5-2013

Missionaries in Latin America: A Study on Short-Term Missionaries and the People They Help

Katharine Serio
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

MISSIONARIES IN LATIN AMERICA:

A STUDY ON SHORT-TERM MISSIONARIES AND THE PEOPLE THEY HELP

MISSIONARIES IN LATIN AMERICA:

A STUDY ON SHORT-TERM MISSIONARIES AND THE PEOPLE THEY HELP

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the department
Master of Arts in Anthropology

By

Katharine Marie Serio
University of Arkansas
Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, 2011

May 2013
University of Arkansas

ABSTRACT

The last few years have seen the emergence of growing anthropological interest in short-term mission work, examining the phenomenon though a variety of denominations and mission locations around the world and analyzing the representations and experiences of both the host communities and mission teams traveling to them. This thesis explores how United Methodist short-term mission participants attempt to embody an ideal "mission self" while doing missionary work and the role that narratives about the experience at home played in this. I examine the ways in which members of a Louisiana based UMC team on a medical mission conceptualized their trip to Mexico in summer 2012, focusing on how they represented themselves in relation to their mission work. While much of their time in the field was devoted to processing patients and handing out medications, a significant amount of time was spent on reflexive discussion of what the mission meant to participants. In the construction of these narratives, participants describe their motivations, often the desire to follow Biblical commands of service and the hope for spiritual renewal, as well as their internal transformation, understanding that their actions would have the greatest impact on themselves and not the people that they aim to help.

This thesis is approved for recommendation
to the Graduate Council.

Thesis Director

_____

Dr. Kirstin Erickson

Thesis Committee:

_____

Dr. JoAnn D'Alisera

_____

Dr. Eric Hoenes del Pinal

THESIS DUPLICATION RELEASE

I hereby authorize the University of Arkansas Libraries to duplicate this thesis when needed for research and/or scholarship.

Agreed _____
Katharine Serio

Refused _____
Katharine Serio

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank the mission group that allowed me to be a part of their team. I am very grateful to my advisor, Dr. Kirstin Erickson for her encouragement and guidance that she has provided to me during this process. I would also like to thank my committee, Dr. JoAnn D'Alisera and Dr. Eric Hoenes del Pinal for their support. Finally, I am so thankful to my parents for all the help and assurance they have always given me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The United Methodist Church was founded based on a mission oriented principle. Most churches do something to help out their community and many try to send teams or support full time missionaries abroad. This emphasis has helped some people connect to the mission work done at their churches. In this study, I explore the mission space, examining the construction of mission identities. What have been the experiences of missions in Mexico in the past? How are current mission teams dealt with in the present? How do theology and directions of the United Methodist Church impact how Methodist short-term mission workers define themselves on missions? How do personal experiences shape the expectations and desires of individuals on these trips? I contend that the "mission self," as one facet of identity, is performed and discussed based on the intersection of all of these things: history, experiences, theology, and a desire to help people.

I have been interested in this topic since childhood and I have participated in mission trips before this project was started. Therefore, I will begin with a reflexive examination of my ideas going into my research. My first mission trip was ten years in the making. I was seven years old when my church, St. Peter's United Methodist Church[i] (located near New Orleans, Louisiana), began a relationship with a church in Cuba. My mother thought it would be a good idea if my brother and I wrote a letter to someone there. She helped me write mine which resulted in a Cuban man thinking we were a couple and wanting to write to us. I think it was probably a shock for Rafael Rodriguez to find out that he was actually writing to a little girl but we bonded over our love for our cats and my fascination with his life – he raised chickens and he was learning English by listening to the radio! The hardest word he ever learned was shower because he could never figure out what the radio hosts were talking about. I begged my mother to let me go on a mission trip to meet him but she always said no. She herself went two or three

time in those ten years. Quite a few Cubans even made the trip to the U.S., and some stayed at my house, but my pen pal was never among them. He got married and had a son in those years. His sister won the lottery and moved to the United States with her husband.[ii] I was able to visit her, and while this helped a little in my waiting, I remained obsessed with the idea of going to this country. In my first year of high school, a girl sitting next to me told me that someone told her to talk about Cuba if she wanted my attention. At that point, I had no idea my dream was that well known. It would take another three years to fulfill it.

Finally, when I was seventeen, my parents decided that I was old enough to go to Cuba. My church was planning a trip for the summer of 2006 and I was ecstatic. We were in Jovellanos, Cuba for around ten days and I got a little taste of what life was like there. The cars were old and the electricity was unreliable but the people were some of the nicest and most resourceful I had ever met. The mission trip was probably not the most conventional. We did not go there to do construction or hand out medicines – standard practice for United Methodist mission trips. We were there to help the Iglesia Metodista Jovellanos celebrate their 100 year anniversary (which they had postponed for two or three years because they wanted a group from their "sister" church to be there). There were seventeen of us and we had the opportunity to just hang out and listen to their stories. We devised activities for the children to do, arts and crafts and games. And I finally met Rafael. We are both very, very quiet people so we did not do a lot of talking but he sat next to me during every meal and ate all my left overs. I played with his three year old son who followed me around whenever he saw me. It was one of the most magical times because we were able to get along well despite the differences in culture, language, and religious expression.

I have wanted to go back since I left but that has not been possible. Due to the U.S. embargo of Cuba and the travel restrictions, it can be nearly impossible to get both the U.S. government and the Cuban government to give permission for anyone to go there.[iii] I was able to go on trip to Panama in 2009 but it was everything that the Cuban trip was not. My church in Houston, TX, Richmond United Methodist Church, teamed up with a group from Nebraska to do construction, including building a cover for the church's outdoor space, building bus stops around the community and painting schools in the area of Bongo, Panama. However, they had hired people to do the work. We were able to help them a little bit by mixing cement and moving rocks, but the American people I was with were very critical of the Panamanian work crew and openly criticized everything they did, from how they mixed and poured cement to how they tore down a dead avocado tree. Fortunately, I think there was enough of a language barrier that the Panamanians did not understand exactly what people were saying. I think they understood the attitude though. A few of us retreated to the church and improvised Vacation Bible School for the children who came to the church after school. We had some Spanish books to read to them and with them, and one American woman had some clay that the children played with. We ended up enjoying ourselves with the children, and I had hoped that we showed the people there that not all Americans were judgmental and rude.

The contrast of these experiences made me critical not only of my religion but also of the nature of mission trips. How could one go so well and the other be such a disaster? In this thesis, I set out to explore some of the issues and achievements of short-term church organized mission trips through the lens of a third mission trip in which I recently took part. I want to try to understand how other people think of and conceptualize mission work because I realize my motives are probably not widely shared. From a young age, I saw mission trips as an opportunity

to get to know people from different parts of the world – the only way my seven year old self could imagine having such an opportunity.

When I was getting ready to start my thesis work, I decided that I wanted, needed, to go to Mexico. I had learned a lot about Mexico in my undergraduate studies and I felt very drawn there. Unfortunately, it seemed that between the summers of 2011 and 2012, every trip to Mexico was being cancelled. Every church I contacted that I knew had a history of going to Mexico said it was too dangerous due to drug related gang violence and they were no longer going to be sending teams. I was worried; I knew I was going to have to start looking elsewhere, but I was not ready to give up. Finally, my mother told me that our old church would be sending a team to Mexico and they were in desperate need of people to go. I went for it.

There would be seven of us on this trip to Reynosa, Mexico during the summer of 2012, a smaller number than usual because they were unable to put together a construction team this year. I knew the leader of the mission trip, Ellen Carter, and her daughter, Sara, although not very well; they were familiar faces from childhood. I had never met anyone else. Ellen was very receptive when I emailed her to explain my project as was the rest of the group when I met them. They were happy to help me with my research. I was familiar enough to be accepted into the group fairly easily but enough of a stranger that no one had any expectations about how I should act or what I should say. As a veteran of two short term mission projects and a member of the United Methodist church, I was a "native" anthropologist, and I had to figure out where I fit into this group, negotiating between where I thought I should be and where everyone else situated me (Narayan 1993: 678-680; Kondo 1990: 10-11; Jacobs-Huey 2002: 793). In this paper, I have tried to frame my experiences and situate myself within the United Methodist mission

movement, relating my experiences to my chosen topic for a greater understanding of not only short-term missions, but also the anthropological enterprise itself (Okely 1992: 1).

The plan for this particular short-term mission trip to Mexico in June 2012 was to run clinics around the area so that people in the community could get check-ups and obtain medication. This was the first year that no American doctors volunteered; there would be a Mexican doctor to assist us. Luckily, we had a nurse going because she was the only one qualified to read and understand the prescriptions we would be filling. Everyone except the pastor and me had done this mission trip before. They already had an idea about what their jobs would be and how the trip was going to go. I went in not knowing how the trip was going to go. Admittedly, I was afraid about how we would act toward the sick people that we saw. I had an idea that it would be perceived by the American volunteers as going to save the Mexicans, our culture against theirs. Michel-Rolph Trouillot talks about the savage slot; the west created the myth of the savage as a foil for itself – a utopian projection (Trouillot 1991: 39-40). Trouillot argues that this myth should no longer be used, and that "the savage" should not be reinvented in other ways, as terrorist, refugee, freedom fighter, opium/coca grower, or parasite (1991: 35-36). Based on past experience, I believed that mission teams have created this savage for themselves while they are doing mission work perhaps due to having a very limited knowledge and personal experience with the Other. While I think that this can, and sometimes does happen, it did not occur in Reynosa. The mission team I worked with might have conceptualized Mexicans as Other but the members did not appear to see our Mexican hosts and patients as savage; the people we saw were viewed as individuals, patients, with their own illnesses and problems.

Every patient had a name and every volunteer saw that name as the patients worked their way through the clinic, checking in, seeing the doctor, getting their prescriptions filled and

distributed. It was impossible to see them as a monolithic Other – "the Mexicans." Some individuals had diabetes; others had worms. Some were pregnant; others were treated for "*infecciones*." It was easy in this context to remember that people are different, internal differentiation is always present and conceptualizing people without this leads to groups as bounded, discrete entities (Abu-Lughod 1991: 152-153). Every year, the participants are a little bit different even if they are the same people; people make decisions every day and deal with those decisions, the mistakes, tragedies, disappointments, losses, and enjoyments, happiness, friendships, and wanting to put their best selves out there (Abu-Lughod 1991: 157-158).

I got to know each of my team members to varying degrees as they both constructed and revealed what I call their "mission selves," creating narrative constructions of these selves based on what each had done in the past and hoped to do in the future, their medical problems, failures, and triumphs. While the same church has been going with some of the same people for over a decade, this mission trip was its own entity. I do not know everything that happened on past mission trips or what will happen on the next mission trip. I cannot say everything that happened on this mission trip but I can say what I experienced and how I experienced, and I have some idea about the others' actions and reactions to mission work. We will never know the whole truth; this ethnography, as with all others, is complex, partial and problematic (Clifford 1986: 25).

I interviewed my fellow mission members, trying to understand their motivations for participation. The narratives informants relay to the researcher – stories, reasons for doing or not doing things, hopes, and expectations – are their constructions, their versions of reality (Bruner 1991: 4). Therefore, the object of collecting narratives is not "objective categories but 'meanings'…arrived at by indigenous participants" (Bruner 1991: 17). At the same time, as an

anthropologist, I have the responsibility of representing my informants' ideas, realizing that they have no way of shaping it once the information is out there (although since they have the ability to read this thesis, if there are problems and they do not agree with my interpretation, I can address their concerns in potential, future work) (Clifford 1986: 13; Stacey 1991: 112-113; Hastrup 1992: 122). Culture is interpretation and everything that is said by informants is reinterpreted, recontextualized, and reframed; anthropologists use informants' information to illustrate the anthropologists' points (McRobbie 1992: 729-730; Rabinow 1977: 150-151). We cannot be equals in the research process, but I try here to represent everyone's ideas fairly, although I know that my interpretations might be problematic.

During a week in June of 2012, as we worked in Mexico and through subsequent interviews, I attempted to allow everyone a chance to express what they wanted and needed to put forth; I asked questions pertaining to mission work but allowed for the conversation to go in different directions (Anderson and Jack 1991: 15). I talked to Ellen about her daughter's struggle in the church and about her grandchild who is around the same age as my nephew. My focus was less on the information gathering and more on the interaction between us, the process of the interview (Anderson and Jack 1991: 23). During one interview, Pastor Sam Gordon jumped up and grabbed a book, an introduction to anthropology book that his son had purchased for college. He leafed through it making comments on some of the examples he found, trying to understand what I was doing. This interview process can illustrate how, as an anthropologist, I might have affected the interview. Different stories would be told to different audiences (Okely 1992: 16). Pastor Sam would not have talked about anthropology to most people who walked into his office. Ellen would not have talked about her daughter's struggles in the church – her difficulties transitioning from the daughter of a member to a full member with responsibilities in the church

– if I had been an older adult or had not shared the same childhood church as Sara. My interpretation is based on the "original" narrative but the very act of my being present affects the construction of consultants' stories. My presentation of these stories, with my own aims (emphasizing certain things and making larger connections) in them affects how readers will interpret them (Borland 1991: 64). The informants are not speaking "cultural truths" but are giving answers based on questions asked in a certain context (Hastrup 1992: 119).

As informants told me their stories and their opinions on mission trips, they remembered how they got involved and why they decided to participate. As a registered nurse, Rose Anderson knew she had a skill that was needed. Ellen and Pastor Sam have felt called to do mission work throughout their lives, both in their community in south Louisiana and further away. Pastor Sam has been to England and Mexico, Tennessee and Arkansas, and all over Louisiana helping out wherever he can. However, it is important to remember that, "though we speak, so to say 'in our own name,' of ourselves and from our own experience, nevertheless who speaks, and the subject who is spoken of, are never identical, never exactly in the same place… we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990: 222). Whatever the stories are now, they illustrate the meanings of this time and place, this culture and history (Hall 1990: 22). Each person's stories highlight their differences which "constitute 'what we really are'; or rather – since history has intervened – 'what we have become'" (Hall 1990: 225). This identity has been affected by place, time, history, and culture and is constantly changing for individuals. In other words, the self is created in the space between "intimate discourse, inner speaking, and bodily practice formed in the past," and discourses and practices experienced in the present (Skinner, Holland, and Pach III 1998: 9). I experienced just a snapshot of each of my

informant's lives, a snap shot of the yearly Mexico mission trip of St. Peters UMC and a snapshot of mission trips in general. The identity of each of these is always changing and I can only comment on a small piece of the larger picture.

Ellen and Sara started the mission trip over a decade ago as a way for their family to come together over mission work. Sara initially wanted to go to Cuba, but her parents would not let her go alone and neither felt called to go there. They promised her that they would do something else instead. That is how the Mexico mission trip was born. They started by teaming up with other churches, then they went to training so they could lead the trip themselves. While each person has a personal history with missions, there is also a larger mission history that needs be addressed (Chanfrault-Duchet 1991: 82). It is not enough to know the personal accounts for mission work but there also needs to be a process which "locates persons in history and history in persons, focusing on the ways in which individuals and groups fashion and are fashioned by social, political, and cultural discourses and practices in historically specific times and places" (Skinner, Holland, and Pach III 1998: 3).

The context of the trip, understanding the history of the church and our destination, helps in the situated understanding of how mission team members negotiate the mission field, creating meanings and reinforcing beliefs for themselves (Chanfrault-Duchet 1991, Skinner, Holland, and Pach III 1998: 6). At the same time, it helps us understand the shared culture, imposed on the self (Hall 1990: 223). Growing up in the church inspired both Sara and I to beg our parents to let us go. As children, we were shaped by the context we grew up in and we reacted in similar but not necessarily approved upon ways (Skinner and Holland 1998: 89). Exposing us to mission work at a young age was meant to teach us about being kind and generous. We were not supposed to want to go to some far off land, not yet anyway. Meanings become contested, outcomes

unpredictable because each of us reacts to culture differently, sometimes surprisingly (Skinner and Holland 1998: 89). We all have agency and, at the same time, we are all shaped by culture and history; people make decisions and act based on structural, and contingent, circumstances (Des Chene 1998: 39-40).

The first chapter of this thesis is an overview of the history of mission in Mexico beginning with the conquest and moving on to the revolution and the introduction of Protestantism, both of which have transformed the landscape and how missionaries can work within Mexico. The second chapter is an exploration of the history of the United Methodist Church. Particular attention will be paid to the legacy of founder John Wesley and how he has continued to shape and inspire Methodist theology centuries after his death. The third chapter is an examination of development work. It focuses mainly on some of the issues and concerns that arise when both religious and nonreligious groups attempt to help others in their own communities and abroad. The final chapter considers issues of identity and narrative in the construction of "mission selves," the conceptualizations that mission team members make about themselves and the work that they perform while on missions.

CHAPTER 1: MEXICAN MISSIONS

Going to Mexico, we first took a flight from New Orleans to Harlingen, TX, which is about an hour from the Gulf of Mexico and 30 minutes from the US-Mexico border. When we arrived, we got into contact with our driver for the day, Tomás Gutiérrez. There were seven people and fourteen big bags. He arrived with a white van that was not meant for passengers; two rows of seats were bolted, for the most part, to the sides of the van facing each other. We piled the bags in the very back almost to the ceiling of the van and got in. I got the lucky seat right up against the baggage across from Donna Mitchell, the top layer threatened to crush us throughout this drive. There were no windows on the side of the van. I could not see out of the front or the back; everyone was seated next to me on one side and the luggage was blocking the other. When we got in, we were in a very American parking lot, with endless cars surrounding us on one side and a small airport on the other. Planes took off in the distance. We made one stop at the local Wal-Mart before heading over the border.

