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University of Nevada, Reno

The Strength of Faith: Evaluating the Advantages of Christian-based Organizations in Aiding Orphans and Vulnerable Youth

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts in International Affairs and the Honors Program

by

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ABSTRACT

This literature review explores the role of Christian faith-based organizations in aiding orphans and vulnerable youth around the world. Christian organizations have a large presence in providing humanitarian services and are strategically positioned to impact the adverse conditions of orphans and other vulnerable youth. Therefore, the primary question being addressed in this research is what are the advantages of Christian faith-based organizations in aiding orphans and vulnerable youth? In answering this question, this thesis focuses on three distinct advantages: 1) moral standing within the community, 2) stimulation of positive identities, and 3) logistical advantages that include continued operation under budget shortfalls, assimilation to cultural norms, and use of social capital to facilitate projects and distribute services. In addition, this thesis briefly reviews three fundamental weaknesses of Christian faith-based organizations. Evaluating the advantages of Christian organizations in the rehabilitation of vulnerable children identifies contributions these organizations can make beyond their secular counterparts in providing humanitarian services. Highlighting these qualities illustrates how Christian faith-based organizations along with other organizations and governments alike can work together to better meet the needs of the orphaned and vulnerable youth population.
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INTRODUCTION

This senior thesis will explore the role of Christian faith-based organizations (CFBOs) in aiding orphans and vulnerable youth (OVY) around the world. The primary question being addressing in this research is what are the advantages of Christian faith-based organizations in aiding orphans and vulnerable youth? This thesis will focus on three distinct advantages: 1) moral standing within the community, 2) stimulation of positive identities, and 3) logistical advantages that include continued operation under budget shortfalls, assimilation to cultural norms, and use of social capital to facilitate projects and distribute services. In addition, this thesis will briefly review three fundamental weaknesses that, if addressed in the future, would greatly increase CFBO influence and efficiency in aiding the OVY community. Literature review is the primary research method used for this thesis.

Analyzing Christian organizations and their work with OVY is a relatively new topic of study within the field of international affairs; there is, therefore, a limited number of sources directly addressing the topic. But when it comes to faith-based organizations, orphans and vulnerable youth, Christian ethics and theology, and the available empirical data evaluating CFBO success, a much broader source of information is available. It is the purpose of this research to link together these separate topics and contribute a new analysis.

Significance of Study

Evaluating Christian organizations in aiding orphans and vulnerable youth identifies the contributions CFBOs can make beyond their secular counterparts. By highlighting the advantages of CFBOs, this research contributes to the question of how
CFBOs along with other secular organizations and governments alike can work together to better meet the needs of orphans and vulnerable youth in countries around the world.

With regards to the children themselves, it is important to note that OVY are in a race against time, not only with regards to their adverse circumstances but also their own bodies. As these children develop into adults, more difficulties arise in surviving and maneuvering their vulnerable circumstance. As Lewis Aptekar (1994) notes in his review of the conditions of street children in the developing world:

When their body image changes to that of an adult, they are forced into criminal behavior or into the same kinds of work that other poor adults do to survive. The reason for this is that the small children are looked on as being cute and receive alms because of it, but when they get big enough to be perceived as adults they are considered dangerous. (p. 198)

This shift in societal perception impedes the provision of money and other resources previously provided, in part, by the community to support the OVY population. As a result, the living conditions of vulnerable children – now turned adults – can become increasingly difficult to overcome. Identifying the advantages of Christian-based organizations in aiding OVY provides one perspective on how to help vulnerable youth before it's too late.

**Research Framework**

In addition to this introduction, my analysis has been broken up into two supplementary sections and three primary sections. The first supplementary section will define key terminology used throughout the thesis along with laying a foundation for the reader to understand the spiritual component that characterizes CFBOs and their service
to vulnerable youth. The three primary sections will each address a distinct advantage of CFBOs in rehabilitating OVY, as determined by the literature review: moral standing within the community, stimulation of positive identities, and three logistical advantages. The final supplementary section will note some of the weaknesses of Christian organizations in rehabilitating OVY. At the end, the conclusion summarizes my findings.

**Challenges of Bias**

I have come to recognize two potential challenges of bias in addressing Christian-based organizations. The first is reconciling the bias I may have developed in having worked with CFBOs in the past. From September 2008 to September 2009, I worked in China with Forever Love foundation, a Christian organization working with street children from around the country. In December 2010, I worked at Zimpeto Children’s Center in Mozambique, also a Christian organization, where I helped facilitate a number of small-scale projects helping vulnerable youth in the area. In December 2011, I had the opportunity to travel to India and work with a local family that led a small church dedicated to helping children living on the streets and in extremely poor households. On the same trip, I was also able to work with Youth With a Mission (YWAM) teaching English at a slum school in New Delhi. These experiences have contributed greatly to my interest in vulnerable youth studies and have provided a first hand perspective into my research.

For any potential bias to affect the conclusion of my research without recognition of the possibility in the first place is not only unprofessional but fraudulent. Therefore, acknowledging that I have had a relatively positive experience working with CFBOs (specifically those caring for OVY) is important information to disclose. I have included
a specific chapter dedicated to identifying weaknesses within Christian organizations and their work with OVY in an attempt to balance out my findings and give voice to both sides of the issue.

