study, I looked at the websites that were faith-based organizations listed by humantrafficking.org and found links to other faith-based organizations that were also part of the counter-trafficking movement. While these NGOs themselves were not on the government supported list, I considered them to be reliable because they were closely associated with NGOs that were on the humantrafficking.org website. These were added to the sample because most of the NGOs listed on humantrafficking.org were secular organizations and by including the affiliated religious NGOs, more balance between the two groups was achieved.
From the original list of 60 NGOs provided by humantrafficking.org, 18 were selected; the other six were faith-based NGOs which had to be found through affiliations with listed NGOs since the majority of NGOs on humantrafficking.org were secular organizations. The NGOs in the sample were also selected because they had websites from which I could read the mission statements, as well as other pieces that expressed purpose (such as “What We Do” and “About Us”). Some websites did not have enough information to be analyzed, so they were not selected. For example, one NGO only had a paragraph explaining the services provided along with three bullet points. Another reason some NGOs were omitted from the study was because they did not explicitly mention human trafficking. For instance, NGOs may have discussed helping at-risk youth or helping those who have run away from home; while it is possible these NGOs may come across instances of trafficking, they do not explicitly work towards counter-trafficking. Similarly, other NGOs may have centered around immigration with no actual mention of trafficking, although these organizations may have worked with trafficking victims. Accessibility through the internet is also an important element in the NGOs of the sample because more people can easily find information about the NGOs. The public can learn more not only about what the NGOs do, but also learn more about the issues in which the NGOs are involved. Furthermore, this may also encourage the public to take action.

The religious NGOs represent various denominations. The majority are not affiliated with any specific denomination, although two are Catholic, two are affiliated with the Lutheran denomination and one is a Mennonite organization. The organizations also differ in size, with some having a larger client base, number of workers, and greater geographic area of service. Also, some of the NGOs partner with other organizations,
while others do not. Those that partnered with other organizations mentioned the organizations they worked with. Since there were fewer faith-based organizations than secular NGOs listed, I added affiliated faith-based organizations to my sample.

The religious organizations in my sample are all Christian. While there are NGOs that are affiliated with Islam and Judaism, none were listed by humantrafficking.org. The religious organizations in my sample are all Christian. While there are NGOs that are affiliated with Islam and Judaism, they were either not accessible through the internet or were not involved in counter sex-trafficking movements. Some of the secular NGOs, such as Free the Slaves, did have stories about the efforts of Jewish congregations, but these groups were not part of a formal NGO. Rather, they were independent congregations that volunteered time and effort to fighting trafficking. All of these organizations were based in the U.S.

**Coding and Analysis**

A thematic analysis is used to look for underlying themes in materials (Bryman 2008). In my analysis, I used the coding mechanisms from grounded theory. Grounded theory is a method that can be used in qualitative studies to generate theory by drawing and organizing concepts and relationships from raw data (Bryman 2008). The process begins by coding, in which the data is broken down and discrete parts of the data are examined for similarities (LaRossa 2005). During the coding process, I looked at all of the materials from each case. I began with mission statements, but also looked at other sections of the websites that expressed the purpose or vision of the NGOs, including “About Us” sections. For example, one NGOs’ mission statement was “to assist
individuals trafficked for the purpose of modern-day slavery in rebuilding their lives, and to engage all sectors of the community to bring an end to this human rights violation.”

I started my data collection by color coding all of the open codes, which are words and phrases that identify key concepts and categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998). During the open coding, I looked for words and phrases that appeared multiple times through all of the cases or seemed to be significant. I determined the significance of the open codes through sensitizing concepts. Sensitizing concepts are guides for qualitative research. They provide “a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look” (Bowen, 2006).

I drew my sensitizing concepts from the research I had already done on NGOs and theories of development. For example, I coded “evangelization,” based upon the sensitizing concepts I had discovered through my research, which repeatedly spoke about the importance of evangelizing and proselytizing in faith-based NGOs. Even though evangelization did not appear in every case, since it appeared numerous times in the research I decided that it was important to code it as well.