Getting out the second time was a different sight. Everyone had agreed that all the meals once we landed in South Texas should be in Mexico and they should, preferably, be Mexican. At about 2:00 in the afternoon, we stopped for lunch at an open air restaurant; it had rows and rows of empty seats. There was a large grill on one end and a refrigerator full of soda: coke, sprite, diet coke, etc. Tomás ordered two large dishes of meat, and being a vegetarian as well as sitting at the other end of the long table, I did not catch exactly what kind of meat it was. I was able to eat the cheesy baked potatoes which were almost soup-like. During the meal, there were groups of men loitering around the edges of the restaurant, few actually stepped foot inside; Steve, somehow, got conned out of a few cigarettes as we were getting back into the van for our destination.

Another blind trip led us to this complex that was surrounded by an iron fence, both structure and fence were painted the same rust color with a golden yellow trim. It is a rather large structure on one end, there is a clinic and a couple offices on the first floor and we were told a few rooms above for students from the local fishing district. This building is connected to another by a staircase; the mission groups stay at this second structure and on Sundays, the common area serves as a sanctuary for the worship service. Above are four small apartments and below is one big room with a kitchen and bedrooms all around. We were staying down a hallway with a choice of four bedrooms each with its own bathroom and shower as well as air-conditioning that we controlled; most were immediately set to about 70 degrees. The men stayed in one room and the women split up into two. I was in a room with Ellen and Donna.

Tomás left us and we did not see anyone else until the women who would cook for us arrived. There was very little interaction between the two groups, they had a job to do and we were getting settled in. Carlos Alvarez, the man in charge of our schedule and getting everything worked out, came with his three dogs (who ran around the room to meet all of us and fight with each other). He explained what we would be doing every day and when we should be ready to leave in the morning. We spent the rest of the evening, sorting hundreds of vitamins for children, adults, and prenatal women into ziplock bags of 30. During the sorting, everyone talked about the church back home and there was also a talk about past mission trips. In this chapter, I will explore the history of mission work in Mexico that forms the context of our mission and, ultimately, led to our arrival.

On May 4, 1493, the Pope, Alexander VI, delivered the papal bull *Inter caetera*, that gave Spain the authority to settle on and rule the newly discovered land across the Atlantic Ocean. Although the power of the papacy was in decline during this time, the Pope was still seen as the

"Lord of the entire world" and proclamations such as this one were used to legitimate claims the Spanish had to land (Rivera 1992: 27-28). The Pope declared "we give, grant, assign… all those lands and islands, with their dominions, territories, cities, castles, other places, and villages with all the rights and jurisdictions and all their belongings to you, your heirs, and successors to be lords with full and free power, authority and jurisdiction" (Rivera 1992: 29-30). Furthermore, the Spanish Crown was to guarantee:

> "that the Catholic faith and Christian religion, especially in this our time, may in all places be exalted, amplified, and enlarged whereby the health of souls may be procured, and the barbarous nations subdued and brought to the faith…[and] to send to said lands and islands honest, virtuous, and learned men who fear God and are able to instruct the inhabitants in the Catholic faith" (in Rivera 1992: 29-30).

This arrangement between the Pope and the Spanish monarchs, whereby the Pope gave and legitimized Spanish claims to land in return for the Spanish effort to Christianize it, was done completely disregarding native will, consent or even knowledge (Rivera 1992: 29).

The main motive of colonization was not religious but economic and political; colonizers used religious efforts to justify their seizure of labor and natural resources. Colonialism throughout the world was concerned with the effort "to impose upon them a particular way of seeing and being…the final objective of colonizers has been to colonize their consciousness with the axioms and aesthetics of an alien culture" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 4). Missionaries were sent all over the world in order to modify the behavior and symbols of the colonized. The main priority of the Spanish was profit, and native labor often helped to ensure maximum profits.

There were two ways in which the Spanish discussed converting the natives: evangelizing conquest and missionary action. Evangelizing conquest consisted of using force to dominate the native populations in order to facilitate their conversion while missionary action involved reasonable persuasion through argument and attraction to Catholicism (Rivera 1992: 226).

Missionaries were always in the middle of this debate, between supporting secular, colonial authorities and having real concerns with the future of the colonized (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 10-11). While the latter had many ardent supporters who were disturbed by the amount of violence and death suffered by the indigenous peoples, the most common and "convenient" method, evangelizing conquest, won out. The civil and political domination led the effort to Christianize (Rivera 1992: 227-229).

However, most of the indigenous population did not willingly submit to the instructions of the Spanish invaders. Therefore, Queen Isabel decreed that "because of all the freedom the Indians enjoy, they run away and separate themselves from relating to and communicating with Christians…and they become vagabonds…in the future [I] compel and urge those Indians to relate and converse with the Christians […] and work in their buildings, in gathering and mining gold and other metals and tilling the soil and producing food for the Christian residents" (in Rivera 1992: 116). As Christians, Spaniards were seen as "gente de razón" (people with reason) while the non-Christian indigenous population was without reason. Evangelization efforts would be directed at spreading the population of "gente de razón" by converting indigenous people and increasing the Spanish population (Bouvier 2001: 19, 34). The queen officially sanctioned the enforcement of Spanish domination, allowing the enslavement of the native population. Forced labor became legal in 1509 for the well-being of the natives spiritually, so that they could be indoctrinated into the Catholic faith and temporally, so that they can learn decent work habits. The native population was then "entrusted" to encomenderos. In the encomienda system, a settler, usually a soldier or noble, was named trustee of a piece of land and its inhabitants. The land was technically still owned by the indigenous inhabitants but in reality the trustee possessed both (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 60). Encomenderos were supposed to educate the native

communities about Catholicism and utilize their labor; the duration of this forced labor was only supposed to last two to three years. The Indians were not supposed to be turned into slaves (Rivera 1992: 116).

In practice, the exploitation of native labor became more important than their spiritual well-being. The Jesuit missionaries sent to convert the Yaquis of northern Mexico to Christianity saw their duties as beyond spiritual matters as well. They were interested in transforming the social, political, and material needs of the Yaquis indefinitely (Hu-DeHart 1981: 24). Their focus was on converting one community at a time, concentrating on the doctrinal education of adults and reorganizing their economies to support the growing missions of Northern Mexico (Hu-DeHart 1981: 24). They exercised great control over the Yaquis who in 1740 complained of excessive labor demands and hunger, and demanded more control over their own lives (Hu-Dehart 1981: 5). Dominican theologian Fray Matias de Paz defended the legitimacy of retaining the forced labor force, arguing that they would lose their Catholic faith if they were separated from the Christians (Rivera 1992: 117). In some cases, the Indian workers, their workload so large and extensive, would not have time or energy for religious instruction, and Dominican friar Bartolome de Las Casas admits that "no ecclesiastical or secular person had at that time the least care to teach doctrine or knowledge of God to these people" while Franciscan Geronimo de Mendieta elaborated, "all of them were more after gold than after their neighbors" resulting in the extermination of many native populations (in Rivera 1992: 121). In the early to mid-sixteenth century, some missionaries were alarmed at the desperation and despair of the native population, many who chose suicide over the exhaustible work they were expected to complete; some, such as Franciscan missionary Motolinia, suggested that idolatry and sin had led to the depopulation (Rivera 1992: 178).

Las Casas took part in the most famous debate concerning indigenous rights, defending them against those like his opponent Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. The debate was held in 1550 for King Carlos V in Valladolid, Spain. Las Casas, who had previously sailed on Columbus's third voyage in 1498, had witnessed firsthand that cruelty of the Spanish soldiers and landowners in present day Cuba (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 61). He argued that the actions of the Spaniards was un-Christian; he thought that the indigenous people had souls and should be converted to Christianity peacefully, insisting that a live Indian who was an infidel was better than a dead Christian Indian. Sepúlveda believed the opposite, that conversion was necessary even if by force; this was a common view of the colonials (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 61). The debate had no real conclusion and the abuses continued as before (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 61).

Those few who tried to defend the native population often took a paternalistic stance, Augustinian Pedro Xuárez de Escobar viewed indigenous people as childlike, dependent, invalids who needed Spaniards to defend them, "[a]ll these Indians are like little birds in their nests, who have not yet grown wings nor will grow them to learn to fly alone, but who always have need for their caring parents to bring fat and nourishment" (in Rivera 1992: 149). They especially needed religious instructors to teach them and preach to them the proper behavior. They were not suited for religious orders, unable to give orders or govern; they could only be subjects, submissive and only able to imitate what they saw (Rivera 1992: 150).

On May 6, 1533, a small group of Franciscans in Mexico tried to petition the King Charles I to allow native individuals to enter the order. Native individuals sang, read, wrote, and taught; they preached to their congregations as the Franciscans had taught them. They were people just like the Spanish and capable of all the things that the Spaniards were (Rivera 1992: 150-151). Most Spaniards opposed this development, however, doubting the reason and

rationality of native peoples, and afraid of the possible implications against their social and economic dominance. If the natives were given access to the priesthood, then they would be able to control their own affairs and would not need to be under the control of the Spanish population; as a result, there were many testimonies detailing the vices of indigenous people: their lack of authority, drunkenness, and inability to carry out intellectual work or to remain celibate (Rivera 1992: 151-153).

Going hand in hand with the evangelization of the indigenous groups, missionaries destroyed as much of the physical manifestation of native beliefs as possible. By 1531, in all of Nueva Espana, they had destroyed over 500 temples, seen as places of the devil, and twenty thousand idols, seen as idolatrous (Rivera 1992: 160-161). Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a foot soldier who took part in the 1519 conquest of Tenochtitlan, led by Hernán Cortéz, was disgusted by the gods they encountered in the temples, such as the figure of Huichilobos. Díaz del Castillo wrote that this god of war "had a very broad face and monstrous and terrible eyes…around his neck some Indians' faces and other things like hearts of Indians" (in Carrasco 2008: 177). He describes the braziers with incense and the hearts of Indians sacrificed that day; the walls and floor were completely covered in blood such that in "the slaughterhouses of Spain there is not such another stench" (in Carrasco 2008: 177-178). When Cortez confronted the emperor Montezuma about these "evil," "deceptive" idols, Montezuma replied "we consider them to be very good, for they give us health and rains and good seedtimes and seasons and as many victories as we desire…and I pray you not to say another word to their dishonour" (in Carrasco 2008: 179) The Spanish attempted to completely wipe out native beliefs and cultural creations; as long as the temples were standing, the native people would still worship there. The holy war

did not end until all of the temples had been razed and all the idols burned, only then would Jesus win (Rivera 1992: 161-162).

In some cases, children and youth were boarded at new villages and were taught Catholic doctrine. Molding young minds was easier than convincing adults to change their beliefs and practices (Deeds 2003: 25). The missionaries used the children to spy on the adults, alerting the priests to any native religious practices. This resulted in severe punishment, and sometimes death, of children at the hands of their parents who were unaware of the priestly manipulation (Rivera 1992: 163-164). To their indigenous subjects, missionaries declared that their ancestors' struggles were the result of worshiping the devil and that God sent the Europeans to punish their idolatry, "because God abhors idolaters above all other sinners" (Rivera 1992: 163). The missionaries were aware that the native rituals and beliefs were being kept alive secretly. Bernardino de Sahagun, a Franciscan missionary, argued that the destruction of indigenous beliefs led to the collapse of their social ethic, causing them to fall into idleness, cynicism, and alcoholism (Rivera 1992: 163-164).

Of course, native groups did not take the actions of Spanish invaders passively; they used various techniques to ensure their survival and the survival of their culture. In northern Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, Xiximes shamans linked sickness and hunger to the Jesuits, convincing most of the Xiximes against building churches. Jesuits continued to preach and baptize but the Xiximes refused to give up their customs (Deeds 2003: 22). They particularly enjoyed telling (and possibly embellishing) the Spaniards about their apparent ritual cannibalism, "Indian flesh was ordinary, similar to beef. Blacks tasted more like salted pork, but Spaniards, savoring the lamb, were the most delicious of all" (Deeds 2003: 22). Sometimes, these stories were more powerful than real weapons, creating discomfort and possible departure of the missionaries (Deeds 2003:

20). There were armed revolts, attempted assassinations of priests, and runaways but Indigenous people relied mostly on language, ceremonies, dreams, dances, diet, land usage, and sexuality for resistance. Women, in particular, were successful in refusing to learn Spanish and practicing female spirituality and dream visions. Ceremonies of healing, and agrarian rituals were maintained (Bouvier 2001: 167-168).

Prior to, and even after, "conversion," native groups used ceremonial dances as a form of spiritual expression, as a connection to the spirit world, "[w]ith the heart, not the head, the dancing bodies literally…join in the mysteries of life" (Monroy 2008: 163). Priests sought to eliminate these kinds of practices but they were often unsuccessful. To this day, the Yaquis of Northern Mexico continue their deer dancing rituals, dances which continue to lack any reference to Christian symbols (Shorter 2009: 213). The dances are not purely secular either; cosmology, history, and collective identity are all intertwined in these performances, casting doubt on the idea of "conversion" (Shorter 2009: 215). Deer dancing traces the Yoeme understanding of Catholicism, how the community made sense of Jesuit contact in terms of the deer figure; it also illustrates how they continue to make sense of the world around them (Shorter 2009: 215, 242). During colonization, people danced at solstices, before and after a hunt, to encourage the growth of acorns, to mourn a death, to welcome new life, and to defeat their enemies. They might dress up, putting feather crowns on their heads like a bird or they might strip down, connecting nakedness to cycles of fertility (Monroy 2008: 162-163). Many native groups believed, and still believe, that everything has a spirit: plants, animals, humans, mountains, etc. The spirit world is filled with living creatures. Dancing, shamans, dreams, and jimsonweed could connect a person to that world. The Cahuilla people sing to a deer in order to request the aid of a guardian spirit while hunting as well as to express their appreciation to the

animal for allowing itself to be killed, and to allow more deer to offer themselves in the hunt later (Monroy 2008: 161). The priests viewed these practices as diabolical, and savage, that the native groups needed to learn to master their bodies and desires as priests had done (Monroy 2008: 163-164).

Indigenous communities appropriated and manipulated their new Christian symbols to make them meaningful, sometimes in ways that mocked and facilitated resistance against the mission authorities (Ahern 2007: 280). This manipulation of beliefs results in a syncretism, or blending, of beliefs. For example, anthropologist William Merrill's discussion of the Rarámuri illustrates that while they are Christians, many of their beliefs do not line up with conventional Christianity; when many people "ask forgiveness," they are seeking to ensure God's beneficence but the Rarámuri are requesting "good crops, rainfall, long lives" or are just giving thanks to God for these things (Merrill 1995: 67). In addition, they associate God and God's wife with the Sun and the Moon and Jesus and Mary are used in speech because they are a male-female pair, not due to their connection with Christian deities. The Trinity and redemption from Christ's crucifixion are missing from their cosmology (Merrill 1995: 81).

The Acaxees, another indigenous group in Nueva Vizcaya, who were on better terms with the Jesuits than the Xiximes during the late sixteenth century, provided labor for mines and agriculture, learned catechism, and turned over their icons. In return, the Jesuits, along with Spanish soldiers, protected them from their enemies, including the Xiximes, and gave them gifts including clothing, tools, and tobacco (Deeds 2003: 20-23). The Acaxees were able to continue their rituals away from the villages and vigilance of the Jesuits. Led by their shamans, they continued to venerate the idols of their gods of war and fertility. They participated in dancing and offerings of food and drink to their idols but the Elders warned of the dangers of destroying

more idols. Starvation and death would occur if they did not restore the balance of reciprocity to their gods (Deeds 2003: 23).

In 1603, more Jesuits and soldiers arrived and forced resettlement, making it more difficult for the Acaxees to worship their deities. The Acaxees, following tribal leader Perico (calling himself God, Bishop, and Holy Spirit), rebelled against the Spanish. Perico claimed that he was sent from Heaven to save the Indians. He performed baptisms and marriages; he said mass, taught new prayers, and named disciples who sent news of the revolt to other pueblos and rancherias (Deeds 2003: 23-24). Perico's goal was to eliminate the Spaniards and claimed he could transform them into livestock to make it easier to kill them. For two years, Perico's forces attacked the mining camps and roads bringing the mining activities to a stop (Deeds 2003: 24). Finally, the new Spanish governor sent troops in and recruited from the Tepehuanes and Conchos. Together, these groups crushed the rebellion; hundreds of rebels were executed, the rest were sold into slavery. Spanish officials blamed the shamans, "agents of the devil," for provoking the rebellion; they did not doubt that the devil had the power to change humans into animals and make his idols weep (Deeds 2003: 24). Jesuits, on the other hand, blamed the encomenderos' exploitative and abusive behavior. Still, native groups in the center of Nueva Vizcaya were moved from seventy Rancherias into twenty-four villages. Local leaders had to be appointed by Jesuits, who assured loyalty through gifts and privileges (Deeds 2003: 24-25).

In 1540, in Nueva Galicia, now Mexico City, the Franciscans arrived and almost immediately began executing the usual conversion measures with mass baptisms, destruction of idols, banning of polygamy, resettlement and the indoctrination of children. The Caxcan people resisted not only their new Christian life but also the decade of rape and enslavement of much of their population by Nuño de Guzmán and his troops (Ahern 2007: 281-282). During one of their

rituals, a traditional gourd dance, a female shaman declared that just as the wind had blown away a gourd, so would the Caxcan blow away the Spanish invaders if they were to enter into battle. According to the Viceroy, the actual cause of the rebellions was "*el habla del diablo que se llama tlatol*," (the speech of the devil that is called tlatol) or the messianic messages brought by shamans in which the deity, Tecoroli promised "eternal youth, good health, abundant food, and weapons to those who rejected the teachings of God and the friars" (Ahern 2007: 282). Crops would flourish and followers would be allowed as many women as they wanted. The Caxcan and their allies, within their stronghold but in view of the Spaniards, performed a burlesque mass in reply to the Requerimiento reading, including raising a tortilla as the host. Those in Apozol and el Teul burned monastaries, churches and chapels, and disfigured the cross (Ahern 2007: 283).