The second challenge of bias is that of the reader. I have come to recognize a stigma surrounding humanitarian organizations that affiliate themselves with religion and faith, especially Christian organizations. This stigma is associated with the opinion that certain CFBOs are more concerned with promoting their faith than with the actual distribution of services. While I recognize that in some cases these criticisms are merited, a topic to be discussed in tandem with other weaknesses in the proceeding chapters, this stigma has ultimately prevented collaboration between the secular and Christian-based. When collaboration between secular and faith-based is impeded, it directly affects beneficiaries of humanitarian aid, OVY being chief among them. I hope that my experiences and the resulting research might help to balance out the more prevalent opinions within academia against Christianity operating in a non-western context. I encourage the reader to keep an open mind as I attempt to share why, according to my research, CFBOs are legitimate and successful in aiding OVY.

**An Overview of Faith-based Organizations**

Before introducing Christian organizations, the historical origin and overall contributions made by faith-based organizations (FBOs) in general will be discussed. FBOs are defined as having “affiliation with a religious body; a mission statement with explicit reference to religious values; financial support from religious sources; and/or a governance structure where selection of board members or staff is based on religious beliefs” (Ferris, 2005, p. 312). They can range from churches/temples, to hospitals, to
orphanages and day centers. They encompass a large variety of services and realms of influence. FBOs play a critical role in providing humanitarian services in the developing world, particularly areas where services are under-provided by local government (U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, 2012, p. 13).

FBOs are gaining recognition in the eyes of governments, activists, and funding entities as effective agents for change in the developing world (U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, 2012, p. 13) and are recognized as being “uniquely situated to service vulnerable populations such as impoverished families, prisoners in their rehabilitation and reintegration processes, children of prisoners, homeless individuals and high-risk youth” (Ferguson, Dabir, Dortzbach, Dyrness & Spruijt-Metz, 2006, p. 1513). FBOs are also acknowledged by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development as influential players in the international spectrum and have, consequently, become much more prominent in scholarly literature pertaining to development and civil society (Tadros, 2010, p. 1). Ferguson et al. (2006) are the authors of a comparative analysis of faith-based programs serving homeless youth in Los Angeles, Mumbai and Nairobi. They state:

From the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in the United States to the World Bank's development partnerships with local religious organizations around the world, faith-based organizations are receiving increasing visibility for their role in the provision of diverse health, mental health and social services (p. 1512-1513).

Because FBOs are typically the longest existing provider of services and care within the communities they operate, they are intricately woven into the social fabric and play
influential roles in the lives of affiliates (Tadros, 2010, p. 1). From large urban centers to smaller rural villages, FBOs maintain a long-term presence that is interconnected with many of the various components of a given society. Those who work with these religious organizations contribute tens of thousands of volunteer hours through efforts that “address both local contexts as well as the varied needs of far-flung communities” (U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, 2012, p. 17).

However, some of the greatest influences FBOs have in reaching the marginalized lie in their shared ability with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Overall, NGOs are delivering more humanitarian aid worldwide than all United Nations programs combined, providing as much as $8.5 billion per year (Ferris, 2005, p. 312). As stated in *The Charity of Nations*,

NGOs are active in more countries than many governments, and they carry more credibility with tax-payers then do government aid agencies. Indeed, some individual NGOs have country programs with larger budgets then the government ministries to which they relate (as cited in Ferris, 2005, p. 311).

NGOs work to fill the gap between the services provided by government and the most marginalized or vulnerable individuals that lie beyond the reach of government programs (U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, 2012, p. 13), making their work paramount. For example, in Nairobi almost all social services are provided by FBOs or other secular NGOs (Ferguson et al., 2006, p. 1519). Additionally, FBOs make up 50% of health service provision in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 40% in Kenya and Lesotho, and 55% in Uganda (Tadros, 2010, p. 3). Faith-based and secular NGOs are also
engaged in providing education, financial assistance, humanitarian relief during times of crises and legal aid (Tadros, 2010, p. 3).

One of the potential advantages that FBOs have over other non-government entities in providing for the marginalized is their historical affiliation with the world’s religions such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. The bond between FBOs and the religions they represent extends to before the creation of international law (Ferris, 2005, p. 313) and before the establishment of modern government as well. Through their connection with religion, FBOs develop “stronger community relations” and use faith to “provide a common language for the marginalized to communicate with others around the world” (Lipsky, 2011, p. 34). It is this bond between FBOs and their explicit use of religion that ultimately makes the distribution of services more than just a non-profit endeavor but a way of life rooted in faith and service.

For believers, to be a Jew, or a Muslim, or a Christian implies a duty to respond to the needs of the poor and the marginalized. The expression of this faith takes different forms in different religious traditions but is a powerful motivator for humanitarian action (Ferris, 2005, p. 316).

**Long-standing History of Faith-based Organizations**

FBOs are important to the field of international affairs because of their connection with the world’s religions and the resulting grassroots influence they have within a community. “FBOs are among some of the oldest providers of services and care to their communities” (Tadros, 2010, p. 1). The existence of FBOs extends to before the establishment of key international institutions like the United Nations in 1945.

Historically, there are even accounts of FBO-type groups working during the
beginning of the millennium. According to Berger (2003), most secular NGOs have been created over the last 40 years (p. 20). In contrast, many FBOs represent new incarnations of older religious institutions. Religious orders can become FBOs “by entering into a formal relationship with the UN or by orienting their mission to serve the general public” (Berger, 2003, p. 20). The official Order of Malta (2013) website describes the historical origins of two of the oldest known religious lay orders. In the year 1048, the Order of St. John was established. In response to the order, merchants from the ancient Marine Republic of Amalfi built a church, convent, and hospital in Jerusalem. The monastic community, later known as the Hospitallers, provided care for the poor, sick or injured pilgrims en rout to Jerusalem. Although the Hospitallers were supported by the Catholic Church, their mission was not exclusive of other faiths. Services were provided to individuals regardless of race and religion.