The open codes all contained words and phrases related to what the NGOs do, who they help, and what they value. Along with codes such as “evangelization,” words and phrases that mentioned gender, diversity, or education were all coded. The open coding was done twice so that my analysis would be more accurate. Some examples of my codes were “hope,” “clothing,” “education,” “safety,” “medical care,” and “culturally sensitive.”
Following the two rounds of open coding, I then compared the two open codes. I counted each time the open codes appeared in each round. If there were discrepancies in the number of instances that the code appeared in each case, I went back to the original documents and recounted the codes. I then made a decision about which number of instances was correct. In all, I went through three rounds of making decisions regarding the codes. After all of the codes had been counted, I began to group similar parts into concepts, which can be grouped into categories. A category is a concept, or a set of concepts, that have been elaborated so that they represent phenomena that are present in the real world (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

To create the axial codes, which relate open codes to each other. I combined similar open codes. For instance, I combined the open codes “training,” “teaching skills,” and “education” and labeled them all “education.” I then listed the codes with the data points for each code. Codes that only had one data point were either combined with similar codes or were removed from the list of codes. These were then listed underneath broader themes. For example, all the axial codes that mentioned “God” or “faith” were placed under the theme of “religion.”

While creating my themes, I kept in mind the various theories of development. I looked for axial codes which could be grouped together to fit in with a theory of development. Some themes, such as gender (which contained axial codes including girls, women, and men) and immigrant (which contained axial codes such as immigration and migrants) did not fall within a theory of development, even though the codes showed up repeatedly throughout the material. These themes did not seem to reveal any insights about how the theories of development and the priorities of the NGOs were related, nor
did it reveal any differences between faith-based and secular NGOs. The theme regarding
gender did not reveal anything about how the NGOs perceived the impact of gender in
society or gender roles; rather, they were simply providing descriptive information about
who they served.

The specific descriptions of the theme of religion also did not provide anything
new or unexpected. While the overall orientation of whether an NGO is secular or faith-
based was important in my study, the specific descriptions of faith-based NGOs were not
important. For example, it is not surprising that a faith-based organization would mention
“God” or “faith” or “the Bible” and a secular organization would not. Since these themes
did not expose noteworthy material, I did not include them in my results. Only themes
that provided new insight on how secular NGOs and faith-based NGOs differed and how
the priorities are related to a theory of development or had a sufficient number of
associated data points were analyzed.

To analyze the themes, I color coded all of the data points to differentiate between
the data points from faith-based NGOs and those from secular NGOs. The analysis
process is iterative, so I had to go back and forth between the data that I had collected and
the theories of development that I had researched. As I began to color code the data
points to compare faith-based NGOs and secular NGOs, I took notes of patterns and
relationships that I saw emerge from the data. For example, I noticed that the codes and
themes of the faith-based organizations involved much more discussion of emotion.
These NGOs discussed being compassionate and loving much more than secular NGOs,
who tended to focus more on actual services like advocacy or raising awareness. As I
took note of what the priorities were of the organizations, I looked back at the theories of
development to see if I saw any priorities that seemed to follow a particular theory of
development. For instance, I looked to see if the NGOs expressed a desire to build
relationships with their clients or if they sought policy reform regarding human
trafficking.

Results

The results of my study showed that there were differences in how secular and
faith-based NGOs discussed their priorities. Both types of organizations mentioned
diversity, providing physical and spiritual care, providing support to their clients,
partnering and collaborating with other groups, and advocating and raising awareness.
However, they took different approaches. Also, secular NGOs appeared more likely to
follow a theory of development than their faith-based counterparts.

Importance of Diversity and Multiculturalism

One aspect of working with victims of human sex trafficking that both secular and
faith-based NGOs emphasized was the importance of embracing diversity and
multiculturalism. Since victims of trafficking come from a variety of backgrounds and
countries, NGOs mentioned the need to take into account diversity when working with
clients. However, the approach the NGOs took in addressing multiculturalism differed
between the two types of NGOs. The faith-based NGOs emphasized the idea that they did
not discriminate. They sought to “reflect the diversity of Christ’s body in many ways,
including cultural background, ethnicity, giftedness, and social status” and ensure that
“there is equity—where the quality of life is not determined by race, culture or ethnicity
regardless of a client’s background or religion.” They wanted to “work with individuals
and families – without regard to background” and “connect people and ideas across cultural, political and economic divides.”