One Franciscan brother, Juan Calero became a martyr in 1541. He approached a group of Caxcan begging them to return to settlements and preaching to them; however, according to a witness, another group arrived, shot him with arrows and beat him on the mouth and teeth declaring, "Now you won't preach any more about heaven or hell" (Ahern 2007: 283-284). Speech was important to both indigenous and Christian cultures, as the channel for the spread of symbols. By beating the mouth and teeth, the Caxcan were attacking the source of missionary power and the site of the hated language (Ahern 2007: 284). Just as the Christians had taken away their power and their voices through domination and forced conversion, indigenous groups were attempting to do the same to this missionary. After destroying Calero and taking away his power, the warriors responsible for his death turned his habit into their idol, creating a new cult in the process. Each year, on the day of his death, a celebration was thrown in honor of that victory, "they had killed a destroyer of idols" (Ahern 2007: 284-285). Calero, or at least his

habit, had become a part of the very thing the Christian missionaries were attempting to destroy, appropriated to fit the Caxcan's purposes.

A different situation occurred in Alta California after the Jesuits were kicked out in 1769. The Franciscans received some formerly Jesuit land; they were backed by the Spanish Crown (but not financially supported). They established new missions, Mission Nuestra Senora de la Soledad (1791), San Carlos Borromeo de Carmelo (1770), and San Antonio de Padua (1771), in order to control the native population and force them to work to support the missionary enterprise (Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 109-110). During the initial recruitment to missions, missionaries, along with their accompanying bodyguards, would capture indigenous women and children in order to force their parents and spouses to join them (Bouvier 2001: 90-91). The priests often practiced forgiveness along with violence in their dealings with converts, "shower[ing] all our love and care upon them" but turning to violent punishment "with whippings and confinement to the stocks" for any violations of God's law (Monroy 2008: 169). Twenty-five lashings was the maximum sentence but this could be repeated weekly or daily. Women were punished in enclosed, private, and distant places so that "their cries may not excite a too lively compassion, which might cause the men to revolt" (Bouvier 2001: 95). Initially, their desire centered on changing the culture of the indigenous population to become a "docile, Christian, peasant labor force" but it was impossible to turn natives into proper Europeanized peasants and maintain prosperous levels of economic production (Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 109-110).

The indigenous people of California had developed a relationship with the land, burning the landscape to encourage growth of edible plants and foraging for animals to eat. Within this system, they were able to focus on their artistic and spiritual activities (Monroy 2008: 159-160).

Spanish missionaries practiced “reduction,” a concentrating, and sometimes confinement, of people in a centralized space, forcing the native population to abandon their old way of life. In Alta California, along with this confinement came a schedule mediated by the clock, not the seasons, and everyone had to learn new occupations with men in workshops and women locked away in dormitories (Monroy 2008: 160). Once girls reached adolescence, they were brought to the dormitories in order to safeguard their virginity and prepare them for marriage; it also ensured that they could not run away and that the men would continue to be loyal to the mission. Once married, they would settle on the rancherías (Bouvier 200: 82, 95). Women were taught cleanliness and order, acculturated by Christian women, both Hispanic and native; they dressed in “scarlet petticoats, and white bodices” and learned “practical tasks” like sewing and weaving (82-83)

The missionaries focused on the woodlands for timber and used the valley floor near their mission for food. They grazed their animals and planted grains, fruits, and vegetables, mostly crops unsuitable to the landscape, in small areas. They used irrigation as far as possible to modify the environment. Previously, the Native populations had been able to utilize all the land in the area, covering many ecological zones (Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 112). The Soledad Mission in Alta California was unable to focus on agriculture like the other two missions; every other year, it experienced a poor harvest. These missionaries decided to shift to ranching and textiles. The efforts of these three missions supplied the military with much needed food, clothing and footwear and kept the missions financially stable (Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 122).

In Alta California, there was a high mortality rate for both adults and children which meant that there was continuous need for recruitment that prevented proper acculturation and

evangelism. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, there was a resurgence of "traditional" culture since many of the mission Indians were recent converts who had barely assimilated **(**Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 110). The Franciscans abandoned their attempts at enacting major cultural changes and accepted a "veneer of Christianity deemed acceptable to the church and the introduction of those European skills necessary for economic production" (Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 109). Native converts, especially men, were required to maintain a level of European culture, that surrounding the economic production, agricultural tasks, industrial processes, and crafts. As long as the converts carried out Christian activities and economic tasks, the Franciscan missionaries would allow the practice of traditional native practices (Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 118).

A similar situation occurred in Baja California, once the Dominicans arrived in 1773. The Dominicans took over former Jesuit mission sites, twenty-one over a 600 mile area along the coast. Indigenous groups were gathered into the villages, made to pay land and crown taxes but they were allowed to elect their own officials and had rights to their land. Sometimes, Dominicans had to round up "wild Indians" to bring to the mission settlements (Hall 1910: 138). They depended on indigenous labor as there was little help from the colonial authorities; however, they were much more strict than the Franciscans, enforcing religious instruction and practice, "that promoted strict observation of Spanish patriarchal values and Christian mores" (Reyes 2004: 105). Gifts of food and trinkets were given and pictures of the Virgin Mary were explained. Converts became a part of mission property, religious, social, and industrial duties were required and slight offences were punished (Hall 1910: 138). They attempted to settle the mostly nomadic native population by moving indigenous people to other parts of the peninsula, even separating parents and children in order to have greater control over the young minds

(Reyes 2004: 104-105). They tried to end the hunting and gathering practices of the native communities and introduced agricultural work. There were severe punishments for breaking the rules of labor, as well as sexual and religious violations, lashings and floggings were common on these missions (Reyes 2004: 105). Indigenous groups often rebelled against the missions; Dominican dominance was not guaranteed in such an isolated, harsh climate (Reyes 2004: 105).

By the mid-nineteenth century, settlers' desires for the wealth generated by exploitative Indian labor nearly destroyed the already weak native population, causing the extinction of the Esselen and Chalon Costanoan cultures, and shutting down the missions (Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 112). The mission population was unable to reproduce itself as many more native people, especially girls and women, died than were born; in addition, it was difficult to recruit new converts. Loss of liberty, heavy workloads, poor hygiene, and damp, rotten dormitories for women all contributed to the high mortality rate in the missions of California (Farnsworth and Jackson 1995: 123-124). The missions could not sustain themselves for very long in these conditions; priests would move through villages, baptizing as many as possible before they died, enabling them to go to Heaven (Monroy 2008: 168). Whole villages of natives found themselves moving to missions, "[t]heir infants were dying, their forage areas encroached upon, their shamans powerless [and] the spirit world amok" (Monroy 2008: 168). If they could not be persuaded to move willingly, the priests would bring in the soldiers to force them. Their medicine men could not compete with, the spirit world could not explain, all the new diseases and frequent deaths brought in by Europeans: influenza, smallpox, syphilis and cholera (Monroy 2008: 167-168).

Despite the centuries of domination, with diseases and violence wiping out much of the native population, the Spanish missionaries were never completely successful in eradicating

indigenous religions throughout their holdings in the Americas. Missionaries destroyed idols and temples to dissuade native groups from continuing the worship of their gods but they also built up Catholic churches in the same place as former temples. They tended to position Christian celebrations around the same time as indigenous celebrations and rituals. This was done to replace native practices but it often only added to them and integrated with them, creating something new (Wonderly 1967: 230). The ancient Chols, of southern Mexico, had a feast for the corn-planting time; the Catholic priests tried to replace it with Easter which was celebrated around the same time. An image of Christ on the cross is used; today, the Chols cover the cross with a black cloth, removing it on Easter indicating the resurrection. However, it also indicates the corn-planting fiesta; the cloth is placed to make the god think it is dark and cloudy, so that he will send sunshine, and is removed in the blazing sun as a reminder to send rain to the newly planted corn (Beekman 1968: 237).

In the [Nahuatl] village of Tecospa, the Christian God is considered the creator but also the destroyer. There are other powers in the world; the Virgin of Guadalupe, also known as the Aztec goddess, Tonantzin being the most powerful female deity. The Nahuatl have a concept of the universe being mediated by the opposition of male and female deities (Wonderly 1967: 230). At birth, a Nahuatl person's destiny is decided in a battle between God and the devil. The devil in Nahuatl culture is similar to the Christian devil but not identical. There are also multiple devils, pingos, which are ruled by that main devil. God is not known for love but is an enemy who wants to destroy humans, sending famine, epidemics, and earthquakes, like the Nahuatl deities before God had done (Wonderly 1967: 231). The Nahuatl do not pray to God but turn to Christs, Virgins, and saints, many of which are attributed similar aspects as Nahuatl gods. These virgins and saints have a relationship with Nahuatl people and expect nourishment from their

followers. In the past, human sacrifice was required but now, Catholic saints need only entertainment in the form of fiestas (Wonderly 1967: 231). The Nahuatl incorporated into their religious pantheon those parts of Catholicism that were compatible with their established beliefs such as baptism, confession, fiestas, dances, and the use of images (Wonderly 1967: 232).

Eventually, the Catholic Churches tried to change the church in Mexico by getting rid of the images of the saints to focus on Christ alone. They were attempting to purify the church of the pagan remnants but Mexican Catholics did not agree; they felt more comfortable approaching saints than Jesus (Gonzalez and Gonzalez 2008: 267). They ignored attempts by priests to convince them that St. Lazarus had nothing to do with the parable of the poor man covered in sores but was instead the brother of Mary and Martha. The St. Lazarus wearing rags, covered in sores, surrounded by dogs was a powerful image in Mexican Catholic devotion. It was impossible for the priests to get rid of these kinds of devotional practices of their congregations (Gonzalez and Gonzales 2008: 267).

The most famous example of native peoples interpreting Catholicism to fit their beliefs and ends surrounds Juan Diego, Cuauhtlatoatzin before conversion, a poor Aztec man who had an encounter with the Virgin while he was walking to catechism class in about 1525 (Gonzalez and Gonzalez 2008: 55). She called to him from Tepeyac Hill, formerly a site dedicated to the goddess Tonantzin. The Virgin, dressed as an Aztec princess, told Juan Diego, in his native Nahuatl language, that she desired for the bishop to build a shrine for her on the hill so that she may, "give all my love, compassion, help, and protection" (Gonzalez and Gonzalez 2008: 55). The Spanish bishop did not believe it when Juan Diego did as she ordered and sent him away; Juan Diego went back to the virgin who made him try again but it did not work. However, the bishop did ask for a sign, hoping Juan Diego would not come back. On his next trip, the virgin

supplied Juan Diego with all kinds of roses from the hill, despite it being winter (Gonzalez and Gonzalez 2008: 55-56). He put them in his cloak and went to the bishop. When he released the flowers, an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared on the cloak. The bishop built the shrine as the virgin had requested. For the Spaniards, it was a sign of her approval of their evangelization but for the indigenous population, it was a commitment to them and a legitimization of their position in the social order (Gonzalez and Gonzalez 2008: 56).

Mexican independence, established in 1821, strained the relationship of the newly independent state and the Catholic hierarchy which supported the Spanish monarchy, even condemning priests who supported the independence movement. The church was given enormous power, rights to Spanish land, and special privileges to the clergy (Baldwin 1990: 11). In order to pay for their newly independent state, and not to alienate a major power within it, the state persuaded the church to make loans to the administrations, becoming the banker of the Mexican government. However, the liberals did not support this dominant position for the church (Baldwin 1990: 12).

In the 1850s, a liberal rebellion ended the Catholic religious monopoly in an attempt to establish the supreme power of the state; the Church did not only have a religious monopoly but was vital in regulating marriage, social reproduction, patriarchy, domesticity, and education. The "Reform Laws," passed between 1856 and 1859, sanctioned religious freedom and banned the Catholic Church from owning land (Alonso 1995: 120-121). This resulted in the seizure of Church lands and the transformation of marriage and education into civil affairs (Baldwin 1990: 12; Alonso 1995: 121). Protestantism was made possible during this time as a way to break free from Catholic power (Baldwin 1990: 12-13). Prior to this, during the colonial era, Protestantism

had not even been tolerated, Protestants were tried by the Inquisition and either banished or executed (Costas 1976: 29; Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 159).

In 1857, the Mexican Constitution legalized Protestantism and the religious landscape began to transform once more. Predominantly American denominations sent their missionaries into Mexico; until 1910, they emphasized theology over anything else (Baldwin 1990: 3). Protestant churches such as the Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Baptists sent missionaries. They brought values such as "democracy, freedom of conscience, and affirmation of human progress" (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 160). Protestant missionaries helped foster the growing dissidence, reflected the liberal values growing in Latin America and supported the democratic forces of the Mexican Revolution (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 160).

Catholic priests were worried about the incoming Protestant missionaries who might lead their parishioners away from Catholicism "loaded with gold and astounding promises" (Mora 2005: 306). Their worries were not entirely unfounded either. During the revolutionary time in the early twentieth century, when anticlericalism was widespread, the Chols suffered great losses; their priests were forced out of their villages by the government, Chol ritual leaders were killed, their "saints," named after Christian figures, were destroyed (Stoll 1990: 85). Most Chols escaped bondage on the haciendas but were exploited by saloon keepers and money lenders. Many then turned to evangelical churches. Missionaries hailed their ability, and the ability of their native language Bibles, to get the Chol away from their idolatry, witchcraft, and exploitation. However, the Chol were not interested in their Bibles or Christian ethics but wanted to emulate the wealthy missionaries in order to gain some of their success (Stoll 1990: 86-87).

Initially, the Protestant missionaries, such as Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and the American Bible Society, operated under the doctrine of "disinterested benevolence," the

salvation of the individual was the most important goal. They focused on conversion – converting individuals one by one – and ignored the social and economic environments of their congregations; any reforms, such as anti-slavery and temperance, were focused on helping the individual, not the society (Baldwin 1990: 18-19). Slowly, the Protestant missionaries and converts were subjected to more and more violence and discrimination, inspired by Catholic preaching; it was difficult to buy or rent property, purchase food and clothing, and secure employment. Their distrust of the government, which was supposed to be protecting them, grew and they eventually became openly hostile (Baldwin 1990: 25-26). Inspired into political action, they hoped their efforts would lead to a liberal democracy as laid out in the 1857 Constitution: economic support for middle-class development, educational reform for political and economic transformation, and support for Protestantism. Mexican Protestants reluctantly took up the revolutionary cause, eventually considering it their moral obligation to eliminate corruption and help the poor (Baldwin 1990: 7-8). Nineteenth century Protestants developed from the radical liberalism of the time which was democratic, stressing individual free will and emphasized education and the written word (Bastian 1993: 53).

According to historian Jean-Pierre Bastian, by the mid twentieth century, some Protestant movements, especially Pentecostalism have shifted focus, becoming like the popular, corporatist, and authoritarian Catholicism, emphasizing religious and social control and encouraging lively oral practices while also becoming more like the shamanistic religions, emphasizing their healing powers (Bastian 1993: 53). Pentecostal movements encourage members to disengage certain behaviors such as drinking, gambling, and infidelity which tends to create more peaceful households (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 167). These movements were not overly political, focusing mainly on strengthening their churches or supporting issues of the person over focusing

on the transformation of society; when political, they tend to support pro-family moral agendas (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 166). Pentecostal movements also offered community as well as rights and duties; members must preach in the streets, offer conversion testimonies during services and financially support the community (D'Epinay 2008: 181).

Pentecostal movements are built around a charismatic leader, chosen by a supernatural power as well as through social and economic prestige; they are able to influence other members of their group (Bastian 1993: 48). Pentecostalism attracted many people through the charismatic leader and its worship style which included testimonials, repetitive singing, speaking in tongues, praying loudly, prophesy, and the exorcism of evil spirits (Gonzalez and Gonzalez 2008: 287; Peterson and Vásquez: 2008: 161). People also come to Pentecostalism for its faith healing, preferring the power of prayer over antibiotics and less effective shamans (Stoll 1990: 87; Sterk 1992: 371). Some indigenous populations, such as the Tzotzil, according to missionary Vernon Sterk, tend to believe in shamans and healing through sacrifice; most will reject western medicine which has no spiritual power. They see it as covering up the physical symptom but not actually healing the underlying cause. Indigenous populations can be more receptive to divine healing through Jesus Christ than to merely receiving medicine for their symptoms (Sterk 1992: 375-376). Other Protestant denominations began emulating the Pentecostal movement. Latin American Baptist leadership has followed this trend, using a central figure with symbolic power, the ability to lead like an oligarchy (Bastian 1993: 49). Methodists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians each experienced a Charismatic movement as well hoping for the same success as the Pentecostals (Gonzalez and Gonzalez 2008: 287).