With the loss of the Holy Land in 1291, the Hospitallers moved from location to location, eventually finding their home on the Island of Malta. The Knights of Malta were established in 1565, defending the island and transforming it through various construction projects. The Knights of Malta also contributed to the development of ophthalmology and pharmacology. Today, the Order of Malta is one of the oldest institutions of Western civilization with a commitment to reach spiritual perfection and to diligently serve the poor and the sick (Order of Malta, 2013).

According to Dafoe (2010), the Knights of Templar was another ancient order, established towards the end of the 11th century. The mission of the Knights of Templar was to protect pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land to visit sacred shrines. While the knights themselves were forbidden to own property, the Templar Order as a whole
accumulated land and wealth as a form of support from noble families. Over time, the Templars became the wealthiest of Crusading Orders. The excess of wealth and land provided for an additional form of service to the community. The Order funded the creation of infrastructure and churches in war-torn areas.

Today, religiously motivated military groups are not typically associated with providing humanitarian services. However the Hospitallers and the Knights of Templar represent the long-standing history of faith related organizations. The Knights of Malta, conversely, represent the shift from religious order to FBO described by Berger. In both cases, the long history of FBOs is evident, providing for significant experience in the distribution of services (Ferris, 2005, p. 313).

Although it is hard to determine when FBOs as we know them today were first created, we do know that they have existed along-side the oldest international organizations in modern history. The Young Men’s Christian Association, established in 1855, was one of the first international FBOs ever established (Berger, 2003, p. 18). In the west, FBOs have also historically played a leading role in influencing policy. For example, churches were among those who lobbied for the creation of the United Nations and for the inclusion of human rights protection in the United Nations Charter. The Federal Council of Churches, a partnership of 37 Christian faith groups, “was instrumental in actually drafting text for the charter and passing it on to US representatives on the drafting committee” (Ferris, 2005, p. 315).

**Why Christian-based Organizations are Distinct**

In distinguishing between Ferris’ (2005, p. 312) definition of FBOs, CFBOs are simply defined as those organizations that relate specifically with Christianity, rather than
religion in general. A more concise definition of CFBOs will be discussed in the proceeding chapter. This section of the introduction will look beyond the general themes of FBOs and focus specifically on CFBOs and their work with OVY.

While caring for the marginalized and underrepresented is a common theme among all major religions, Christian organizations are simply more prevalent. In the available comparative FBO studies and surveys, at least those cited throughout this literature review (Lipsky, 2011, Berger, 2003, Ferris, 2005, Foster, 2004, Ferguson et al. 2006), CFBOs consistently make up the majority of the sample size. It would not be far-fetched to deduce that the Christian-prevalence in the literature is reflective of the larger body of CFBOs worldwide as well, although empirical data and hard numbers are seemingly non-existent. Only those organizations that register with the U.N. or some other funding or organizational body can be accounted for.

Elizabeth Ferris, chair of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, states in her report about faith-based and secular humanitarian organizations that “while Jewish and Islamic NGOs primarily serve members of their own religious communities, Christian organizations tend to have a more global outreach: to assist those in need regardless of their religious affiliation” (Ferris, 2005, p. 317). Additionally, there are distinctive qualities between faiths that ultimately affect the operation of a given organization.

Hindu practice tends to be personal and individualistic, while Muslim practice tends to be focused on what is mandated by clerics as most “correct.” Conversely, Christian practice tends to be communal with a strong connection to life issues, often with close interaction between the clergy and adherent (Ferguson et al.,

With strong ties to a communal spiritual experience and closer interactions between clergy and members, Christian organizations are well-positioned to help vulnerable children, a group whose very definition was derived from lacking a healthy family unit or a safe, care-giving community.

In Julia Berger’s exploratory analysis of FBOs she states that her research “reveals salient characteristics, which highlight ‘cultural’ differences” (Berger, 2003, p. 34) between different FBOs. She notes that Jewish organizations “make few references to God or religion, focusing instead on the social justice teachings of the Torah as the basis for their advocacy-oriented missions.” With regards to Eastern religions, recognized more as spiritual NGOs rather than faith-based, Berger (2003, p. 34) notes that they “are among the most loosely structured, focusing on the inner life of the individual through the application of principles advanced by spiritual leaders.” CFBOs, on the other hand, are more missions focused with an emphasis on charity and the concepts of faith and God. “It is not an accident that most of the international humanitarian and relief NGOs, such as World Vision and Catholic Relief Services, are Christian” (Berger, 2003, p. 34). Being more outreach focused greatly contributes to the larger CFBO presence in providing humanitarian service.

Berger voices a few of the possible questions raised by the reader when dealing with the sample group of her research, namely “Why do (CFBOs) account for over 57% of the sample? ...What aspects of Christianity and its followers facilitate the formation of (CFBOs)? What factors hinder other faiths and believers from establishing (organizations)?” (Berger, 2003, p. 34) Her response relates back to this thesis and why
distinctions have been made between CFBOs and FBOs in general:

The answers are likely a combination of ideological, political, and economic factors. It is possible that involvement with the UN and NGO creation is compatible with Christian culture and ideology, given the involvement of churches in the formative process of the UN (e.g., World Council of Churches), their desire to influence the secular polity, and their access to material resources…It is worthwhile to note the argument that certain religions, in their emphasis on charity, individual initiative, institution building, and autonomy, are more likely to encourage non-profit formation than those in which these dimensions are not emphasized (Berger, 2003, p. 34).