Secular NGOs also worked with people of various backgrounds, but did not express their nondiscriminatory practices the way faith-based NGOs did. Rather, secular NGOs were more likely to list services to their diverse clients. They reported that they “provide technical assistance and comprehensive culturally relevant services,” “promote culturally and linguistically appropriate services,” provide “culturally sensitive family law services,” have “advocates [who] are multilingual, and all counselors are able to utilize a translation service to assist callers who speak a language not represented” and “and celebrate multiculturalism among our clients, staff, and supporters.”

While both secular and faith-based NGOs discuss multiculturalism, they take two different approaches. Faith-based NGOs want to emphasize that they do not discriminate. Secular NGOs emphasize that they want to provide services that will be sensitive to cultural differences. The secular NGOs therefore seem to adopt a more capabilities approach in this regard since they state they do not want to simply provide services and solutions without first understanding the culture, although the faith-based NGOs do not seem to be adopting any particular theory of development.

Providing Physical and Spiritual Care

Basic Needs

Basic needs consisted of food, safety, resources, medical care, and shelter or housing. Secular NGOs mentioned providing these needs for their clients much more than faith-based NGOs. One NGO stated that it provided “desperately needed social and medical services such as shelter, counseling, food,” while another “provide[d] victims
with shelter, food, [and] clothing.” Shelter was especially important to secular NGOs, since “a shelter is the safest place for them to stay immediately after returning from their place of bondage.” The shelters created by secular NGOs were also a source of income for their clients. One featured a global business where “handbags and gifts are made by survivors of slavery at shelters around the world” so that survivors could begin to support themselves economically.

Tending to the physical and emotional health of victims was also mentioned many times by secular NGOs. Many of these organizations provided mental health care. They stated that they had a “provision of mental health services and other psychosocial reintegration support,” “appropriate medical examinations and therapeutic support,” “mental health advocates,” “hotline advocates [who] provide crisis counseling,” “psychological services,” “clinical intervention to help victims find relief,” and “counseling related resources and training inclusive of trauma and crisis intervention.” To help meet their clients’ physical health needs, various NGOs said they offered “free medical care to individuals,” “HIV/AIDS treatment,” “urgent medical care,” and “basic health care services such as a general exam, immunizations, and a tuberculosis test at a shelter.” Another NGO also “developed a Pro Bono Medical Network to address the urgent medical needs of our clients.”

Additionally, safety was also important. One NGO stated that its “first priority is the safety of those who seek assistance.” The NGOs sought to “safely rescue victims from their current trafficking situations” and “ensure the protection and safety of its clients.” They “offer[ed] services that help [victims] and their children move toward safe
and independent violence-free lives and “tools they need to build safe, independent, slavery-free lives.”

Transformation and Reconciliation

Unlike secular NGOs, which heavily discussed meeting physical, temporal needs, faith-based NGOs focused more on spiritual needs. Although some faith-based NGOs did mention that “we provide access to resources,” and one stated that it worked to “respond to the HIV and AIDS pandemic,” they did not discuss providing for basic needs to the extent that secular NGOs did. What faith-based NGOs did mention was a desire to “bring change to the lives of the poor.” One hoped to accomplish this through “the transforming power of Christ” and “the power of unified actions of love,” since “communities transformed by the power of God means transformed people.” Reconciliation was also considered a large part of this transformation. Faith-based NGOs said “Reconciliation with economic systems which will help [clients] establish an upwardly mobile career, with social systems paving the way for sustainable living in community, and with God, helping clients connect relationally with Jesus Christ” and they wanted to “facilitate a process of economic, social, and spiritual reconciliation for survivors of trafficking and exploitation.”

The difference in how secular and faith-based NGOs describe meeting the needs of their clients is important to understand because it is a major component in the counter-trafficking movement. For those who have come across trafficking and are seeking the services of NGOs, it is important to know what needs NGOs address. However, by simply examining what needs the NGOs state they meet, it is difficult to see if and how they may use a theory of development, since they did not discuss the methods used to
provide “tools [clients] need to build safe, independent, slavery-free lives” or to “facilitate…reconciliation.”

Improving Quality of Life

Meeting Emotional Needs

Along with transformation, faith-based NGOs also spoke of other emotional needs that they wanted to meet. One recurring theme was the desire to restore hope to victims. Faith-based NGOs reported that they wanted to “[pour] hope into the lives of many,” “flood the streets with hope,” “engender hope,” and bring “future hope of God’s kingdom” as well as a “message of hope to everyone in our path.”