The last few decades of the twentieth century saw a change in the attitude of evangelical missionaries, Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals, and others, as well as Catholics (Parker Gumucio

2002: 71). Missionaries could not come in and expect the indigenous population to conform to them and their religious requirements; the indigenous people would "[remake] Protestantism in their own image" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 7). Formerly, being pro-indigenous meant supporting the assimilation of indigenous people into the dominant society, being paternalistic and colonialist was the main attitude (Parker Gumucio 2002: 71). Indigenous movements started rejecting the tabula rasa policy of Catholic missions which stressed nationalism and civilizing policy.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) brought about the change in the Catholic Church that indigenous believers supported. At this Vatican II, bishops from throughout the entire world, even those from Latin America and other third world nations, discussed and eventually, transformed the Catholic Church's positions on a range of issues: schools, seminaries, liturgy, the sacraments, the roles of pastoral agents and laypeople, and the church's position on political and social matters (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 203). The document, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), declares that the church must act on behalf of the weak and poor throughout the world and that the both poor individuals and poor nations should have political equality (Peterson and Vásquez 2008: 203-204). Both Catholics and Protestants abandoned neo-colonial and ethnocentric policy and began training indigenous leaders in schools, convents, and parishes (Parker Gumucio 2002: 72). Some young, educated leaders turned on Christian churches, becoming more aware of their involvement in religious and cultural colonialism; older indigenous people accepted their syncretic beliefs (Parker Gumucio 2002: 72-73). As the new leaders begin to emerge and take control, they will probably construct a further syncretism of beliefs and rituals as they attempt to claim their "pagan" and "demonic" religions (Parker Gumucio 2002: 80).

Protestantism has spread rapidly (although it has not been more than two to five percent of the population), particularly among the indigenous population of Oaxaca, Mexico despite the belief that Protestantism is incompatible with and destructive of indigenous cultures (Gallaher 2007: 88; Stoll 1990: 7). Missionaries changed their methods to accommodate indigenous terms, making it easier to convert to Protestantism and retain their culture. They did this by shifting focus from the individual to the group and by church planting (Gallaher 2007: 88-89). Missionaries are more focused on church planting than they had been in the past when they were converting people one by one. They evangelize a group of people in order to establish a church that is led by the native converts, creating indigenous, not mestizo or Spanish preachers, beliefs, and practices (Gallaher 2007: 98). The role of the missionaries has become administrative; they take care of the mission projects: running training programs, teaching at seminaries, raising money, and producing educational materials. Protestant missionaries attract indigenous people to their churches through literacy work; Bible reading is central to Protestant worship so pastors teach the indigenous language to the congregation (Gallaher 2007: 94). They first arrive by offering to help the community with some developmental project without mentioning religion, building up a relationship until they "earn the hearing" (Gallaher 2007: 98).

While we did not have any intention of church planting or trying to convert anyone, this is taken care of by the Mexican congregations as they deem it necessary, this is the context of the mission trip as we entered into it. We were there to meet the needs of the community as they (the Mexican mission leaders) set them out for us. All of the support we gave, our time, money, and supplies were allocated by the mission coordinator, Juan Ramírez. Those from the United States are dependent on the Mexican organization for the opportunities, for planning and setting up sites, for missions while the Mexican organization is dependent on groups from the United States

for economic support. Congregations of the United Methodist church in the United States form partnerships and build relationships with congregations of the United Methodist church in Mexico; for the most part, this has prevented either side from becoming dominant or oppressive over the other.

Once independence and Protestantism arrived in Mexico, Mexican communities were forceful in their religious acceptance of some things and rejection of others. Unlike during the Spanish conquest, they were in a position to dictate how their lives as well as beliefs would change. Many Mexicans, after centuries of forced conversions by missionaries, can be suspicious of new forces arriving to change their beliefs again. Now, missionaries are more receptive to the concerns and beliefs of their potential converts and embrace the powers of shamans, idols, and prayer (Gallaher 2007: 89). They let the Mexican people lead themselves and their own churches, working in partnership with the Mexican church organizations; gone are the days when missionaries debated the humanity on the indigenes. The Mexican people no longer have to let others decide, and enforce, how they will worship, when, where, and by whom. They can freely and openly pick and choose which parts of the various religious forces that they will adhere to and believe based on their own experiences and desires.

CHAPTER 2: THE METHODIST CHURCH

The dates of our mission trip coincided with the annual conference of the United Methodist Church in Louisiana. Normally, Pastor Sam would be attending the conference, but he thought that going on a mission trip was more important; he had just moved to his new church and wanted to begin establishing a relationship with its members. Unfortunately, he would be missing a vote that he viewed as one of the most important issues within the church. There was a proposal to get rid of VIM (Volunteers in Mission) as well as youth and adult education within the conference; this would take some of the pressure off individual churches, reducing their annual costs to the conference. They are also two vital programs within the church. Without VIM, it would be very difficult to foster new mission work. Ellen did not know how she would feel about leading a team without support from VIM. When she was first starting out, she did not have the knowledge or resources to set up the mission trip. VIM offers training for mission leaders and requires two VIM trained participants in each of their mission trips. They gave her forms for participants to fill out, not only concerning the trip itself and the requirements for it but also medical and funeral forms, things she would never have thought about. Organizations like VIM can even help plan and book transportation. Ellen always knows that when she is in Mexico, there is someone in Louisiana who can offer support if anyone gets into trouble. The director of VIM also travels around the world looking for and evaluating potential sites of need that the United Methodist Church could offer support. Mission work is one of the main missions of the United Methodist Church which states that:

> The United Methodist faith is deeply rooted in the Scripture and in the basic beliefs of all Christians. Out of that theology and the faith have grown some specific actions that mark United Methodists as Christians engaged in ministry to the world. The early members of the groups that eventually became The United Methodist Church

- took strong stands on issues such as slavery, smuggling, and humane treatment of prisoners;
- established institutions for higher learning;
- started hospitals and shelters for children and the elderly;
- founded Goodwill Industries in 1902;
- became actively involved in efforts for world peace;
- adopted a Social Creed and Social Principles to guide them as they relate to God's world and God's people;
- participated with other religious groups in ecumenical efforts to be in mission. ("Mission and Ministry" 2002)

Without VIM, it will be much more difficult for churches to fulfill this mission. In this chapter, I will examine the history of the United Methodist Church focusing particularly on the founder of the movement, John Wesley, as he provided the foundations for this mission-oriented denomination.

John Wesley (1703-1791), founder of the Methodist movement, was the son of Samuel (1662-1735) and Susanna (1669-1742) Wesley. Samuel Wesley's father and grandfather were both ministers who were ejected from of their parishes for dissenting against the Anglican Church. Samuel was sent to Newington Green, an alternative school for those with dissenting views (Collins 2003: 21-22). It was here that Samuel, after receiving an assignment to refute an Anglican argument, decided that Anglicans had actually been right and decided to enter the Anglican Church, becoming a priest in 1689 (Collins 2003: 23). Samuel Wesley set up small religious societies when he was stationed in Epworth, beginning in 1700. These societies emphasized rigorous study of scripture, devotional literature, and a high standard of morality. Young John Wesley might not have participated in these societies with his father, but he was familiar with their methods and teachings (Collins 2003: 24-25).

It was Wesley's mother who seemed to have more influence on him as she was much more active in raising him. Susanna was raised in a Puritan household, although she became a part of the Church of England at thirteen. Both Susanna and John were affected by her father, Dr.

Samuel Annesley, a Puritan minister who emphasized holiness, faith working by love, and the role of the Holy Spirit; one of his sermons was published by John Wesley in *A Christian Library*, Annesley wrote "it must be divine faith, wrought by the HOLY GHOST, where GOD and man concur in the operation; such a faith as works by love, both to GOD and man; a holy faith, full of good works" (in Collins 2003: 14). Susanna spent a great deal of time growing up in meditation and self-examination, keeping a journal of the state of her soul. Susanna raised her children this way as well, setting aside time every morning in church and meditating as well as reading chapters from the bible. There was also a strict schedule for school, eating, "dressing, undressing, changing linen and so on" (Collins 2003: 16-17). In a letter to John Wesley, she describes her strict discipline starting at their first year or sooner to "fear the rod, and to cry softly; by which means they escaped abundance of correction they might otherwise have had…In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their wills" (in Collins 2003: 17). In 1712, when her husband was away from his church, Susanna was so dissatisfied with his replacement, Mr. Inman, who she thought lacked sound spiritual teaching and often repeated lectures on the importance of paying debts, that she began holding evening services in her kitchen. At one point, as many as two hundred people attended. These services included songs of psalms, prayers, and sermons from Samuel's library (Collins 2003: 20). According to theologian Kenneth Collins, Wesley would have attended these meetings and saw a "living example of a functional definition ministry, one that deemed it far better to minister to the needs of the common people…than to watch the harvest rot on ground for want of laborers" (Collins 2003: 20-21).

Wesley began his movement with the concern that praying, reading the Bible, and going to church were not enough; something was missing in his spiritual life (Collins 2003: 26). In

1729, while attending Christ Church (part of Oxford University) along with his brother Charles, Wesley became a part of a new study group, that was called "the Holy Club," "Godly Club," "Bible Moths," and eventually "Methodists," "because of their strict conformity to the method of study prescribed by the statuses of the University" (Collins 2003: 43-44). In addition to prayer, reading the Bible, and receiving the Lord's Supper, one member, John Clayton, led the others at keeping the fasts of the ancient church and performing "works of mercy." William Morgan, another member, convinced the group to visit the Oxford prisons, praying to prisoners and distributing books on piety. The group also gave up everything that was not necessary to survive, Wesley wrote of one member, "One of them had thirty pounds a year. He lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two and thirty…" by the fourth year, the man was able to give away ninety-two pounds to the poor (Collins 2003: 44-45). The first group of Methodists was ridiculed at Oxford, in the early 1730s, because of the rigor and unnecessary burdens they imposed upon themselves, such as the strict fasting and frugal spending, believing that should "spend every hour, nay minute, of their lives in the service of God"; the death of William Morgan, in 1732, was attributed by many to excessive fasting (Collins 2003: 47). On October 18 of that year, Wesley wrote an apologetic for Oxford Methodism to Morgan's father but did not alter his practices or his leadership of the group, "a man that does not engage himself entirely in the practice of religion is in greater fear of damnation than a notorious sinner" (Collins 2003: 47-48). His search for leading a life of holiness guided him to extol works of piety and mercy as well as the rules and precepts that some deemed too harsh but he thought necessary for salvation (Collins 2003: 48).

In 1735, while John Wesley was in London, he was invited to Savannah, Georgia to take the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) chaplaincy and support the mission work for the Anglican Church. He saw this opportunity as a way to save his own soul for he was still a "grievous sinner…laden with foolish and hateful lusts" (Collins 2003: 55; Norwood 1974: 25). He saw mission work as the final piece of his quest for holiness; he would never achieve what he thought was at the heart of the gospel without doing mission work (Collins 2003: 55; Norwood 1974: 25). He believed that he could never find the holiness he was seeking in England the way he could in Georgia; he thought that while there were "heathens" in England as well as Georgia, those in Georgia would benefit more from his presence, explaining in a letter "[b]ecause these heathens at home have Moses and the prophets, and those have not. Because these who *have* the gospel trample upon it, and those who have it not earnestly call for it" (in Collins 2003: 55-56).

In Georgia, he was in charge of ministering to the colonists of Savannah and later, those of the town of Frederica after his brother, Charles, left. He was not able to preach to native groups as he had hoped. He attempted to set up Methodist study groups, finding success in Savannah but failure in Frederica. He had some difficulty in Georgia, clashing with colonists who did not agree with his opinions on baptisms and burials; he rebaptized the children of dissenters, those who rejected the established Anglican Church (he did not think they were baptized correctly and could not take the sacraments), and refused to perform burial rights on these dissenters (Collins 2003: 67-69). In Georgia, Wesley fell in love with Sophie Hopkey but, afraid of falling further from his devotion to God, rejected her (Collins 2003: 74-76; Norwood 1974: 25). When she married another man, he publically humiliated her, refusing to serve her communion. He also struggled with "disobedience" and sin. After a year and nine months, he

returned to England in despair, questioning whether he was ever converted to God or not (Collins 2003: 74-76, 78). Though it was not what he envisioned, Wesley decided that the mission to Georgia was a humbling experience and that it was a part of God's path for him, preparing him to be more open in the future (Collins 2003: 80). Back in England, once his faith was restored, the Methodist movement grew as Wesley began to preach outside, traveling throughout the country for the rest of his life. At first, as noted above, he faced violence and prejudice and then eventually, acceptance, tolerance, and admiration within the Anglican Church (Norwood 1974: 29-30).

John Wesley, as the leader of the Methodist movement, expected his lay ministers to stick to his message; any disagreements could be brought up only at his annual meeting but he determined the final outcome of the disagreement. In his *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today*, according to theologian John Cobb, everyone was allowed his or her own interpretation of the Bible but could not necessarily promulgate this interpretation as a pastor; he or she must preach as Wesley dictated. For instance, he or she could believe in predestination but could not preach it in Methodist contexts (Cobb 1995: 140-141). Along with preaching what Wesley required, the ministers he taught were sent where he wanted them to be; this often meant moving around frequently. To this day, each annual conference is in charge of the location of preachers within their jurisdiction and most pastors do not spend more than a few years in one church (Frank 2002: 210-211). This prevents any one preacher from becoming more important than the message. Pastor Sam had barely been at St. Peters for a few weeks when he went on the mission trip.

It was always John's, and his brother Charles's, intention for Methodism to be a part of the Church of England and fought against the establishment of a separate denomination

(Norwood 1974: 31). The growth of Methodism in the United States began in the 1760s, concentrated along the eastern seaboard, with lay preachers bringing Methodism with them to America and continuing their ministries. It was not until 1769 that Wesley began sending missionaries who would find these "small but sturdy" church plantings (Norwood 1974: 69, 74). However, only one, Francis Asbury, would stay on once the Revolution turned in the U.S.'s favor (Norwood 1974: 73). Methodism officially became a denomination in the United States in 1784 as a result of the American Revolution; at the time, there were approximately 15,000 members (Norwood 1974: 52, 74). The Church of England in the United States had collapsed; the Anglicans lost their authority and were suspected of being sympathetic to the British government. This created a crisis in the distribution of the sacraments of baptism and communion as well as a crisis of authority as Wesley along with the Church of England were out of touch with those in America (Norwood 1974: 91). Finally, Wesley sent Thomas Coke to ordain Methodist ministers in America through a laying on of hands; Wesley also sent an abridged Articles of Religion, a revised version of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, ordination certificates, and a general letter to preachers. The Methodist leaders, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury at the top, in America were then free to decide the direction of the Methodist Episcopal Church as it was then called (Norwood 1974: 96-101). From these beginnings, the church has grown to over 12 million members as of February 2011, 7.8 million in the United States, the rest spread throughout the rest of the world with Africa and the Philippines experiencing the most growth (Dunlap-Berg 2011). In addition, in 2004, there were missions in over 125 countries, comprised of 903 mission personnel supported by the church and 135,000 Volunteers in Mission ("Quick Facts" 2004)

Methodism began as a renewal movement within the Church of England in the eighteenth century; it was not the result of debate or controversies (Carder 2009: 9). The main focus of Methodism was the experiences and practices surrounding the Anglican doctrine. The name Methodist was attributed to those following John Wesley because of their emphasis on structure and organization more than their actual beliefs (Carder 2009: 9). To Methodists, beliefs are important but Christian unity through love of neighbor and God has outweighed doctrinal differences; Wesley accepted and supported the good works of other Protestant groups and Catholics (Cobb 1995: 146-147). Wesley was interested in determining the way to salvation; in his explorations, his focus became the relationship between beliefs and behavior, doctrine and discipleship, theological concepts and Christian character (Carder 2009: 10). When Methodism came to America, officially creating the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, individuality, tolerance, and sincerity were the primary markers of religious faithfulness (Norwood 1974: 75; Carder 2009: 10).

Since Methodism began as a renewal movement that emphasized experiences and practices while deemphasizing a doctrine, within the United Methodist Church, loyalties to Christ and the Christian doctrine are the only requirements; baptisms and professions of faith from other denominations are valid within the United Methodist Church. The UMC does not have a specific creed that members are enjoined to recite, focusing on what believers have in common, attempting to pinpoint the basic beliefs of most, if not all, Christians; (Carder 2009: 16). *The Book of Discipline* (2008) is the major work that lays out all the rules and policies of the United Methodist Church reflecting the understanding and mission of the Church at the time (v). The basic affirmations – which Carder believes are shared with other Christian communions – are:

1. We believe in the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We hold a faith in the mystery of salvation in and through Jesus Christ.
3. God's redemptive love is realized in human life by the activity of the Holy Spirit, both in personal experience and in the community of believers.
4. We are part of Christ's universal church when by adoration, proclamation, and service we become conformed to Christ.
5. The reign of God is both a present and future reality.
6. Scripture is authoritative in matters of faith.
7. Our justification as sinners is by grace through faith.
8. The church is in need of continual reformation and renewal.
9. The essential oneness of the church in Jesus Christ is affirmed in the historic creeds (Carder [citing *The Book of Discipline* 2008: 41] 2009: 16-17).

In this way, Methodists historically perceive themselves as being open to diversity and encouraging the ability of individuals "to think and let think" (Carder 2009: 25). The Methodist tradition has encouraged continued investigations into the nature of God. However, this does not mean that there are no doctrinal parameters. Tolerance and theological diversity were expected but Wesley and other early Methodists believed in a "marrow" of Christian truth that must be conserved (Carder 2009: 25). Wesley was worried about the Church of England's ability to live out the basic religious beliefs. He worked to "translate the doctrines from the realm of abstract thinking and compartmentalized creedal formulations into the worldview, proclamation, and character of the people called Methodists" (Carder 2009: 25). Evangelization, holy living, and mission were the three major traditions Wesley emphasized (Carder 2009: 25).

The early Methodist movement was also a reform movement. It was the responsibility of the Methodists to spread the scripture over the land through "doctrinal interpretation, evangelical proclamation, discipleship formation, and social witness" (Carder 2009: 17). All of these things were vital to a relationship with God. The "plain doctrine and good discipline" is a good starting point for Spiritual renewal throughout the world, to "experience the justifying and sanctifying grace of God and encourage people to grow in the knowledge and love of God through the personal and corporate disciplines of the Christian life" (*The Book of Discipline* 2008: 45).