One may note that charity, individual initiative, institution building, and autonomy are characteristics of religions other than Christianity as well. For example, charity to the poor is one of the five pillars of Islam, and individual initiative can be described as a central component of Buddhism, the teachings of which promote the individual pursuit of enlightenment and peace. However, Berger’s argument addresses the combination of all of these qualities working collectively.

With regards to OVY, Dr. Geoff Foster, a UNICEF correspondent, compiled a report titled Study of the Response of Faith-based Organizations to Orphans and Vulnerable Children in which he determined that CFBOs significantly outnumbered other FBOs in the provision of services to orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, and Swaziland (Foster, 2004, p. 21). In a comparative analysis of Christian, Islamic, and Hindu faith-based programs, Ferguson et al. notes that Christianity “often tends to have people with a vision and desire to provide services for
vulnerable youth,” more so than Hinduism or Islam (Ferguson et al., 2006, p. 1520).

Therefore, due to the distinct qualities of CFBOs discussed and the prevalence of CFBOs in the available academic research, my literary analysis has focused exclusively on the CFBO community in aiding OVY.

**The Adverse Conditions of Orphans and Vulnerable Youth**

The lives of vulnerable children are reflective of a number of different adverse environments. The term “OVY” is representative of those children who are homeless, trafficked, involved in sexual exploitation, used for illegal child labor, and forced into armed combat. It can be argued that OVY are, in fact, the most vulnerable population because of their adverse circumstances coupled with a lack of autonomy as under aged citizens before the law. While United Nations treaties exist recognizing the rights of children, it is expected that adult guardians are to take responsibility over the realization of these rights, in conjunction with the provisions and over-sight of the states themselves. When OVY are without *appropriate* adult supervision (emphasis added to distinguish from the so-called “adult supervision” by the very adults exploiting the children), they are left without a voice to advocate on their behalf, especially in nations that are underdeveloped or in crisis. The needs of OVY can be easily neglected in the multitude of civil needs.

Vulnerable children are not centralized in one part of the world but represent every continent, every age, and every background. They can be found in HIV/AIDS affected communities, populated urban centers, poor rural communities, and in both developed and developing countries. These children are the victims of abuse, abandonment, and exploitation (Consortium for Street Children, 2009) and, as a result,
experience social, emotional and cognitive impairment ultimately affecting their future as adults (Redding, 2003, p. 3). However, what makes the condition of OVY so unique from adult vulnerable populations is that they are still developing as individuals and can, therefore, be spared the long-lasting effects of their adverse conditions if interventions are made.

**Secular Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Youth within the United States**

OVY migrate between rural communities and populated urban centers, they transition in and out of rescue centers and shelters, and are hard to locate over time if residing permanently on the streets. Even when OVY are able to be located within a given community, it can be very difficult to receive accurate information from them:

[Children living on the streets] have developed an extraordinary capacity to tell stories. Lying about their ages, family background, the reasons for being on the streets, and their current circumstances is included in their well-rehearsed scripts. Presenting information about themselves is part of their survival skills, which, like those of other nomadic entertainers, rests on their ability to manipulate their audiences (Aptekar, 1994, p. 199).

Despite the difficulty in assessing their conditions, there is evidence to suggest that the needs of children living on the streets and other vulnerable youth have become increasingly apparent to the eyes of the United States government.

In the United States, Public Law 109-95 was created in 2005 for the purpose of creating a, “comprehensive, coordinated, and effective response on the part of the U.S. Government to the world’s most vulnerable children” (Public Law 109-95 Secretariat, 2005, p. 1). This law contributed to the creation of the *U.S. Government Action Plan on*
Children in Adversity, published in December of 2012, creating a framework for international assistance that emphasizes inter-agency communication and collaboration. The plan is grounded in the understanding that a promising future belongs to those nations that invest in their children, while failure to do so undermines social and economic progress (U.S. Government International Assistance for Children in Adversity, 2013).

The mandate highlights a series of objectives that have been identified as the most important component to OVY rehabilitation (U.S. Government International Assistance for Children in Adversity, 2013). Putting family care first, promoting evidence-based policies and programs, and strengthening child welfare and protection programs are only a few of the objectives. These objectives are then passed on to the expansive government network helping children in adversity, which includes 30 different offices in seven U.S. government departments and agencies working in over 100 countries. U.S. officials then pass down these objectives to the individual schools, orphanages, clinics, and churches working at the grassroots level that are then able to see these objectives implemented in the lives of the OVY that they serve. The creation of this action plan represents a historical milestone in reaching out to the OVY population because never before has a U.S. comprehensive mandate of this kind been created.

Secular Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Youth Internationally

Internationally, coordinated policy efforts addressing the rights and protection of children have existed for many years. The U.N. General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, recognizing the inherent dignity and equality of all human persons and employing the first efforts in asserting the universal
protection of fundamental human rights (United Nations, 2013). The UDHR consists of 30 articles and is considered the ultimate standard of achievements for all nations. “Since its adoption, the UDHR has been translated into more than 360 languages— the most translated document in the world - and has inspired the constitutions of many newly independent States and many new democracies” (United Nations, 2013). A number of human rights treaties have been ratified since the 1948 declaration, expanding the body of international human rights law. One such treaty is the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted in 1989, which establishes the political, social, economic, political, cultural, and health rights of children around the world (Assembly, 1989).

Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that States parties shall “undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention” (Assembly, 1989). It clearly falls upon States parties to adopt appropriate measures to protect the rights and interests of OVY of the practices prohibited under the Convention at all stages of the criminal justice process, starting with recognizing the vulnerability of child victims. Article 9.2 states that, “all interested parties shall be given an opportunity to participate in the proceedings and make their views known” (Assembly, 1989). States parties must promote awareness in the public at large, including the affected OVY, through education and training about the preventative measures and harmful effects of the offences referred to throughout the treaty. Legal enforcement of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is under the responsibility of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors the implementation of the Convention by State parties (United Nations Human Rights, 2012).
The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) was created by the U.N. General Assembly in 1946 to provide food, clothing and health care to European children plagued by widespread disease and famine in the wake of World War II (UNICEF, 2013). The creation of UNICEF actually predates the ratification of the UDHR as one of the first humanitarian endeavors on the part of the United Nations. Today, UNICEF is now working in more than 190 countries and territories to save and improve children’s lives (UNICEF, 2013). According to the UNICEF (2013) website, “UNICEF upholds the Convention on the Rights of the Child” and “is the driving force that helps build a world where the rights of every child are realized.” Additionally, UNICEF is recognized as “the global authority to influence decision-makers, and the variety of partners at grassroots level to turn the most innovative ideas into reality”, making UNICEF unique among world organizations and those working with children (UNICEF, 2013).

**Difficulties in Aiding Vulnerable Youth and the Role of Christian Organizations**

Despite all of these efforts, both internationally and within the U.S., there are still many difficulties in aiding the OVY community. As one of the most marginalized and most difficult to track populations, there are few reliable sources that can fully testify to the lives of OVY. With regards to homeless OVY, it is nearly impossible to document the actual number of children living on the streets, a reality that has stifled the creation of government policy to address the issue (Consortium for Street Children, 2009, p. 2). The Consortium for Street Children, a network of organizations in the United Kingdom, recently released a statistical assessment of homeless OVY word-wide. They report that while UNICEF estimated as many as 100 million street children worldwide in 1989, Consortium for Street Children can now only ensure the existence of at least tens of
millions (Consortium for Street Children, 2009, p. 2) due to the lack of information and credible data retrieval methods. Without a consistent place of residence, researchers have trouble locating specific OVY over time, preventing long-term analysis and observation. Experts working on the ground who interact with vulnerable children directly insist that the actual number of OVY living on the streets is much higher than tens of millions, but without the means to collect statistically significant empirical data, government organizations like UNICEF are forced to under-estimate (Consortium for Street Children, 2009, p. 2).

The difficulties in aiding OVY point to the need and importance of other forms of response. While the U.S. and the larger international community are working to meet the needs of OVY, CFBOs have still been able to identify niches and loopholes from which to also provide aid. CFBOs have also been involved in OVY care for a much longer period of time as well. For example, according to a report about FBO care for children affected by HIV in Tanzania, “During the first two decades of the AIDS pandemic, governments and international donor agencies largely neglected the plight of orphans and similarly vulnerable children” (Mmbando, Hartwig, Hofgren, DiSorbo, Smith, & Hartwig, 2009, p. 13), while those working with the children affected by the pandemic, CFBOs included, had been sounding the alarm for years.

In Los Angeles, Mumbai, and Nairobi, OVY noted having an improved sense of self-worth, sense of belonging, hope, and direction for the future after their involvement with CFBOs (Ferguson et al., 2006, p. 1523). In Zimbabwe, 80% of new orphanages built between 1996 and 2006, were initiated by FBOs with 90% of the funding provided by Christian organizations (Williamson & Greenberg, 2010, p. 9). In HIV/AIDS regions of
southern Africa, Christian organizations and other FBOs are situated to mobilize resources and provide support for the millions of AIDS orphans because of their position within society (Tadros, 2010, p. 6).

This sizable investment in OVY care is rooted in the Christian principles to which these organizations adhere. Defending the orphan is consistently addressed throughout the Christian Bible. According to James 1:27a “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans.” As a result, CFBOs are not only on the ground working with OVY but are also deeply invested to the cause through a sense of commitment rooted in faith. CFBOs provide essential services and hold influential positions within local communities and within the larger international spectrum.
DEFINITIONS

The relationship between CFBOs and OVY is a relatively new topic of study within the field of international affairs. This thesis takes the various theories, interpretations, and studies relevant to OVY and CFBOs and contributes new analysis that would otherwise be neglected. Defining those key components of the analysis provides the theoretical framework for understanding this research. What follows is a discussion of the main topics addressed in this thesis coupled with more concise definitions. This chapter defines the four basic questions of who, what, why, and where in order to clearly communicate the premise of this study.

Who: Understanding Orphans and Vulnerable Youth

For this thesis, “OVY” is used to define the world’s most vulnerable children. A child, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (United Nations Human Rights, 2012). The life circumstances of OVY include suffering from HIV/AIDS, homelessness, forced labor, trafficking, sexual exploitation, or begging on the streets; conditions representative of the worst forms of adversity. In many cases, OVY suffer from more than one of the above forms of hardship.

The process of adequately defining the children represented in this study was difficult. The varying literature regarding vulnerable children has created many different terms with unique definitions. These definitions are generally a combination of the words homeless, street, vulnerable, poverty, orphaned. While there is a general sense of continuity expressed through these words, the specific terms “orphans and vulnerable
children” (OVC) and the more colloquial “street child” are the most popular terms used to describe these individuals within the literature used. However, according to publications from government and non-government organizations (PEPFAR, UNICEF, Save the Children, and Children’s Defense Fund) the term “OVC” is typically used to describe children living in HIV/AIDS infected areas. While children that are affected directly or indirectly by HIV/AIDS would be considered OVY, this is not a characteristic reflective of all those children referred to in this thesis, i.e. those that are not affected by HIV/AIDS.