Faith-based NGOs also wanted to ensure that they preserved the dignity of their clients and acted with compassion towards them. They wanted to make sure that the clients were “treated with dignity and fairness” and help survivors “discover their dignity” after escaping human trafficking. The NGOs also said that they worked towards “promoting the God-given dignity of all” and use an “approach that gives respect and dignity to those whom we serve” since “every person deserves to be respected.”

Love and compassion were important elements in promoting the dignity of the clients. They promoted the “concrete practice’ of love of God and neighbor,” worked with “an attitude of love,” wanted to “reach out with compassion and love,” “receive each other with compassion,” “defend and care for abused and abandoned children embracing them with arms of love,” and “create welcoming communities to receive refugees.”

Empowerment and Self-Sufficiency

While secular NGOs did not stress transformation (and certainly not spiritual transformation) or emotions, they still acknowledged that to help their clients, it was not
enough to merely provide services for them. Helping clients become empowered, independent, and self-sufficient were also important. Secular NGOs said that they worked towards “empowering them to utilize their strengths and resources,” “empowering them to live and work in their community,” “realize the strengths and aspirations of both our clients as well as the grassroots volunteers,” and “give them the freedom to grow in the direction of their potential and dreams.” Faith-based NGOs never mentioned empowerment, although achieving self-sufficiency was important. Faith-based NGOs stated “self-sufficiency is key to successful integration” and they wanted to “help individuals become self-sufficient.”

Empowering clients is an important aspect of the capabilities approach to development. The capabilities approach maintains that true development comes from people changing their own lives and not being dependent upon an external force. By helping people learn to live independently, they do not become reliant on NGOs to always provide for them, but are able to function in society without aid. While providing hope and love for clients is also important, but does not really fall in with a theory of development.

**Partnerships and Collaboration**

Both faith-based and secular NGOs mentioned the importance of working with other organizations to accomplish their goals. Faith-based NGOs expressed that they “bring churches, businesses, and schools together to help the oppressed.” They wanted to “commit to work in partnership with the local church,” “partner with schools, churches and individuals to bring change to the lives of the poor, the slave and the blind,” and along with “local organizations and congregations create welcoming communities…”
Another NGO stated that it “partners with our community to move people facing adversity to wholeness and self-sufficiency.”

Similarly, secular NGOs also collaborated with various other organizations. One NGO stated that it works in “collaboration with other national and international organizations in the global fight against human trafficking” while others mentioned they “collaborate[d] with organizations working to eradicate human trafficking, including non-governmental organizations, governmental agencies, and grassroots advocacy groups” and “the criminal justice system.” One NGO was part of a group of “65 community-based groups, government and law enforcement agencies [that] now work together in collaboration.”

While both faith-based and secular NGOs discussed partnerships and collaboration, there were differences in how they addressed this. The faith-based NGOs were much more likely to mention working with congregations and churches. The secular NGOs did not mention partnering specifically with organized religious groups. Instead, they mentioned governmental agencies and the law enforcement. The religious NGOs mentioned partnering with others to help individual lives through being welcoming and helping victims become self-sufficient. Secular NGOs looked at a larger picture when discussing working with other groups. Rather than focus on individuals, they sought to end human trafficking altogether by seeking the aid of law enforcement, advocacy groups, and governmental agencies.

In terms of how each type of NGO expressed their approach to partnerships, the faith-based NGOs leaned more towards a capabilities approach to helping those who had been trafficked. They did not mention working with the legal system. Instead, they
mentioned working with individuals, being accepting, and working with the victims on a more personal basis. In contrast, the secular NGOs took a more radical theorist approach. Rather than collaborate to build personal relationships, the secular NGOs strove to use legal systems—both national and international—in order to bring about the abolition of trafficking.

**Advocacy and Raising Awareness**

While advocacy was discussed by both types of NGOs, there were fewer instances of faith-based secular NGOs mentioning advocacy; when it was mentioned, it mostly revolved around immigrants and refugees. One said it “not only seeks to meet migrants' needs but to create a more welcoming system of laws and policies in the United States” while others said “we stand with and advocate for migrants and refugees” and have “decades of service expertise to inform our advocacy on behalf of people fleeing war and persecution.”