According to Carder, Methodists take their beliefs seriously; beliefs affect one's vision of one's self, his/her relationships with others, his/her relationships with the Earth and his/her relationships with God. Beliefs, seen in this way, shape whether we measure our worth based on knowledge, appearance, productivity, or through faith in the "infinite worth and dignity as sons and daughters of God" (Carder 2009: 26). Similarly, Carder maintains that beliefs can determine whether one see people as enemies or friends, "as a criminal deserving retribution or as a fellow sinner in need of forgiveness and restoration" (Carder 2009: 26). In addition, he thinks that beliefs can help one determine if the Earth is for people to exploit or if people should nurture and protect it for future generations, and beliefs can help one determine if God is cruel or loving, distant or present, concerned with limited populations or with everyone (26). Wesley wrote in a sermon:

> "[T]he merciful God regards the lives and tempers of men more than their ideas. I believe he respects the goodness of the heart rather than the clearness of the head; and that if the heart of a man be filled (by the grace of God, and the power of his Spirit) with the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man, God will not cast him into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels because his ideas are not clear, or because his conceptions are confused. Without holiness, I own, no man shall see the Lord; but I dare not add, or clear ideas" (Carder 2009: 27).

Wesley thought that beliefs shape action and that holy living consisted of faith and works, enacting faith and belief, proclamations of belief are not enough; having an intellectual belief in God is not the same as having faith in God (Carder 2009: 27; 29).

Within Methodist theology, there are four types of grace: the first three are based on individual actions – prevenient grace, justifying grace, sanctifying grace – and the last is based on the community's actions – glorifying grace (Carder 2009: 77-83). For United Methodists, the way to salvation is understood as through prevenient, or preventing, grace, the idea that God's grace comes before a belief in Christ. Prevenient grace is experienced as a growing sense of need

for God, it leads "to repentance, sorrow over sin and the realization that we are unable to save ourselves" (Campell 1999: 54-55). This can be contrasted with Calvin's theory of predestination – which is the idea that God has already decided that some people are to be saved and others are not. Wesley thought this idea of God was too monarchical and omnipresent; he believed God was more like a loving parent and that God would support human freedom by grace, everyone can be saved through belief (Jones 2002: 111). Wesley thought everyone is predestined to be saved only if they believe; there is no unconditional predestination to be found in the Bible (Jones 2002: 110).

This prevenient grace leads to a justifying grace which is seen as a faith in Christ and a forgiveness of sins; this second type of grace leads to a transformation of the self, a renewal of every aspect of life (Campell 1999: 56; Runyon 1998: 42-43). It is justifying grace that creates the community of Christians, those who believe in and trust Christ's sacrifice, "in which people are accepted and affirmed as children of God" (Carder 2009: 81). Sanctifying grace helps one become holy, increasing in knowledge and love of God. It enables one to attempt to attain Christian perfection, having love for God and neighbor and doing as Christ did. Wesley believed this perfection was attainable, to lose the desire to sin and only live in "God's light" (Carder 2009: 82).

Finally, glorifying grace is the belief in God's final reign of righteousness over evil and death. It depends on a community of believers and an entire transformation of humanity (Carder 2009: 84). Wesley's idea of grace has led to Methodist involvement in mission and social action; education, medical care, economic issues, political issues, and human rights concerns have all been taken up in Methodism in an attempt to bring about this new creation (Carder 2009: 84).

Wesley commanded that those who followed his Methodist agenda to go out into the world just as Jesus told his believers to do.

Wesley encouraged his followers to build plain meeting houses, limit expenditures to only the necessities, and give the rest to the poor. He believed that the more money one had, the further they drifted from grace; believers should live the lives of poor as Jesus did (Carder 2009: 33). According to the Gospel, Jesus tended to associate with outcasts, the sick, the poor, women, children, and disgraceful others. Though he is called the King of Kings now, on Earth, he led a life of poverty, practicing carpentry to help support his family. He also healed the sick, fed the hungry, raised the dead, and forgave people for their sins (Carder 2007: 47). Good discipleship enables one to give up his/her possessions and give money to the poor; according to Carder, people are a "means to God's ends, not the reverse. The church exists to fulfill God's mission rather than to further our narcissistic goals" (2009: 32-33). Carder warns that many contemporary churches fall into the trap of consumerism. The "gospel of prosperity" reigns; churches are measured through size and the self-described needs of participants. Carder thinks that many people join based on what the church can do for them and that evangelism becomes "a marketing strategy for the recruitment of members rather than the proclamation of the good news of God's redemptive action in Jesus Christ" (Carder 2009: 32). Discipline and mission are advertised alongside recreation and entertainment in the schedule of churches (Carder 2009: 32). For Wesley, "costly works," works of the spirit in repentance and faith, was the vital ingredient for Christian love; being and living in this way was the only way (Cobb 1995: 142)

Wesley's legacy seems to maintain the importance of faith and beliefs, prayer and reading/studying the Bible while also emphasizing actions, spreading God's love by giving time and money. Unfortunately, according to Cobb, many United Methodists are more like those in

the Church of England during Wesley's time, caught up the comfortable, middle-class, and secular lifestyle, not asking the deep, difficult theological questions unless crisis arrives (Cobb 1995: 15-16). Short-term mission work appears to create the perfect situation for all these things to occur for those Christians who do not choose ministry as their occupation but must spend some of their time working to support themselves, ignoring theological issues. During mission trips, members of the team spend much of their time working to help someone or a group of people, but the rest of the trip is often focused on fellowship. There are multiple devotionals throughout the day and conversation is often how on the work being done is related to God's greater plan.

During the trip home from Mexico, we learned through an email that Ellen received, that the annual conference decided to eliminate VIM and adult education; a move that John Wesley probably would not have supported. He was a big proponent of putting faith into action; mission work is one of the best ways to do that. The group, especially Ellen and Pastor Sam, was worried that mission work coming out of Louisiana will stagnate as people who could be interested in starting their own groups will not have the direction or resources to do it. Pastor Sam was also worried about the jobs that will be eliminated by this cut, the director of LAVIM, as a minister in the United Methodist Church will probably be able to return to preaching but the other members of the department might not be so lucky. The consensus was that local missions will probably not be affected but they also do not allow the same kinds of opportunities that missions abroad do – the brief immersion not only in another country but also in Christianity.

CHAPTER 3: WORKING IN MEXICO

When we arrived at our sites (including schools and churches within small communities) every morning at between eight and nine o'clock, we tried to set up as quickly in order to see as many people as possible before three o'clock in the afternoon. The first day we were at a two room school, Doctor María Sanchez was in one room examining patients and the rest of us were in the other room either checking people in (triage) or getting the medicines together and handing them out. The other two days we worked together in one room churches and everyone was together. Some people were able to sit inside but most people were forced to wait outside in the hot sun the entire time they waited for their turn. It had been awhile since the last team came and they did not know when the next team would come.

We had to work around Doctor María's schedule; she had to be back by three o'clock every day in order to get to her second job at the hospital where she worked until nine o'clock in the evening. Carlos mentioned that she did not have to work the second job but it was something she wanted to do. She had the ability and time to help, so she did. She saw between seventy and ninety people each day (and countless more at night when she left us), going through patients as quickly as she could while giving everyone the time that they needed. As the one giving out the medicine and telling every patient the instructions in Spanish, I had some idea of the various illnesses encountered that week. Many people, especially the little children, had infections and received antibiotics and cough medicine. Many of the older women had diabetes and high blood pressure; very few men came at all. A couple families had worms, and all the children of one woman had lice. Everyone received vitamins and toothbrushes with toothpaste; some only came for those things and others, well, I got quite a few toothless grins as I tried to hand them out.

In this chapter, I will focus on some of the issues and expectations that arise when discussing humanitarian work, maintaining a balance between getting work done, respecting those in need of help and understanding that they might not succeed in drastically changing the conditions of those they serve. As individuals, volunteers are often worried about what they will be faced with in the field. There are also concerns that arise when people from different cultures and classes interact in this way with one side helping the other. There are questions about what it means to do volunteer work and what it means to receive the benefits of that work. Everyone who gives time or donates money is interested in lives of those "less fortunate" and many expect something in return, whether it is a change in the circumstances of those less fortunate or the feeling of satisfaction, or spiritual renewal, from being able to "give back" to those in need.

According to anthropologist Omri Elisha in *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches*, evangelicals do a significant amount of mission outreach In this instance, evangelicals tend to be conservative and typically emphasize a personal relationship with God and introducing others to such a relationship (Elisha 2011: 119). Evangelical volunteers that Elisha worked with aim "to become better Christians through social outreach, to make other churchgoers better Christians through outreach mobilization, and to spread the gospel by 'sharing the love of Christ' with cultural strangers and disadvantaged people" (Elisha 2011: 119). The United Methodist Church is not an evangelical church; there is less of an emphasis on spreading the gospel, at least explicitly, with others. The emphasis is often on action. Mission workers of the UMC strive for spiritual fulfillment through missions and see it as part of what God calls all to do. Many would like for other Christians to mobilize, but as Ellen pointed out, she never wants to force someone come on a mission trip – it would be miserable. She wants a group of people that want to be there and feel called to be there. The

United Methodist church posits that the emphasis should be on showing, rather than sharing the love of Christ. Pastor Sam recounted a time when he was in Mexico and his hosts had him go door to door with a translator. While there, he offered to pray with or for them if they wanted him to. It was not a chance for him to evangelize to them but to make connections with the community in which his group was providing a building and show that God cares. We did the same thing through our medical aid; attempting to heal the sick in order to illustrate the love of God without the use of words. Ellen said that the sign of a successful mission trip to her was if one person felt the love of God in their lives and turned toward Him or renewed their faith in Him. Throughout the mission trip, people remarked that they hoped that the people who came through our clinic felt our love for them, God's love for them. This particular group understood that many of the people were Christians themselves and we did not need to witness to them.

For contemporary Christians, mission work, especially international mission work, involves getting out of one's "comfort zone." According to Omri Elisha, for evangelical Christians, this involves cross cultural exchanges, overcoming fears and prejudices in order to witness to people in unfamiliar settings (2011: 129). These evangelicals do not support the "prosperity gospel;" instead they critique materialism, using outreach to transcend the impulses and pressures of the consumer culture and to embrace the virtues of benevolence, and sacrifice (Elisha 2011: 122). Taking risks and making sacrifices is perceived as allowing for much greater spiritual growth than the safety of Church services and small groups which can result in complacency and being stuck "in a middle-class whale gut" as the story of Jonah warns (Elisha 2011: 128).

In the case of St. Peter's United Methodist Church, there was also another element to "getting out of our comfort zone." The mission group expected that, in Mexico, we would not

receive the comforts of our life back home. We were going to be staying in a large room with bunk beds, no air conditioning, and bathrooms outside. We would eat the same food that Mexican people ate. There would be a higher tolerance for the sticky heat that would sit in the school and churches where we worked, the smells wafting in from the outhouses with every breeze we were lucky to receive, and the dangerous van that not only had no air conditioning, but was lacking windows besides those in the front and back (contributing to car sickness for about half the volunteers) and whose unbolted seats threatened to toss their passengers to the other side with every bump and turn. Of course, there was some grumbling and complaining by all but everyone was able to work through her or his discomfort and focus on the task in which we all had to partake. There will always be a level of discomfort with aid work, whether it is physical, emotional, spiritual, or social and this is what helps keep the faithful away from "frivolous things" (Elisha 2011: 127-128). There is Biblical precedence for pursuing and accepting these conditions; Jesus said "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5 NRSV 2006[1989]). In addition Romans 5: 1-5 states:

> Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2]through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. [3]And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4]and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [5]and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us (NRSV 2006[1989]).

According to one of Elisha's informants, Pastor Tim, "When you get involved in the lives of the poor you experience the love of God in ways that you can never grasp in your West Knoxville soccer games and three-piece suits" (Elisha 2011: 129).

Such experiences and priorities can be illustrated in Dr. Christine Pascual's memoir *Out of My Comfort Zone: A Journey into the Medical Mission Field of Haiti* in which the medical

doctor chronicles her experience in Haiti after the earthquake of January 2010. She experiences a myriad of problems before even leaving the airport in Haiti, where airport workers "tried to give us the wrong bags [after the luggage was delayed], charged us for free carts, and threatened to tax our luggage" (Pascual 2012: 7). A couple, Kim and Preston, who she met when she arrived in Haiti would be staying for year and would be living in a twelve by twelve foot wooden box with a tin roof and plastic sheets for walls (Pascual 2012: 4). There is always an expectation during relief work that the conditions will not be ideal. Some mission workers, such as the team I went with, even express disappointment if the conditions are "too good" (which would probably be just "okay," "unimpressive" in the U.S.). For example, the air conditioned rooms we were with two sets of bunk beds and a bathroom where the sinks and shower (with its curtain) opened up into the room would probably not be considered luxury accommodations in the United States. However, in Mexico, the team is used to sleeping in a room with a series of bunk beds and an outdoor bathroom. For many, it is important for the resources to go to those in need and not for those who are volunteering. When Dr. Pascual did not immediately receive her luggage, she declared, "Who cares about our luggage? We want those meds and supplies" (Pascual 2012: 4). She has to treat patients in less than ideal "exam rooms" with dirt floors and sheets for doors. In one instance, all she has is a canvas tent that is basically a wind tunnel. She must speak through an interpreter. She has to diagnose illnesses that she has only read about, malaria and typhoid fever, elephantiasis and tracheoesophageal fistula (Pascual 2012: 11-12, 20). None of these conditions are ideal or even legal in the Unites States but when volunteering for aid work, especially medical, everyone tends to put up with more.

We did not have much interaction with the patients; I was the only one who knew any kind of Spanish and there was not a lot of time to do anything but getting people checked in

before seeing the doctor and handing out the medicine afterwards. I had similar feelings as Elisha, who states, "the ordeal they must have endured, I felt irrelevant and inconsequential in light of their pain" (Elisha 2011: 95). Here he is referring to victims of domestic abuse, but I think it applies equally to the communities of Reynosa, Mexico. According to Rose, the nurse in our group, the people were very sick; she saw lots of medicine for respiratory issues and fungal infections. Illnesses that might not be as big of a deal for most of us in America could be devastating for those in Mexico. The first time I told a mother, she needed to keep her child's medicine in a refrigerator, her face dropped; she did not say anything, she just took the medicine. Elisha felt "a deep sympathy…and a sense of personal satisfaction at having done something, however minor, for their benefit" (2011: 95). As the person handing out the medicine to every single person, I was their last stop and I was plagued by this fear that they would not understand me or would not be able to take the medicine properly for whatever reason; some medicine needed a refrigerator, other medicine needed water, good, clean water and some people, mostly women, needed to keep track of half a dozen or more different diagnoses, treatments, and children. Most people seemed grateful for the medicine but some seemed confused and others just seemed ill, tired, and overwhelmed. I was the only one who was overly worried about the patients taking their medicine. Rose was very optimistic; she thought everyone could follow the doctor's instructions. The only person she did not think could be helped was a man who had had a farming accident that tore up his foot; he had to wait three or four days for the clinic. Rose said it was infected beyond repair. He would either lose the foot or die. We gave him antibiotics for the infection and he was told to go to a hospital as soon as he could.

There can often be a disconnect in aid work, wherein it fails to meet all the needs of a desperate community in which activism, food, money, and medicine are all needed but they are

not, or cannot, all be achieved (Farmer 2003: 9-10). A dilemma for aid and development projects is finding the balance between outsiders doing things themselves, meeting the needs of the community now, and building up infrastructure that would allow the people to solve their own problems (Smillie 2001: 1). However, according to Ian Smillie, an international development practitioner and writer, when the focus is on the latter, the opposite tends to occur. Outside groups coming in to help build self-sufficiency through training, research, and building often decide what is needed and how it is going to be accomplished (Smillie 2001: 8-9). This leads to greater dependency of impoverished peoples; they start out on unequal footing, have no way to address the needs they think are most important and are never able to take control of the organization of aid (Smillie 2001: 9). This problem is illustrated by the situation in Bosnia, two years after the Dayton Peace Accords, in which NGOs were still trying to handle "enormous psychosocial upheaval, feeding programs for refugees, [and] reconstruction of homes" (Smillie 2001: 17). Local organizations were obliged to conform to outsiders' standards and requirements; each outside donor had its own format for proposals and very few would accept anything in the Bosnian language (Smillie 2001: 18). Even if local communities received aid, and the relief organization stays long enough to help, it can often take 15-20 years to see any major change. Many organizations and aid workers still have issues of not attempting to understand local cultures or their coping mechanisms (Smillie 2001:18-20).

Organizations, such as CARE (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere), slowly learned the importance of devoting enormous amounts of time and cooperation to relief and development work, according to Ian Smillie and, Yugoslavian journalist and founder of the Bosnian NGO Foundation, Goran Todorovic. "One-year" projects usually take more than two or three years (Smillie and Todorovic 2001: 41). Medical aid takes an indefinite amount of time;

there will always be sick people who do not have the resources to treat themselves, in economically vulnerable regions. Cooperation refers not to members within the organization but between different cultural groups, local organizers and foreign volunteers, or foreign organizations and local workers. Local associations often have a better idea of "its own needs and its own time frame" (Smillie and Todorovic 2001: 41).