Similarly, “street child” connotes homelessness and while it is a more general term adopted by the various service providers working with OVY, its ambiguity limits its use, especially within an academic setting. For example, it is wrong to assume that all street children are homeless. According to Aptekar (1994), OVY may, in fact, have a home, but whether by force or choice, spend a majority of their time on the streets whereupon they make their livelihood (p. 197). Additionally, street children are not all orphans, another common assumption associated with the term. In fact, some of these children live on the streets with their families.

To use either “OVC” or “street child” would be to exclude children whose life circumstances would otherwise identify them as relevant subjects of this research. Therefore, this thesis uses the specific term “OVY” to define vulnerable children, negating the implications that go along with using any of the above-mentioned terms. Using the term “OVY” prevents the assumption that the vulnerable children addressed are only representative of one specific form of adversity. Therefore, orphans and vulnerable youth (OVY) will be used as the primary defining term when addressing
vulnerable children. It is meant to be a comprehensive definition of youth in the worst forms of adversity while not excluding certain individuals not necessarily represented by other existing terminologies. Note, however, that terms such as “OVC”, “street children” and “MVC” (most vulnerable children) are used by other sources cited in this thesis. In those situations, OVY is intended to be interchangeable.

**What: Distinguishing between Christian Faith-based Organizations**

In addition to the differences between CFBOs and FBOs as described in the introduction, there are also varying forms within CFBO themselves. There are many different denominations within Christianity and understanding how these theological differences affect CFBO operations must be addressed. Christianity can be a blanket term for many different groups who believe in Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Bible. In a UNICEF sponsored study about FBO response to orphans and vulnerable children, Christianity is the only religion under which additional categories of definition and distinction are made: Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, and Interdenominational (Foster, 2004, p. 21). In addition, the study identifies a significant number of organizations as “Other Christian”, making up nearly half of the Christian organizations surveyed and more than a quarter of all religious organizations surveyed (Foster, 2004, p. 21).

Beyond denominational differences, Benedetti (2006) distinguishes between two types of CFBOs on the basis of religious pervasiveness: secular CFBOs and militant CFBOs. Secular CFBOs are likely to have mission statements indistinguishable from secular NGOs while militant CFBOs seek to actively spread the religious message of Christ (Benedetti, 2006, p. 853). As a result, secular CFBOs are more likely to register
with the United Nations and other similar international institutions as well as take part in academic studies. Militant CFBOs, on the other hand, are more intent on the provision of services with a strong Christian resonance and can be harder to identify by governments and international institutions for analysis. The religious pervasiveness of a given CFBO can ultimately affect the way in which organizational processes are expressed. However, there is not a clear-cut divide between secular CFBOs and militant CFBOs. Instead, each represents an extreme on a continuum along which organizations can be placed (Benedetti, 2006, p. 853).

Benedetti’s definitions have been included in order to give voice to the various differences across the CFBO spectrum. Many of the sources cited throughout this literature review are reflective of the more secular CFBOs. The organizations I have worked with and that have undoubtedly shaped my understanding of CFBO work are more militant. In light of Christian doctrine and religious motivation I assert that the similarities between secular and militant CFBOs offset the relative differences in light of this analysis. This thesis is a general overview of CFBOs and their work with OVY. Distinguishing beyond the label of CFBO, in a general sense, is simply not within the scope of this research.

While a Catholic organization working with OVY in India may operate systematically different than a high-prevalence Pentecostal organization working with OVY in Greece, there are still theological principals that are consistent between both the organizations. These spiritual and deeply foundational principals, as defined using the Christian Bible, are consistent among Christian organizations working with the OVY population. And while the interpretation and outworking of the religious text may be
varied between denominations, there still remains a generally accepted recognition of the importance of helping those less fortunate, OVY being chief among them. This fact will ultimately be what defines those CFBOs addressed in this study.

As far as terminology, “CFBO” is used in tandem with other popular terms like religious non-governmental organization (RNGO) and FBO during the course of this paper. While not all FBOs are Christian, all CFBOs are a type of FBO. All of the sources that I have included discussing FBO work have included CFBOs as part of the sample group. In most cases, CFBOs make up the majority of the sample. Therefore, FBOs will in some cases be used as a substitute term for CFBO.

In addition, Christian churches are considered to be a type of CFBO. On a fundamental level, while churches are indeed a type of organization, they can be regarded as having a unique identity compared to other NGOs, FBOs, and non-profit organizations. While I try to distinguish between “churches and affiliated organizations,” it is should be noted that certain sources cited in this paper use the two terms interchangeably and a distinction is not always clear. For the purpose of this research, the term “CFBO” is all encompassing and related to all of the various terminologies associated with Christian organizations providing humanitarian work.

**Why: Spiritual Foundations for Aiding Vulnerable Children**

What follows is an assortment of scriptures taken from the Christian Bible, a spiritual and historical account of the Christian faith that is recognized as the source of Christian doctrine and theology throughout the thousands of different denominations. Many of the scriptures referenced here are from the Old Testament, written before the birth and life of Jesus of Nazareth. As a result, Old Testament scriptures pertained first to
the Jewish people before ever being used within a Christian context. It must be prefaced, therefore, that although scriptures mandating the care of orphans would have been specifically referencing the Jewish community and likely promoting the support of Jewish children, these scriptures are still relevant to Christian organizations today. With the spread of Christianity and the recognition of the Bible as the primary Christian text, the laws and mandates of the original Jewish people have been culturally adapted as part of the Christian life. With that said, by understanding the connection between the operations of a CFBO and the spiritual mandate to care for orphaned children, we can understand why these organizations are involved in aiding the OVY population.