The secular NGOs described their advocacy work in much broader terms. They worked on “fully developing its advocacy arm,” “advocat[ing] against trafficking,” “providing advocacy for the victims of human trafficking,” promoting “grassroots advocacy,” making a “combination of legal services, advocacy, and public education programs” available, and “advancing the human rights of all trafficked survivors.”

Along with advocacy, phrases referring to raising awareness were also more commonly found on the websites of secular NGOs than on faith-based NGOs. It was only mentioned once by a faith-based NGO, which stated “our services include awareness.” Secular NGOs mentioned that they “draw public attention to the challenges refugees face and the blessings they bring to American communities,” “promote public awareness,”
“create public awareness materials,” and “[raise] awareness of human trafficking at the national, state, and local levels.” Furthermore, they “offer educational lectures about human trafficking” and one had a “public education campaign.”

Raising awareness and advocacy is related to the radical theory of development. Raising awareness and advocating for the rights of those who have been trafficked typically involves trying to bring change to the legal systems, both nationally and internationally. Many secular NGOs which emphasized advocacy also emphasized the need to change policies. They said they wanted to “achieve justice and equality through holistic direct legal services and national public policy advocacy,” “improve national policy,” “lobby policymakers,” and “change certain policies which obstruct the prosecution of pimps and traffickers.”

*Analysis as it connects to theories of development*

Overall, the faith-based NGOs did not seem to follow any particular theory of development. The priorities of the NGOs were much more spiritual and emotional, so they did not fit with the theories of development which are meant to describe methods of meeting physical, temporal needs. The secular NGOs, since they were not concerned with spirituality, did focus on material, physical needs of their clients. They seemed to be more inclined to follow a radical approach to development, since they mentioned repeatedly the need to raise awareness, advocate for victims of trafficking, and to change policies both nationally and internationally.

*Conclusion*

While there were some similarities between faith-based NGOs and secular NGOs, there were also vast differences. Neither one emphasized the economic theory of
development, although there was one NGO that revolved around training its clients to work in a business so that they could be more independent and self-sufficient. Aside from that one NGO, the only theme that seemed to pertain somewhat to the economic theory was the provision of goods and services; however this was tempered by the emphasis of self-sufficiency. However, it is possible that more of the NGOs in my sample do actually follow the economic theory, but simply did not express that in their websites. The NGOs seemed to lean much more towards the radical theory of development, although there was some discussion that seemed to lean towards the capabilities approach as well.

The secular NGOs in particular seemed inclined to adopt a radical theoretical approach towards carrying out their work. They mentioned advocacy, raising awareness, and changing policies much more than phrases related towards either an economic or capabilities approach. Even when they discussed collaboration, they were much more likely to speak about collaborating with the criminal justice system than faith-based NGOs.

The faith-based NGOs did not seem to follow any particular theory, although they did bring up advocacy and empowerment. Theories of development are more focused on material development, so it would make sense that perhaps a more religious organization would not be so concerned with earthly needs. The priorities of the faith-based NGOs were much more spiritual and emotional, focusing on transforming people, providing hope and love for others, and emphasizing their relationship with God. These organizations were less likely to list all the services that they provide, instead focusing on the attitudes and motivations behind the organization. They also seemed to want to stress
to the public that even though they were a religious based organization, they did not
discriminate. This was not featured in any of the secular NGOs’ websites.

Even when faith-based and secular NGOs mentioned the same priority (such as
partnering with other groups or ensuring cultural sensitivity), the presentation of the same
priority differed. Faith-based NGOs seemed much more emotional in their presentation
and stressed the importance of faith in their work. Secular NGOs were much less
emotional and instead focused on providing details on the services they provided.

The NGOs were less likely to embrace the economic theory. This could be the
result of criticism of the economic theory of development. In the past, economic
development and neoliberalism has been criticized for being another form of imperialism
and was not considered actually beneficial the Global South. The economic theory of
development is based upon the idea that by providing financial aid to the Global South,
that the third world countries would be able to become more developed. Critics stated
that the only result was that the countries became dependent on the Global North for aid
and that the money did not solve any problems. Instead, it seemed like another way for
the Global North to impose itself upon the Global South by instituting a more capitalist
approach.