In his book, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*, anthropologist Paul Farmer attended a gender workshop in Guatemala taught by two women from the capital city. The exercise seemed demeaning, "the participants, having survived genocide and displacement, were now being treated like children" as they sat in children's desks and used crayons to depict scenes from their childhood (Farmer 2003: 3-4). In her essay, "The Political Economy of 'Trauma' in Haiti in the Democratice Era of Insecurity," ethnographer activist Erica Capel James discusses how victims of state-sponsored violence in Haiti had to search for assistance from a variety of governmental and nongovernmental agencies and constantly perform their suffering for recognition in the institutions (James 2004: 128-129). They were responding to an agenda laid out by the capital and, while it might not have done any harm, it certainly was not very helpful (Farmer 2003: 4).

Kathy Mangones, a former NGO director and consultant in Haiti, addressed food shortages in Haiti, recommending that outsiders should build the local partnerships, address needs identified by their recipients and enhance their cultural understanding but also to practice more flexibility when it comes to assistance (2001: 72). The goal of all is to get the aid to those who need it and rules and regulations can be deterrents and cause more suffering. Since the group with which I traveled with was a religious organization which has an established partnership with an organization in Mexico, we did not have to worry about the red tape. The

partnership works because both sides have an idea of what their government allows them to do. In addition, by allowing Juan to be in charge of deciding what is needed, the group did not have to worry about bringing useless, unwanted items. That does not mean that the situation within the community was turned around but the medicine that people desperately need was making it into their hands. There has been some attempt to teach people about their diseases; people in the local organization have prepared and given information to patients based on their individual needs such as pamphlets on diabetes and high blood pressure. Patients are not required to consume the information in order to receive the medicine nor is there any expectation that people will be able to change their habits. At this point, the focus for both the Mexican and American United Methodist church groups is on informing the community about their health; maybe someday there will be a next step.

As anthropologist Erica Bornstein notes, in *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Dehli*, in terms of giving, there is always the fear that whatever is given will be misused; it is up to the receiver to be worthy of the gift and the giver to be sure that the gift is given to the right recipient at the appropriate time (Bornstein 2012: 63). Elisha uses the term "accountability" to describe the responsibility of the receiver to live up to the support they receive. For some mission work, especially regular long term work with the same people, volunteers might expect to see change in the lives of those they help. They may expect changes in behavior or circumstances but sometimes feel "'burned' by people who 'choose' to remain on destructive paths and refuse to accept responsibility" (Elisha 2011: 162). Many people who do mission work want to be compassionate but feel "used" or deceived for the resources they provide. The work to enforce accountability to avoid "enabling sin" (159). There are always people to take

advantage of charity but sometimes people are rejected due to a volunteer's suspicion when they are in real and sincere need (Elisha 2011: 163).

As Bornstein admits, "some might argue that charity is a means of reproducing inequality" especially when giving is a donation and givers do not have any control over what happens to their gift once given (Bornstein 2012: 18). Gifts, such as those to NGOs, can be used to control populations, assert power, and reinforce inequality; there is an inherent hierarchy when it comes to NGOs (Bornstein 2012: 52; Mosse 2005: 20). At the state level, aid is given to nations based on "demonstrable commitment and past performance" shifting the focus from gift to contract (Mosse 2005: 3). There is an expectation when giving to NGOs; donors believe that inequalities will be overcome but there is rarely a discourse that would help this happen. Gifts become accountable. On the flip side, in India, where Erica Bornstein did research, there are times and places where giving is seen by Indians as an obligation and no thank you is required or even wanted. A British woman was confused by her driver who refused to say thank you for all the little gifts she gave him but he had perceived these "gifts" as her duty as an employer to keep the relationship strong (Bornstein 2012: 13). Bornstein habitually thanked her mother in law for bringing her tea in the afternoon while she was writing until her mother in law started to say thank you as she brought the tea, "in India, donors are grateful to recipients for receiving their gifts " (2012: 14). In this society, when things are given with selfish expectations (such as salvation) the gift becomes polluted; it is not very good charity. Similarly, there should be no expectation of return, no obligations be placed on the recipient.

In the West, religious giving, termed "donation," often involves the donor being in control of, wanting to know where his/her money went; for Hindus in India, "gifts" become detached from the giver who has no control of and no desire to know what is done with his/her

money (Bornstein 2012: 30-31). These two cases illustrate two opposing ideas when it comes to aid and gift giving. On the one hand, gift giving is thought of as reciprocal and socially obligated as seen with Elisha's evangelical givers (Mauss 1967[1925]: 11). This can be seen less as giving and charity and more as debt and credit (Bornstein 2012: 33). Failure to reciprocate is the equivalent of friendship; gifts are "a pattern of spiritual bonds between things which are to some extent parts of persons" (Mauss 1967[1925]: 11) On the other hand, there is the notion of a pure gift, as described by Bornstein, which expects nothing in return, not bound by regulation or obligation (Bornstein [citing Derrida 1992] 2012: 32-33). Giving in this sense is greatest when anonymous, giving without any reward or recognition, or impulsive, giving without even thinking (Bornstein 2012: 33). In Mexico, the mission team is somewhere in between these two opposing ideas. There is nothing expected in return for our gifts and services from those benefitting from them; instead, the gift that is received is a spiritual gift. Mission work brings one closer to God and feelings of spiritual renewal which is enough for many mission participants.

Fortunately, for the Mexico mission trip, we did not have to worry about the motivations of people we saw. Like Dr. Pascual, in Haiti, our group did not make faith a condition of their treatment. Although Pascual did "pass along" the Word of God, through her words and good deeds, it was up to the patients to take it or leave it (Pascual 2012: 16-17). There is no way to hold either party accountable for getting things done. We help them as best we can and they get their medicine and take it any way they can. One woman in our group, Donna, mentioned that some people do not take their vitamins properly or sell them but that does not mean vitamins will stop being given. There was only one woman that group members were suspicious of and that was because she told us she was from South Texas and was in Reynosa visiting her mother with

her grandchildren and that they had come to pick up toothbrushes because the boys had forgotten theirs. It did not appear that they were unable to pay for their own toothbrushes and in theory, they could have taken them from children who really needed them. We did not dwell on that, we had plenty of extras and she did help us when we were looking for people who had not heard their name called. There was no way we would run out of toothbrushes. I think after ten years, Ellen had built a strong relationship with Juan to the extent that she did not worry about anyone's motivations. So little had changed in the ten years that the church has been sending groups, it was important for her to emphasize that what we do is take care of the needs of the moment and we will probably never see any kind of result to the work done. There are issues in Mexico that prevent drastic positive changes in the lives of its citizens.

For the most part, the organization with which we worked, Manos de Ayuda, has been successful when working with American Christian mission teams. They helped to set everything up, planning the meals, deciding where we would be working, and making a list of desired supplies. Our job was to decide when to arrive and to gather and bring the supplies. In the past, a few years ago, before a perceived increase in violence in the borderlands between Texas and Mexico as well as the coverage in American newspapers of the reported brutality, some groups were not even able to decide the dates of their mission trip. The organization would book up quickly, especially during the summer. In 2008, when Ellen forgot to contact Juan about going to Mexico, she only secured a spot because of her own, and the church's relationship, with him. Every month, the people in Mexico would take a week off from hosting mission groups; Ellen's was able to take that week. In 2012, about half of the available spaces were empty. Many of the groups who used to do work with Manos de Ayuda have not been since 2010 or 2011, often citing the threat of violence as their reasoning.

This brought out one of the main bones of contention that manifested itself during the mission trip between the mission coordinator and another United Methodist church group. This was a construction group that tended to plan everything out and inform the Mexican organization what it was going to do. For Juan, the mission groups provided an opportunity for both sides to come together and to give people in the community a chance for work. This group had rejected the Mexican cooks by bringing their own American cook. In their minds, they were giving an older American man the opportunity to come on a mission trip and have something to do. To Juan, they were depriving local people of a vital source of income. With the decrease in mission groups, there has been a greater financial strain. Juan also mentioned that the church this group was from was responsible for the building we were staying at. It was a gorgeous building but it was not built like the Mexican people would have done it; it also required more upkeep. The structure had air conditioning throughout, and multiple kitchens and bathrooms. It was an enormous building with significant electricity and water bills. The Mexican organization was grateful for all that this particular church had done for them, contributing support, time and effort, for many years even in dangerous periods but Juan wished that they could have allowed the Mexican side more input. Rose did not think that Juan should have shared this story with our group as she viewed it as inappropriate to complain about one group to another even when couched in praise for our group. This group was not like the other group and Juan wanted us to know that he appreciated our attitude when it came to working with himself and his team.

According to Elisha, volunteers should understand that when doing any kind of volunteer or missionary work, whether it is in one's local community or abroad, volunteers are there to serve someone else's needs (2011: 95). The church group from St. Peter's UMC let the organization leaders take care of our schedule, where and when we worked, ate, and slept. We

brought the things that the ministry most needed, mostly vitamins and school supplies. Mission trips are about helping to get something done that the people there do not have the resources or abilities to do. In this situation, the patients seen in Reynosa did not have the money to buy the necessary medicine and often lived too far away from the free clinic to visit it. We were able to provide financial support to the clinic and give our time to bring the medicine to the community. The ministry coordinator, Juan, praised us for our ability to let go of the control that other church groups have needed. There were some groups who wanted to tell the ministry what they were going to do and how they wanted to do it. The being said, Rose thought we should have had more control. Her biggest issue was transportation, citing her years as a trauma nurse; she was very uncomfortable with the unbolted seats and no seatbelts, on the highway especially. Rose regretted not refusing to get in the first day because she was confident that other people would have followed her lead. She believed that what Juan thought of some of the other groups was true about him, he and the other leaders wanted to have everything their own way.

Often, on our side, we are looking for an "experience," one that stands out, disrupts from the normal, everyday routine, that is selfless, and needs to be shared (Bornstein 2012: 113). Steve Harris, in particular, stated that his goal for this trip was a spiritual renewal; in fact, Ellen was unsure if she would put a team together until Steve expressed interest and need to do something. Going on mission trips, people want to help those in need but they also feel called to do and want to feel that closeness to God when they do it. Juan's ultimate vision for his ministry is of a completely integrated group, with Americans and Mexicans working side by side, building construction projects and giving out medicine in the community. He is trying to combat this idea that Americans are the givers and the Mexicans are the receivers. He has had problems recruiting local community members because of this idea; they do not always believe that they

are supposed to do the volunteer work. Juan is looking for both sides to become attached so that the want to give and help each other remains strong; so that one side would not just stop giving their time, energy, and money which this community desperately needs. Volunteer work that involves more than just writing a check helps to ensure continued support (Bornstein 2012: 124). It is harder to ignore suffering when it is standing in front of you.

Steve tried to hand out candy that first day, and was quickly told it was a bad idea but it was too late. He had handed out a few pieces (most of what he had) and the kids were already swarming. He had to admit to them that there was nothing left. The second day, we came prepared with crayons and sheets of paper for the children who were waiting in the hot sun. Each child received one crayon and one coloring sheet and they were able to trade with each other when they need a new color. On the last day, we set everything out since we did not need to save any for another day. The children again went crazy for the treasures and many hoarded as much as they could so that it would last long after we were gone and they did not know when the next team would come.

CHAPTER 4: MISSION SELVES

In Mexico, Rose becomes Rosa and she says she puts up with more in Mexico than she would in Louisiana. She endures the stifling heat and the unpleasant smells wafting in from the outhouses. She deals with somewhat dangerous transportation. She accepts that the conditions of the clinics would not be adequate in the United States but are fine in Mexico. Rose made a comment about how much she enjoyed it whenever someone from Mexico said her name, pronouncing it "Rosa" and rolling the r. In this chapter, I will examine the "mission self" – what it means to be on a mission, what is expected of mission members, and how team members present themselves and conceptualize their time abroad based on this idea of the mission identity.

The Self

Erving Goffman developed the idea of the dramaturgical model[iv], which highlights "how individuals, social groups, and institutions manage information in order to present a particular impression to those with whom they interact" (Howson 2004: 18). Goffman was interested in the roles that people inhabit as an entry into the discussion of identity, declaring "They [observers] can also assume from past experience that only individuals of a particular kind are likely to be found in a given social setting. They can rely on what the individual says about himself or on documentary evidence he provides as to who and what he is" at that specific time and place (Goffman 1959: 1-2). Goffman explains that individuals control who they wish their audience to think them to be, giving an impression based on their interests (Goffman 1959: 2). The audience also plays a role, giving their own impressions based on their interests so that different situations necessitate different roles, for instance the relationship between friends versus the relationship between a server and a customer, etc. Goffman wanted to analyze the different roles, different

performances of the self, that people embody when they are faced with different situations and audiences (1959: 4).

In her ground-breaking book *Gender Trouble,* Judith Butler, took Goffman's ideas further; the production of self is not only dependent upon the other people present and the role meant to be played. Rather, the self is regulated by certain structures "by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with those structures" (Butler 1990: 3). For example, a "subject" does not merely stand before the law but is also constituted by the law "as the fictive foundation of its own claim to legitimacy" (Butler 1990: 4). Gender, race, ethnicity, class, and regional modalities are all constituted and produced identities (Butler 1990: 4). At the same time, identities are produced and disappear depending of the context and in order to meet specific aims; identities are open ended and allow for multiple "convergences and divergences" (Butler 1990: 21-22). In addition, as Etter-Lewis points out, when it comes to experiences, there can be multiple causes and effects caused by the multiples social roles one is acting out at any given time (1991: 56). Gender, according to Butler, along with other facets of identity, is performative, "always a doing…performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 1990: 34).

Further, Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis points out that there is no "norm" of the self, in particular, that no "single male [or female] voice has the power and authority to represent others, regardless of race or gender" (1991: 43). Multiple and different accounts of individuals must be take into account and told (Etter-Lewis 1991: 43). Chantal Mouffe elaborates that women do not need one coherent identity; deconstructing essentialized identities is "the necessary condition for an adequate understanding of the variety of social relations" (1992: 371). People are constituted by multiple "subject positions" that are never fixed; the identity of "such a multiple and

contradictory subject is therefore always contingent and precarious, temporally fixed at the intersection of those subject positions and dependent on specific forms of identification" making it impossible to speak of subjects as one unified entity (Mouffe 1992: 372). However, despite this, the use of notions like "women," "men," "working class," or "mission workers" can still be useful; the unity of these groups is based on the "partial fixation of identities" (Mouffe 1992: 373). Dorinne Kondo agrees, commenting that identity becomes "spatialized as a series of shifting nodal points constructed in and through field of power and meaning" (1997: 32). There is no "true" identity but "selves" that are open to the forces of the world, historical, cultural, political, geographical etc., "complicated and enlivened by multiplicity and ambiguity" (Kondo 1997: 32, 36-38).

Identity then is a production, a process that is never complete (Hall 1990: 222); this includes the mission/Christian identity. Cultural theorist Stuart Halls acknowledges that cultural identity is a state of "being" but it is also a state of "becoming" (1990: 225). Kondo elaborates that identity is something that humans can "create, construct, work on, and enact" (1990: 48). The mission trip is an ideal context for the participant to work on his or her self. In between mission trips, life happens and identities face changes and struggles, affected by place, time, situation and history (Hall 1990: 225, Kondo 1997: 47). By the time of the next mission trip, mission members have new perspectives and will be affected in new ways.

Meeting at the church prior to the team's departure to Mexico, the parking lot and narthex were bustling with people making sure the team was prepared and everyone ready to go. The seven team members were easy to identify in their green shirts and bright rainbow lanyards with their names printed on tags. Orange ribbons went on the suitcases, the departing prayer was said,

bags and mission members were loaded on the van to be whisked to the airport and eventually Mexico, nobody encountered would have to wonder where they were going or why.

Sociologist Alexandra Howson describes, in her book *The Body in Society: An Introduction,* the ways in which the body can be expressive; clothes are the main disseminator of outward expressions of the self. They depict the status of the wearer, going so far as to differentiate those with access to power and those without (Howson 2004: 73). Clothes can also create a form of collective identity, such as with working-class boys in post-war Britain, who used dress "to create a sense of resistance not only to adult authority but also to capitalist culture" and the hippie movement of the 1970s and grunge movement of the 1990s in the United States (Howson 2004: 109-110). Each group had its own recognizable style that illustrated the wearers' involvement with the movement, and that they agreed with and followed the views of that movement. Similarly, missions often include some identifying shirt that team members wear. It is practical; it makes it easier to keep track of people when everyone is dressed the same. It is also a statement of identity. The shirts we wore proclaimed "Christian Love in Action/Amor Cristiano en la Acción" across the back along with the United Methodist emblem of the cross and flame; on the front was the logo for the Louisiana Volunteers in Mission (VIM). The shirts characterize the team as a religious mission team, as a United Methodist mission team.

Along with the outward physical signs of identity, mission members are expected to act in certain ways. Everyone on the team signs a document agreeing to this VIM mission covenant:

> UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION
> I realize that the following commitment is crucial to the effectiveness, quality, and positive expression of our mission together. As a participating member of the "United Methodist Volunteers In Mission" (sic) team, I agree to:
> 1. Lift up Jesus Christ with my thoughts, words, and actions.*
> 2. Develop and maintain a servant attitude toward the people our team serves, as well as toward each team member.