According to the Bible, there is a mandate to care for orphans. In the book of Isaiah (1:17, New American Standard Bible), “doing good” in the eyes of God specifically addresses the need to defend the orphan. In the book of Deuteronomy (24:21, New American Standard Bible), a collection of laws and mandates for the people of God, the Bible references taking a portion of the crops harvested and dedicating them to aiding orphans. Elsewhere, a mandate is given to the people of Israel to “not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow” (Jeremiah 22:3b, New American Standard Bible). In the New Testament, it states that religion accepted as pure and faultless before God is “to look after orphans… in their distress” (James 1:27, New International Version).

There is also considerable scriptural reference to God’s protection of orphans. The Bible states that God will protect the lives of orphans (Jeremiah 49:11a, New International Version) and that He will not abandon them (John 14:18, New International Version). God is identified as the helper of the orphan (Psalm 10:14b, New American
Standard Bible) and that, in Him, orphans finds mercy (Hosea 14:3c, New American Standard Bible). The Christians that operate CFBOs believe that fighting on behalf of orphans is of considerable importance to God, and therefore should be a primary objective of the organization itself.

For those who mistreat or abuse orphans, God executes justice upon them (Deuteronomy 10:18a, New American Standard Bible) and promises to be “a swift witness against…those who oppress…the widow and the orphan” (Malachi 3:5a, New American Standard Bible). In the Psalms (10:17b-18, New American Standard Bible), the author states, “You (God) will incline Your ear to vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror”. In the book of Exodus (22:22-23, New International Version) God warns, “Do not take advantage of…an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry” and later, “woe to those who…plunder the orphans” (Isaiah 10:1a-2b, New American Standard Bible).

Finally, the Bible also emphasizes the blessings to be bestowed upon those who are obedient in caring for orphans. In Deuteronomy (24:19, New American Standard Bible) the Lord promises to bless those who work to provide for orphans. Job, a righteous man before God, attributes the blessings in his life to helping orphans. “For when the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it gave witness of me, because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the orphan who had no helper. The blessing…came upon me, and I made the widow’s heart sing for joy (Job 29:11-13, New American Standard Bible).

These scriptures establish the theoretical framework from which CFBOs operate. For Christians, providing for orphans and other vulnerable children is not just a matter of
charity but rather a mandate derived from the Bible. Providing for the needs of the OVY population out of religious responsibility acts as a strong motivator and contributes to the advantages of CFBOs (Ferris, 2005, p. 316).

**Where: Assessing Christian Organizations and Vulnerable Youth from a Global Perspective**

A final component of this chapter is to discuss the geographical scope of the research. This literature review is a general overview of the relationship between CFBOs and OVY. As a result, sources were consulted analyzing CFBOs and OVY from a number of different regions around the world. As stated by Ferris (2005, p. 325), CFBOs are “rooted in their local communities and yet have global reach.” The advantages of CFBOs observed through the course of this research are not meant to represent only a small group but rather a multitude. Although different cultures can affect the appearance and operations of organizations, there exist consistent characteristics within CFBOs around the world. Thus cultural relativity does not negate those advantages identified and discussed in this thesis.

Rather than the conclusion of this thesis being country specific, research suggests that the characteristics of CFBOs are consistent beyond the country of origin, affiliation, or operation. As has been discussed earlier, CFBOs represent thousands of different denominations. But there are consistent principles that these organizations abide by in serving OVY regardless of geographical location. One might question the wide scope of this research but there is in fact a specific purpose in maintain a global perspective. The plight of OVY is not a country specific problem and therefore this research contributes an analysis that is consistent with the fact.
MORAL STANDING WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

The first advantage CFBOs have over other secular organizations is the moral obligation through faith that compels their service and the resulting influence and standing within society. CFBOs promote values of compassion and care, in addition to maintaining moral authority within the community (Steinitz, 2006, p. 97).

While other secular organizations are likely to operate under a similar sense or moral rightness, it is ultimately this sense of duty rooted in religious obligation that renders more commitment to the cause, especially in the face of financial or organizational shortcomings. “In contrast with the rights-based approach of many secular NGOs, the starting point for (CFBOs) is the duty-oriented language of religion characterized by obligations toward the divine and others, by a belief in transformative capacities, and a concern for justice and reconciliation” (Berger, 2003, p.19). As a result, FBOs may be more prone than secular NGOs to speak out on behalf of the marginalized because of their long-term investment and commitment to individual communities (Lipsky, 2011, p. 30).

With regard to the often-faulted missionary tradition within the western religious community and its complicity in colonialism, there also resulted church involvement in social services, particularly in education and health (Ferris, 2005, p. 316), all of which is derived out of a deep seeded sense of religious obligation to the transformation of those nations and communities. In any case, it is generally agreed that when FBOs are “both credible and influential, and when workers are committed through faith, their influence…can be invaluable” (Lipsky, 2011, p. 30).
In a comparative analysis titled *Evaluating the Strength of Faith* author Alyson Lipsky looks at the potential advantages of faith-based organizations in sub-Saharan Africa in providing health services. Her analysis uses the term “FBO” to define the organizations surveyed, however all of the organizations mentioned throughout the analysis are specifically Christian-based (African Christian Health Associations Platform, Christian Medical Commission, World Relief, Christian Medical Missions, Inc., Christian Heath Association). Lipsky (2011) concludes that, “the greatest comparative advantage that FBOs may have is their moral and ethical standing within the community” (p. 29).