Additionally, neither type of NGO seemed to adopt the feminist theory of
development. While it is understandable that NGOs, which want to help the problem of
human trafficking would not follow the postmodern aspect or the environmental aspect, it
is more surprising that they would not try to adopt any of the other aspects of the feminist
theory. When the NGOs described women, they did not mention that they wanted the
women to be very involved in solving their problems—they simply wanted the women to
accept their aid. Nor did any of the NGOs mention changing the patriarchal societies or changing gender based roles. The organizations did not seem to be concerned about women as a whole, but only with their clients, who happened to be primarily women.

The results of the study are important since it provides information to counter-trafficking NGOs themselves about what other NGOs are doing. This can help NGOs seek out new partnerships, but can also allow NGOs to examine their own work. They can compare the services and approaches of their own organization, and also learn from other organizations. For instance, if one NGO has begun to do policy work, they can seek out other NGOs who have done the same and learn more about advocacy practices. Additionally, those who know people who have been trafficked or suspect instances of trafficking can become more aware of what services NGOs offer.

The discussion of faith-based NGOs versus secular NGOs is also important because it shows how they two groups differ in defining what they do and lends itself to future studies. Secular NGOs seemed to discuss the provision of concrete services, while faith-based NGOs seemed more interested in discussion values. However, while this offers some insight on the differences between secular and faith-based NGOs, it cannot present a perfect picture of either since there could be discrepancies between what the NGOs say are their priorities and what their priorities actually are.

It can also be important for governments to be aware of what NGOs are doing. Both government and nongovernmental agencies have met to discuss human trafficking. As governments strive to eradicate human trafficking, it can be helpful for them to be aware of what NGOs are doing and how the governments can support the NGOs and work together with them to combat trafficking.
Future Research

Previous studies on sex trafficking have tended to focus on the victims of trafficking rather than on the NGOs that serve the victims. Research has also been more centered on female victims of sex trafficking, although there have been a few studies on male sex workers (though the male sex workers in the studies were not necessarily trafficked) (Leiter et al. 2006; McCamish, Storer, and Carl 2000; Montgomery 2008; Pettman 1997). While it is important to conduct research on victims (both male and female), studies of counter-trafficking NGOs are also important so that the global community can be aware of what services are available and what other needs have yet to be addressed.

Future studies should examine how well NGOs deliver on what they promise. This study was limited to analyzing what NGOs state they want to accomplish. Therefore, it was not possible to determine how effectively the NGOs worked. Furthermore, future research should be conducted to see how the clients of the NGOs respond to the work of the organization. While both types of NGOs expressed that they did not want to discriminate, there may still have been instances in which clients did not feel welcome or comfortable at the NGO.

Studies on this could strengthen NGOs even more. If NGOs were able to make public certain benchmarks, then state how they meet these benchmarks, the NGOs could be more effective in serving their clients. For example, an NGO can state that they provide culturally sensitive programs, but without concrete examples of how it does this it is harder to judge if the NGO is in fact providing culturally sensitive programs to
clients. If an NGO realizes that in creating certain benchmarks that it is not meeting certain goals, then the organization could look at various ways it could meet its goals.

Studies could also be conducted on why the theme of gender did not seem to be significant in how theory of development and the priorities of NGO were lined up. The theme of gender did not fit in with the radical theory or the feminist theory since the mentions of women were only descriptions and did not involve discussion about changing how society views women or the rights of women worldwide. If there was discussion about empowering women or protecting their rights, it was only to empower or protect the clients of the NGO, who were women. However, there was no movement to promote the human rights of women outside of those who have been subject to human trafficking or who are not directly served by the NGO. Also, studies could further explore religion, which like gender, was discussed a great deal in the material but still did not fit in with any of the theories of development. New studies could further research religion and development to perhaps create a new theory of development that encompasses religion.

Additionally, future research should look into the reasons behind an NGO made a decision to prioritize certain aspects over another. Only one NGO had a lengthy discussion about the benefits of having a business that hired the clients of the NGO. Other NGOs seemed to focus on policy reform or providing other services to clients such as housing and education. Research could explore why the NGOs focused on the areas they did, and may reveal that there is an area that NGOs have neglected, but still needs to be addressed. This could also be related to researching the response of clients. The clients may state that an NGO fulfills some needs, but that clients feel that other needs have not
been met. Research should also be conducted on NGOs outside of those that are part of counter-trafficking movement. Studies on the methods and their effectiveness used by NGOs that could transfer to various types of organizations could be beneficial to the whole of society.

References


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