3. Pray for and support my team leader and his/her decisions.
4. Respect the host's religious views, realizing that different people have different expressions of faith.
5. Accept the ministry that is going on in the area where I am serving as well as the local approach to the mission, though it may differ from my own approach.
6. Strive for harmony among team members, hosts, and people of the hosts' society, keeping in mind local conditions and customs. To do this, I will follow the teachings of Christianity, the Golden Rule, and local societal customs and laws; avoid local taboos; use common sense and good judgment in all things; be considerate, tolerant, and patient with other customs, beliefs, and needs; and generally set a good Christian example.
7. Abstain from using alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and profanity; wearing inappropriate clothing; and engaging in other objectionable behavior, from the time of my departure until my return home.
8. Refrain from negativism and complaining. Travel and ministry outside my church may present unexpected and even undesired circumstances. However, my support and creativity will improve the situation.
9. Refrain from gossip. If it is not true, good, and positive, I will not say it.
10. Remember that I am a servant of Jesus Christ called to be in ministry with the host team. I will serve as best I can so that both the spiritual purpose and the task of the mission will be accomplished.
* Volunteers who desire to serve in an emergency or chronic disaster setting are asked to show their faith and love by what they do, not by what they say. It is important to be extremely sensitive to the mission context. Proselytizing, converting others to United Methodism, preaching, and praying publicly are inappropriate. (LAVIM Mission Covenant)

In addition, the United Methodist Church Mission website recommends that while on the mission trip, there is adequate time devoted to daily devotionals, team meetings and group processing of events, prayer before every workday starts, and reflections on cultural differences. It also encourages patience and flexibility ("Guidelines for Sending Volunteers in Mission" 2013). The construction of the mission self is rooted in putting these guidelines into action and adopting the recommended attitude for dealing with every situation that comes up between airport and airport or church parking lot and home. As seen in the last chapter, handing out the medication and vitamins is one aspect of it but the rest of the trip emphasized devotion and cultivated community between the team members and occasionally someone from the outside visiting.

Often when an issue arose, such as the day a miscommunication left us without lunch, Ellen, as team leader, would make sure that Carlos, our guide, knew and would be able to take care of it. While some on the team wanted her to make a bigger deal out of unpleasant situations, Ellen always kept her cool, would often shrug and say it is a mission trip, things go wrong and we just have to go with it. The only time that she became somewhat upset was when one of the team members discovered that a backpack was missing. When we had arrived in Texas, before going over the border, we bought the ten backpacks and school supplies that Juan, the mission coordinator, had requested. Once in Mexico, we packed the school supplies in the bags for Juan to give to some of the schoolchildren in the area. A woman who worked in the office had asked for one but was told that she needed to see Juan about it. The next day, we were short one backpack, along with the supplies that were in it. Everyone was a little upset because it was something that would not be easy to replace and someone on the Mexican side of the mission had violated their own protocols. Still, Ellen said she would tell Juan about it and let him take care of it; it was not something to make a huge deal about. It can be hard for some to follow the recommendations of mission behavior at times, times when people did not want to be patient or flexible, but under Ellen's leadership, things went smoothly and we were praised for our ability to adjust and listen to our Mexican hosts. Our actions, over the individual feelings and attitudes of group members, spoke volumes to Juan.

According to anthropologist Brian Howell, in his essay "The Repugnant Cultural Other Speaks Back: Christian Identity as Ethnographic 'Standpoint,'" belief is not central to Christian identity or practice. It is the practice, which illustrates internalized believing, that is the prevailing identifier of Christianity, emphasizing "the centrality of embodied experiences of commitment above, or at least alongside, affirmations of specific doctrinal or theological

positions" (Howell 2007: 379). This is seen most often with non-Western Christians but is present with Western Christians, especially Protestants, as well. Often beliefs can only be considered sincere when they are backed up through physical manifestations (Howell 2007: 380). In Thomas Kirsh's research, for Zambian Christians, belief was not acted out as part of their identity but "had a certain performative power directed at 'the outside world'" (Howell [citing Kirsh 2004: 700] 2009: 379). For Evangelical Christians in North America, and for Pentecostals in particular, belief is only valid alongside physical manifestations. For the Christians of Baguio that Howell studied with, shared beliefs "could only be considered valid in the presence of physical comportment, social location and interests" (2007: 379). It is probable that every mission team member in Mexico believes in the message of United Methodism but this is not guaranteed; the majority of the tenets listed by the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission have to do with how mission member present themselves outwardly and little to do with inner beliefs.

Goffman considered the performances that people use every day to present their various identities; however, he also admitted that it is more difficult to ascertain the belief behind the performance (1959: 10-11). Goffman asserts that a performer "implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them," that they believe the character and his or her qualities as they are performed (1959: 10). Goffman turns this around in order to examine the performer's own belief. The two extremes include, on the one hand, being completely convinced that the reality presented is real and, on the other hand, having no belief in his or her act. The latter may have no concern with what the audience believes or he or she might be "deluding his audience for what he considers to be their own good, or for the good of the community, etc." (Goffman 1959: 10-11). Goffman points out those in service occupations, such

as doctors who give out placebos or those who check the tire pressure at filing stations for anxious drivers, as people who might usually be sincere but sometimes must delude others (1959: 11). However, whether cynic or believer, these positions are not static and people can move and oscillate from one state of believing to another. Cynics often begin just by playing a role, wearing the "mask" of whatever they are supposed to or trying to embody (Goffman 1959: 11-12). Eventually, this role might become second nature and a part of his or her personality. For example, Goffman did a study of the island of Shetland; the owners of the tourist hotel had to "set aside their own conceptions as to how life ought to be led, displaying in the hotel a full round of middle-class services and amenities" (Goffman 1959: 12). Eventually, the owners became less cynical and started embracing the middle-class lifestyle and who their clients thought they were (Goffman 1959: 12).

Donna took extensive pictures of the building that served as out accommodations in an attempt to persuade people who normally do not want to come on mission trips because of the perceived inferior living arrangements to come on future trips; we stayed in a very nice place with many bedrooms, air conditioning, hot water, and indoor toilets. The group normally stays in one or two large rooms with no air conditioning and must go to another building for the showers and bathrooms. Donna's intention was much like Goffman's discussion of the cynic turned believer (Goffman 1959: 12). She thought that the nice accommodations would persuade people to come and later, they would be won over to the mission experience after seeing everything else that goes on, all the people that are helped through the mission team's support. Ellen did not agree with Donna's plan because she preferred people who really wanted and felt called to be there; the residence might be nice but the places we worked at were not as luxurious. She did not want to spend a mission trip with people who came for the wrong reasons, complained all the

time, and ruined it for the others. Personal beliefs are important but it is vital to the team that everyone acts somewhat sincerely. The people that went were more likely to complain that the rooms were too nice and we should be roughing it more, to experience something closer to what Mexico is really like. Sara thought that the Mexican organization had Americanized the accommodations to attract people but that people who come on mission trips should not experience the amenities they are used to.

Narrative Theory

Psychologist Jerome Bruner, in his essay "The Narrative Construction of Reality," explores the idea of narrative – stories, myths, reasons for doing or not doing, etc – as the main facilitator of a person's experiences and memory, "not only of representing but of constituting reality" (1991: 4-5). The stories people tell have almost as much to do with their identity as the performances they give. In "Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions in Context," Brian Howell argues that for many short term mission groups, the "trips are 'not about the destination;'" this is done by decontextualizing and creating commonalities between different places and experiences. This happens in four ways (2009: 206).

First, according to Howell, participants of short-term missions try to distinguish these trips from tourism which ends up compromising how the teams view and conceptualize their destinations. This is done by focusing on motives which are theological and which "hold out long-term benefits for both the receiving and the sending groups" by challenging the group to make a difference (Howell 2009: 206). Touristic impulses are quashed, cultural particularities are deemphasized and locations become generic. Short-term missions become the same no matter

the location: “Europe is the secular Other; developing countries are undifferentiatedly ‘poor;’ urban life, particularly black urban life, is the chaotic ‘inner city’” (Howell 2009: 206).

Second, the missionary call in these cases also works against context of a particular location. Howell maintains that “the specifics of the location is seen, whether consciously or not, as virtually incompatible with the language of call, of service, and ultimately of mission as embraced by short-term missions” (2009: 206). Sacrificial languages discourage the expression of enthusiasm about the possible educational or cultural benefits of a trip; mission participants uphold a “willingness to be flexible and available and…an indifference to the destination [so that] it becomes difficult for members of the teams to ponder the contextual particularities of a trip or to think about reasons other than meeting spiritual or physical needs why they might choose one country over another.” (Howell 2009: 206-210). Those that Howell interviewed often did not care where they went as long as they are where God wants them to be and they are doing missions; none linked their desire to a particular destination (2009: 210).

Third, the meaning of the mission “often leads to a mission based on plight and need” (Howell 2009: 206). Participants were encouraged to focus on a specific task to meet the needs of those people “out there” emphasizing what they could bring to a place lacking something (Howell 2009: 207). Every mission became “a movement from plenty to want, from have to have-not, from wealth to poverty…plight-based ministry” (Howell 2009: 207). Finally, then, visual representations after the short-term mission trips, which create a connection between the congregation and the participants, create a further distancing of the Other and a continuing de-contextualization of the place (Howell 2009: 206). Their pictorial narratives usually unfold chronologically from coming down in the plane to “pictures of luggage being moved, the home where the team stayed, and the team working, ending with multiple pictures of the team

surrounded by those served, particularly groups of smiling children" (Howell 2009: 207). There is a purpose to these pictures and their framing, often to highlight the need and poverty witnessed. This leads to standardized presentations of images from Rural Ghana to urban Mexico to semi-urban Dominican Republic to Chicago which all become general "missions" (Howell 2009: 207).

I believe that most of these issues are more complex in the situation that I encountered; while there is definitely a motivation to distinguish the mission from mere tourism, this distinction has less to do with a de-emphasis of location and more to do with other church goers' attitudes. For example, some members of the church do not want to support, financially, what they basically see as a vacation, an opportunity for a good time on the church's dime. Sara does call the mission trip a vacation but not in the way that is often assumed by the word vacation, saying, "I go on a mission to do service to others and have my spiritual walk with Christ grow stronger. Mission[s] are fun and feel like a vacation, but I go with a job to do and not just to relax."

I do agree with Howell that the mission often involves carrying out an assigned task that can subordinate the connection to a particular location, in order to "meet needs 'out there,'" but this does not have to mean that the location becomes completely unimportant or meaningless (2009: 207). Everyone on our trip chose to go to Mexico and many were on their second or third trip; the destinations were not generic places of need, most of the group reminisced about past trips, remembering a couple of the clinic sites and some of the people they saw in the past.

It is true that when preparing for mission trips, there is little to nothing done to teach participants about the culture or history of the country they will be encountering, which is something that would probably be very beneficial for those going on the trip (Howell 2009: 208).

However, it does not mean that those who go on missions are completely ignorant or uninterested in the culture of their destination. In their own way, mission members stressed their interest in, and appreciation of, Mexican culture. One of the things many of the team members emphasized while we were there was the importance of eating real Mexican food and getting a taste of how people live in Mexico, experiencing their lifestyle. During this particular trip, we basically had Mexican meals, at least for dinner; our lunches were bag lunches, consisting mainly of ham and cheese or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches along with chips. This was acceptable for everyone because time constraints made it difficult for a more elaborate meal. However, one year, they were served chicken fried steak; whether it was good or not was not really the focus. It was disappointing to that group because what they wanted was "authentic" Mexican food, not Mexican versions of American food that they could have anytime. The most impressive meal that was cooked for us (not at a restaurant) was the tamale night; the cook had brought her own pot from home and spent much of the day working on it. Steve was a little disappointed when the cooks took the leftovers with them because he had enjoyed it so much. Even though everyone wanted an "authentic" Mexican culinary experience, it was interesting that only one of the restaurants we visited had more than two or three groups, including us (although it was two o'clock in the afternoon while we were at one of them but there were still a number of people loitering around the entrance who did not come in); the one that was busy was on the major shopping strip in a different town from the community we had been staying in. The food we got at these places might have been out of the price range of the very people the group wanted to experience.

In addition, the United Methodist Church recommends, and many mission groups spend, one or two days in the host country they visit doing tourist things such as going to museums,

seeing the sites, shopping at local markets, and eating at local restaurants. This is in an attempt to get the teams to appreciate the culture and learn something about it. On the last day in Mexico, Juan drove us around the area, wanting us to see where wealthy Mexicans live. He told us a little about their neighborhoods; they always build a giant fence first to make it more difficult for thieves to steal the valuable building supplies. The tops of many of the fences were made out of wrought iron and into points that would easily impale someone trying to maneuver around it suspiciously. The houses themselves were grand compared to the houses that we passed on the way to all of our sites, which consisted of rows and rows of tiny, one story, possibly one or two room houses or casitas on dirt roads with little difference in the color of the ground outside and color of the structures. These grand houses we saw would not have looked out of place in a wealthy neighborhood of downtown Houston. They are set off, closed off and protected; perhaps he was trying to show us the stark contrast of these houses in comparison with the neighborhoods we had visited. In addition, he had stressed earlier the importance of everyone in a community needing to come and work together; in our case, it was the spiritual community from two different physical communities that he wanted to partner up to help the Mexican one materially and medically. After that excursion, we spent the next a few hours at a popular shopping area. Everyone bought their special Mexican items. Sara bought two giant bottles of real vanilla while Rose and Donna got some very inexpensive prescription medicines; Ellen bought some clothes and I got a ceramic turtle.

Mission Narratives

Psychologist Jerome Bruner describes the particularity of storytelling; there are genres that stories fall into. For example, the "boy-meets-girl" scripts require gift giving – flowers,

perfume, or whatever. This particularity can also make the narrative generic, enabling a sort of "embeddedness" that allows for "narrative particulars [that] can be 'filled in' when they are missing from an account" (Bruner 1991: 6-7). Mission narratives can be categorized as a "type" of story in this way even when certain particulars are missing.

These narratives can be used in the search for meaning making – "'why' the story is told how and when it is, and interpreted as it is" (Bruner 1991: 10). They are not just thrown out there but serve a purpose and need to be interpreted. Interpreting these stories involves knowing the intention and the background knowledge of the storyteller and audience; in this case both are Americans with a background in United Methodism (Bruner 1991: 10). Whichever way one constructs her or his mission narrative, it is clear that the intention is to explain why the individual came to mission work and why she or he keeps coming back year after year or whenever she or he can. Though the stated purpose of mission work is often a construction project or medical job that church members are able to work on, the deeper meaning relates to how people attending them will benefit; they get something out of it, a feeling, a transformation, the trips themselves create meaning for the lives of participants. An important point to make about these narratives of mission is that while a mission will inspire a sort of transformation, it does not mean that after one trip, the participant maintains this spiritual high. As Steve's statements about needing spiritual renewal often illustrate, there is a need to come back again and again.

Mission members often describe why they do mission work as well as their expectations before the trips and the outcomes after the trips. This mission narrative almost always starts with a sort of calling, "Jesus said we should do this." Biblically, Jesus says "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39 NRSV 2006[1989]). He also says:

> Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;[35]for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink… [37]Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?[40]And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt. 25:34-35, 37,40 NRSV 2006[1989])

For many, these are the Biblical callings to mission action but there is often also a personal calling when people feel like they are supposed to do something or go somewhere. Ellen did not feel that Cuba was where she was supposed to go but that Mexico was. Reverend Adam Hamilton said during the National Prayer Service that "it's time we stop giving out of charity and start giving of our time, money, and efforts out of a missional calling. It's easy to give out of a sense of liberal guilt – giving a little to others because it makes us feel better for having so much. If we are to be the church, then we are to go to the margins of society and live there with the people" (Gosden 2013). Reverend Ellen Blue said of her own mission calling that it was from reading things like "a biography of Jane Addams, who founded the Hull House settlement in Chicago, and a young adult novel about nurse Sue Barton set in the Henry Street Settlement in New York City" (Jacobs 2013).

As far as the "missionary call" goes, as described by Howell, "[f]ocus on the specifics of the location is seen, whether consciously or not, as virtually incompatible with the language of call, of service, and ultimately of mission as embraced by short-term missions" (Howell 2009: 206). This might be true for some but not all. For instance, Steve goes on the church's mission trips to Cuba and to Mexico; he sees both as opportunities for spiritual renewal and might agree with Howell's statement. Donna, similarly, enjoys going to different places for mission trips; she commented on her desire to go on mission trip to India in the future. However, she spoke of mission trips as opportunities to travel the world, experiencing different places and different

people. Instead of regular vacations just to see the sights; like Sara, she wanted to go to do a job. Ellen, on the hand, felt very strongly that the missionary call could be place specific. When Sara wanted to go on mission trips, originally, she asked Ellen, her mother, if they could go to Cuba; Ellen and her husband shot down that idea because neither felt as though they were called to that particular destination and Sara was too young to go by herself. When she heard of a Mexico trip, Ellen and her husband did feel called there and have been going back ever since. Similarly, Sara fell in love with Mexico and feels strongly about going back every year. Both Ellen and Sara have built up a relationship with Juan; Mexico has become a special destination for them and they probably feel that they would have a difficult time translating those feelings to another location.

When discussing mission work, there is also often the expectation, as was shown in the third chapter, that there will be a sacrifice of the comforts of American life in addition to the good work that is done on behalf of the group for the citizen of the destination; it would not feel right to stay in luxury accommodations while serving those suffering as much as many of the patients were. Inevitably, however, the mission member stresses that she or he will be the one transformed and often concludes that she or he gets more out of the experience even than those she or he helps materially. Sometimes, the transformations are unexplainable. Steve simply states that he goes to "cleanse his head and his heart." Other narratives are tangible; Sara, after moving a half hour away had not been going to church regularly, but after the trip, she found a church in the area that she was able to attend weekly. Interestingly, there is not a lot of talk about how this happens; there are no specific instances that trigger the spiritual renewal. This might refer back to what Bruner describes as reason over cause: "If people can predict anything from a character's intentional states, it is only [how] he will feel or how he will have perceived the situation" (1991:

7). Steve repeatedly stated that his goal was for spiritual renewal, something that his daily life seemed not to fully provide for him but going to Cuba or Mexico would. Rose, on the other hand, never mentioned that part of it; she came back this year because she had a skill, nursing, that was desired for the trip.

In his book, *Still, the Small Voice,* folklorist Thomas Mould examines Mormon narratives which are told and retold in order to reinforce practitioners' faith, "while some stories are mundane, promoting the importance of values such as honesty, economy, and generosity the vast majority describe spiritual experiences that prove the presence and power of God" (2011: 24). Narrators often try to explain their position and interpret the action within the narrative introducing their values and meanings into the story (Riessman 1993: 20). Narrators might not always produce accounts which are factually true but as sociologist Catherine Riessman points out, "they are revealing truths. Those truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was,' aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences" (Riessman 1993: 22).

In her book, *Narrative Analysis,* Riessman explains, these stories are constructed; they are "worldly creations" where "meaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal" (1993: 5, 15). Stories can take on lives of their own through tellings and retellings, and changes in context and audience (Stewart 1996: 210). In her book, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America,* Kathleen Stewart comments that narratives are "productive" illustrating "cultural conventions, relations of authority, and fundamental spatio-temporal orientations in the dense sociality of words and images" producing the "real" through countless signs (1996: 29-30). Retelling these narratives in another context changes them, making new meanings and understandings; truth claims emerge "in the performative space where signs (talk) and meanings (ideal/ideas) collide" (Stewart 1996: 210-211). Narrators choose which

parts to include and exclude; in addition, perceptions, perspectives, motivations and images "all reflect important interpretive decisions that shape" the stories that are told (Mould 2011: 138).

The "mission self," then, is a process that often begins with donning the outer vestments of faith and the implied intention to serve in some capacity. The actions on the trip serve to reinforce this intention, refraining from some activities, such as gossip and drinking, and emphasizing others, such as respect and frequent devotionals. Finally, the ways in which members talk about their trip, their narrative constructions pull this all together; they form, create, craft their narratives in ways that give them meaning for the teller and eventually for the people who will come to listen to the stories later.

During one of our days running a clinic, Rose made an off-handed comment that the people we were seeing were very dirty and unkempt. Talking after the trip, she said it again and elaborated. Usually, when she comes on these trips, the patients seem to put themselves together much more carefully and are cleaner. She attributes this change to the increased illness she observed in the area, they were so sick that they must not have been able to put in the effort for their appearance. Mission identity does not seem to be constructed based on success within the community; mission teams are aware that their presence will have no lasting long-term impact and possibly not even substantial short-term impact. They can come back year after year, in some years, life in the community will be better and in other years, it will be worse. They hope to do their small part to help community members until the next group arrives but the real impact, as they construct it, is on the mission team members themselves.

CONCLUSION

Pastor Sam tells the story of one of his first mission trips to Mexico. While there, his group attended a local Sunday church service which was conducted in Spanish; that man next to him turned and said, "What are they doing?" Pastor Sam asked what he meant and he said "Well, we are here visiting. Shouldn't they be singing and giving the sermon in English?" Pastor Sam thought about it and asked, "Well, if they were at our church, would you expect the service to be in Spanish?"

At the beginning of the mission movement, missionaries often forced their "converts" not only to speak the language of the missionaries but change their political, social, religious, and economic systems to match those of the missionaries. For a long time after, missionaries still assumed that the missionized would accommodate them and interact with them on the missionaries' terms. Recently, these attitudes are changing. Gone are the days when it was expected that the receiving group has to conform to the many of demands of the visiting group; the Mexican churches and other religious organizations have greater autonomy to construct the mission on their terms and work with the mission groups so that both are satisfied with the projects.

There are still problems present in mission work. Occasionally, there are people who want to control every aspect, when they come and what they do but they still require the cooperation of the local community to provide them with a site and accommodations. Being in service to others is a major facet of mission work but the success or failure of a mission project is never much of an issue. While it is important to work hard in the local community, there is often an understanding that the mission team is not a savior and that no structural, societal changes will occur. Mission teams might be able to help an individual here and there but they will not change the underlying problems that cause the individuals to need outside aid. Sometimes the aid

that is brought is not enough; teams can bring medicine but they cannot ensure that people will have food and water. There is often a language barrier; very few people going on short-term missions learn the language of their destination. They depend on their hosts to take care of translating. This can hamper the building up of relationships which is an important aspect of many missions; Juan definitely wanted it to be a part of his.

Monetary support is important but more important are the potential connections that can be made among different communities and churches. Community and sacrifice are the two main themes when it comes to short-term mission work especially between St. Peter's United Methodist Church and Manos de Ayuda. Both of these things are a work in progress as the mission workers learn and expect to sacrifice, to give up the control to the Mexican leadership and spend their time in conditions that many would not stand for in the United States. At the same time, the Mexican organization is working to inspire their local community to join the mission effort so that both groups will work side by side and becoming invested in each other, in order to build long term bonds and continued support which is desperately needed. There are over one hundred requests for *casitas* (small houses) in the Reynosa community we visited. People in need request these small homes. Manos de Ayuda is lucky if one or two of them are constructed in a given year. Similarly, people in the community have little access to healthcare outside of local clinics which are often only in service when an outside group funds and runs them, meaning that potentially some people can go a long time without the proper medication.

Many who go on mission teams really do have a desire to give back and serve the community they visit. The United Methodist Church has a history, inspired by founder John Wesley, of emphasizing service and missions as a main force driving the church. Church members are encouraged to go out into the local community and further to show God's love by

helping others when they are in need; neither the Bible nor the church condones belief without action. Evangelizing is not a priority in these missions; the assumption being that people have already heard and made a decision about Christ. Some mission team members even comment on those being helped as being more spiritual – potentially closer to God than themselves precisely because they are suffering. The "mission self" is mediated by a desire for this closeness to God, being near suffering and trying to do something about suffering; this is what Jesus did and what he wanted his followers to do.

[i] To protect the anonymity of all individuals, the names of all informants, organizations and churches are pseudonyms.
[ii] Details for the Cuban lottery can be at http://havana.usint.gov/media/pdfs/lottery.pdf. It is conducted by the United States government to give Cubans a chance to live in the United States.
[iii] Applying to travel to Cuba for religious purposes can take months and, if approved, expires after a couple of years. On the other hand, getting permission from the Cuban government involves knowing the right Cuban people to give them what they want or they can revoke approval at the last minute.
[iv] This is related to Victor Turner's concept of the "social drama." In Ndembu society, these ritualized dramas were public outbreaks of tension; when groups or individuals were in obvious conflict and opposition. They were not also resolved completely. (33).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. "Writing Against Culture." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working the Present*. Richard G. Fox ed., pp. 137-162. Sante Fe: School of American Research Press.

Ahern, Maureen. 2007 "Martyrs and Idols: Performing Ritual Warfare on Early Missionary Frontiers in the Northwest." In *Religion in New Spain*. Susan Schroeder and Stafford Poole eds, 279-298. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Alonso, Ana. 1995. *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier*. Tucson: U of Arizona Press.

Anderson, Kathryn and Dana C. Jack. 1991. "Learning Techniques and Analyses." In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. Gluck, Sherna Berger and Daphne Patai, eds, pp 11-26. New York: Routledge.

Baldwin, Deborah J. 1990. *Protestants and the Mexican Revolution: Missionaries, Ministers and Social Change*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Bastian, Jean-Pierre. 1993. "The Metamorphosis of Latin American Protestant Groups: A Sociohistorical Perspective." In *Latin American Research Review* 28(2): 33-61.

Beekman, John. 1968 "Minimizing Religious Syncretism among the Chols." In *Readings in Missionary Anthropology*. Smalley, ed. Pp 235-244 Tarrytown: Practical Anthropology

Borland, Katherine. 1991. "'That's Not What I Said': Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research". In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. Gluck, Sherna Berger and Daphne Patai, eds, pp 63-75. New York: Routledge.

Borstein, Erica. 2012. *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Delhi*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bouvier, Virginia Marie. 2001. *Women and the Conquest of California, 1542-1840: Codes of Silence*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Bruner, Jerome. 1991. "Narrative Construction of Reality." In *Critical Inquiry* 18: 1-20.

Butler, Judith. 1990. Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, pp. 1-46. New York: Routledge.

Campell, Ted A. 1999. *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Carder, Kenneth L. 2009. *The United Methodist Way: Living Our Beliefs, Revised Edition*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources.

Carrasco, David. 2008. *The History of the Conquest of New Spain.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Chanfrault-Duchet, Marie-Francoise. 1991. "Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story." In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. Gluck, Sherna Berger and Daphne Patai, eds, pp 77-92. New York: Routledge.

Clifford, James. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths." In *Writing Culture*. Clifford and Marcus, eds, Pp 1-26. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cobb Jr., John B. 1995. *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Collins, Kenneth J. 2003. *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 1991. *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa, Volume 1*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 1997. *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier, Volume 2*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Costas, O.E. 1976. *Theology of the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America: Missiology in Mainline Protestantism: 1969-1974.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

D'Epinay, Christian Lalive. 2008. "The Pentecostal 'Conquest' of Chile: Rudiments of a Better Understanding." In *Latin American Religions: Histories and Documents in Context*. Anna L. Peterson and Manuel A. Vasquez eds. New York: New York University Press.

Deeds, Susan M. 2003. *Defiance and Deference in Mexico's Colonial North: Indians under Spanish Rule in Nueva Vizcaya*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Des Chene, Mary. 1998. "Fate, Domestic Authority, and Women's Wills" In *Selves in Time and Place: Identities, Experience, and History in Nepal*. Skinner, Pach III, and Holland, pp 19-50. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Dunlap-Berg, Barbara. 2011. "Church Membership Tops 12 Million." http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lwL4KnN1LtH&b=2789393&ct=9191354.

Elisha, Omar. 2011. *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Etter-Lewis, Gwendolyn. 1991. "Black Women's Life Stories: Reclaiming Self in Narrative Texts." In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. Gluck, Sherna Berger and Daphne Patai, eds, pp 43-58. New York: Routledge.

Farmer, Paul. 2003. *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Farnsworth, Paul and Robert H. Jackson. 1995. "Cultural, Economic, and Demographic Change in the Missions of Alta California: The Case of Nuestra Senora de la Soledad." In *The New Latin American Mission History*. Erick Langer and Robert H. Jackson pp 109-129. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Frank, Thomas Edward. 2002. *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Gallaher, Carolyn. 2007. "The Role of Protestant Missionaries in Mexico's Indigenous Awakening." In *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 26(1): 88-111.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *Presentations of Self in Everyday Life.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gonzalez, Justo and Ondina Gonzalez. 2008. *Christianity in Latin America: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gosden, Ben. 2013. "Learning from Adam Hamilton's Homily at National Cathedral." In *The United Methodist Reporter*. http://www.unitedmethodistreporter.com/2013/01/learning-from-adam-hamiltons-homily-at-national-cathedral/.

"Guidelines for Sending Volunteers in Mission." 1998. In *United Methodist Volunteers in Mission: Guidelines For Sending and Hosting Volunteers.* http://gbgm-umc.org/vim/documents/doc2.htm.

Hall, G. Stanley. 1910. "Mission Pedagogy." In *The Journal of Race Development* 1(2): 127-146.

Hall, Stuart. 1990. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity*. J. Rutherford, ed., pp. 222-237. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hastrup, Kirsten. 1992. "Writing Ethnography: State of the Art." In *Anthropology and Autobiography*. Okely and Callaway, eds, pp. 115-132 New York: Routledge.

The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. 2006[1989]. New York: Oxford University Press.

Howell, Brian M. 2007. "The Repugnant Cultural Other Speaks Back: Christianity as Ethnographic Standpoint" In *Anthropological Theory* 7(4): 371-391.

Howell, Brian M. 2009. "Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context." In *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33(4): 206-211.

Howson, Alexandra. 2004. *The Body in Society: An Introduction*. Malden: Polity Press.

Hu-DeHart, Evelyn. 1981. *Missionaries, Miners, & Indians, Spanish Contact with the Yaqui Nation of Northwestern New Spain, 1533-1820.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Jacobs, Mary. 2013. "Q&A: Women as Social Gospel Practitioners." In *The United Methodist Reporter*. http://www.unitedmethodistreporter.com/2013/03/qa-women-as-social-gospel-practitioners/.

Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2002. "The Natives Are Gazing and Talking Back: Reviewing the Problematics of Positionality, Voice, and Accountability among 'Native' Anthropologists." In *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 791-804.

James, Erica Capel. 2004. "The Political Economy of 'Trauma' in Haiti in the Democratic Era of Insecurity." In *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 28(2):127-149.

Jones, Scott J. 2002. *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Kondo, Dorinne. 1990. The Eye/I. In *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*, pp. 3-48. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kondo, Dorinne. 1997. *M. Butterfly:* Gender, Orientalism, and a Critique of Essentialist Identity. In *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater*, pp. 31-54. New York: Routledge.

"LAVIM Mission Covenant." In *Louisiana Volunteers in Mission*. http://louisiana.prod.brickriver.com/console/files/oForms_YJ7JB6/LAVIM_Mission_Covenant_AZHDZBRQ.pdf.

Mangones, Kathy. 2001. "Alternative Food Strategies and Local Capacity Building in Haiti." In *Patronage and Partnership: Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises*. Ian Smillie, ed. Pp. 51-76. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.

Mauss, Marcel. 1967[1925]. *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies.* New York: Norton Library.

McRobbie, Angela. 1992. "Post-Marxism and Cultural Studies: A Post-Script." In *Cultural Studies*. Grossberg, Lawrence et al, 719-731.

Merrill, William L. 1995. Raramuri Souls: Knowledge and Social Process in Northern Mexico. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press.

"Mission and Ministry." *UMC*. 2002. http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.2295473/k.7034/Mission_and_Ministry.htm

Monroy, Douglas. 2008. *The Borders Within: Encounters Between Mexico and the U.S*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Mora, Anthony. 2005. "Resistance and Accommodation in a Border Parish." In *The Western Historical Quarterly* 36(3): 301-326.

Mosse, David. 2005. "Global Governance and the Ethnography of International Aid." In *The Aid Effect: Giving and Governing in International Development. David Mosse and David Lewis, eds. Pp 1-36. London: Pluto Press.*

Mouffe, Chantal. 1992. Feminism, Citizenship and Radical Democratic Politics. In *Feminists Theorize the Political*, Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds., pp. 369-384. New York: Routledge.

Mould, Thomas. 2011. *Still, the Small Voice: Narrative, Personal Revelation, and the Mormon Folk Tradition*. Logan: Utah State University Press.

Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native is a Native Anthropologist." In *American Anthropologist* 95(3): 671-686.

Norwood, Frederick A. 1974. *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodists and Their Relations.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Okely, Judith. 1992. "Anthropology and Autobiography: Participatory Experience and embodied Knowledge." In *Anthropology and Autobiography*. Okely and Callaway, eds, pp. 1-28. New York: Routledge.

Parker Gumucio, C. 2002. "Religion and the Awakening of Indigenous People in Latin America." In *Social Compass* 49 (1): 67–81.

Pascual, Dr. Christine. 2012. *Out of My Comfort Zone: A Journey into the Medical Mission Field in Haiti*. Bloomington: Crossbooks Publishing.

Peterson, Anna L. and Manuel A. Vasquez. 2008. *Latin American Religions: Histories and Documents in Context*. New York: New York University Press.

"Quick Facts." 2004. http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=6&mid=2119.

Rabinow, Paul. 1977. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Reyes, Barbara O. 2004. "Race, Agency, and Memory in a Baja California Mission." In *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.–Mexico Borderlands History.* Samuel Truett and Elliot Young, eds. Pp 97-120. Durham: Duke University Press.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 1993. *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

Rivera, Luis N. 1992. *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press.

Runyon, Theodore. 1998. *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Shorter, David Delgado. 2009. *We Will Dance Our Truth: Yaqui History in Yoeme Performances*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Skinner, Debra, Dorothy Holland, and Alfred Pach III. 1998. "Selves in Time and Place: An Introduction." In *Selves in Time and Place: Identities, Experience, and History in Nepal.* Skinner, Pach III, and Holland, pp 3-16. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Skinner, Debra and Dorothy Holland. 1998. "Contested Selves, Contested Femininities: Selves and Society in Process." In *Selves in Time and Place: Identities, Experience, and History in Nepal*. Skinner, Pach III, and Holland, pp 87-110. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Smillie, Ian. 2001. "Introduction" In *Patronage and Partnership: Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises*. Ian Smillie, ed. Pp. 1-6. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.

Smillie, Ian. 2001. "Capacity Building and the Humanitarian Enterprise." In *Patronage and Partnership: Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises*. Ian Smillie, ed. Pp. 7-24. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.

Smillie, Ian and Goran Todorovic. 2001. "Reconstructing Bosnia, Constructing Civil Society: Disjuncture and Convergence." In *Patronage and Partnership: Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises*. Ian Smillie, ed. Pp. 25-50. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.

Stacey, Judith. 1991. "Can There Be a Feminst Ethnography?" In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. Gluck, Sherna Berger and Daphne Patai, eds, 111-119. New York: Routledge.

Sterk, Vernon J. 1992. "Evangelism with Power: Divine Healing in the Growth of the Tzotzil Church." In *Missiology* 20(3): 371-384.

Stewart, Kathleen. 1996. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Stoll, David. 1990. *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1991. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*. Richard G. Fox, ed., pp. 17-44. Sante Fe: School of American Research Press.

Turner, Paul. 1984. "Religious Conversion and Folk Catholicism." In *Missiology* 12(1): 111-121.

Turner, Victor. 1974. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Wonderly, William L. 1967. "Pagan and Christian Concepts in a Mexican Indian Culture." In *Readings in Missionary Anthropology*. Smalley, ed. Pp 229-234 Tarrytown: Practical Anthropology.