Being committed to the cause of OVY aid through a sense of moral obligation ensures long-term CFBO investment and provides a powerful resource in motivating the community. For CFBOs “to ground their work in religion enhances their influence with targeted communities, as it enables them to call on people’s moral duty” (Lipsky, 2011, p. 29). This influence, congruent with the fact that CFBOs “are repertoires of spiritual sustenance and social networks” (Tadros, 2010, p. 1), makes CFBOs especially situated to impact the conditions of OVY.

The moral standing of CFBOs is used to directly affect the community in two distinct ways. The first is positively influencing CFBO beneficiaries to change risky behavior. With regards to OVY, we know that they are “most at risk of poverty, alcoholism and transactional-sex” (Steinitz, 2006, p. 100). These behaviors can be addressed by CFBOs given their moral authority and standing within the community. The second form of influence is the ability for CFBOs to mobilize a community to serve those less fortunate. By appealing to the moral sentiments of its constituents, CFBOs can rally people behind a cause and really make a difference.
Positively Influencing Risky Behaviors

The moral influence of CFBOs within vulnerable populations can help deter individuals from partaking in certain risky behaviors associated with their vulnerable status. Lipsky (2011) agrees that when “wielded correctly, this kind of influence can be very important to encouraging desired behavioral changes among beneficiary populations” (p. 30). In a comparative analysis of faith-based organizations, authors Ferguson et al. identify a positive correlation between vulnerable youth activity in the U.S. and participation in religious activities, stating: “religious practices can serve as a key protective factor that shields individuals, especially youth, from high-risk behavior and harmful outcomes” (Ferguson et al., 2006, p. 1513). The authors also recognize there exists a correlation between religious involvement and improved literacy and school involvement:

Considerable evidence…reveals that religious commitment can enhance favorable outcomes in youth, including increased academic achievement and permanence in the educational system… Church attendance by youth is also positively associated with academic achievement from childhood through late adolescence and can serve as a protective factor for at-risk youth against dropping out of school (Ferguson et al., 2006, p. 1513-1514).

And, as noted in a faith-based model of care in Tanzania: “Continued school attendance by (OVY) has been shown to be a key determinant to longer-term quality of life as it often predicts or strongly influences children’s opportunities for employment as youths and young adults” (Mmbando et al., 2009, p. 14).

Findings by Steinman and Zimmerman (2004, p. 151) suggest that African
American high-school youths' attendance at church limits the development of certain types of risk behaviors, including alcohol use, early sexual intercourse, cigarette smoking, and marijuana use. Johnson, Jang, Larson, and Li (2001, p. 479) also discovered that church attendance by African American youth had a buffering effect on serious crime involvement, concluding that, “the constraining effects of church attendance on crime among black youth received empirical support, and the effects remain significant even after controlling for nonreligious social bonding and social learning variables” (Johnson et al, 2001, p. 492). Likewise, Jang and Johnson (2001, p.116) found that church attendance by adolescents minimizes illicit drug use. Jang and Johnson distinguish between religious youth and those not engaged in religious activities, stating that:

The theoretical premise is that religious adolescents are bonded to and socialized by an institution that nonreligious adolescents are not, namely, religious institutions such as the church. Thus, the behavioral patterns of religious adolescents are guided by sanctions derived from religion, whereas those of nonreligious adolescents are not subject to such sanctions (Jang & Johnson, 2001, p. 109).

There is certainly a difference between adolescents in the United States (individuals that seemingly have easier access to education, food, and shelter) and OVY living on the streets of New Delhi. However, there is a point to be expressed through the vulnerable youth/CFBO relationship consistent in both scenarios: CFBOs are able to use their moral authority to positively influence the behavior of at-risk youth.
Lipsky states that CFBOs are more effective than secular NGOs at discouraging unprotected sex in those countries plagued by the AIDs pandemic (Lipsky, 2011, p. 28). Avoiding unprotected sex out of a sense of moral obligation to God, for example, may be more effective then convincing a community to do so through public health programs (Steinitz, 2006, p. 97). Agadjanian and Sen (2007), in their critique of faith-based AIDS care in Mozambique, also agree that it has been to the success of some faith-based organizations to provide a “barrier to HIV/AIDS by promoting, and even enforcing, less risky behaviors” (p. 362).

All of these examples point back to the intrinsic sense of moral obligation within the CFBO community and the ability to leverage this moral commitment to effect community behavior, especially in those OVY that receive sizable support from CFBOs.

**Mobilizing a Community through Faith to Serve**

In addition to positively influencing risky behaviors in OVY, CFBOs are also able to leverage their moral standing within the community to mobilize individuals to serve, whether through volunteer work or financial contributions. There exists a “grassroots connectedness with communities who follow the same faith” (Tadros, 2010, p. 6) and this characteristic of Christian organizations is central to the very organization of the church body. “Churches possess a reservoir of committed members, existing groups and youth activities on which local efforts can build for community-based volunteers” (Steinitz, 2006, p. 98).

This strength is no more evident than in observing the primary work force that backs most CFBO efforts: volunteers. “To the extent that churches are involved at the grassroots level, most of the credit, and much of the day-to-day work, belongs to the
congregational volunteers, who are mostly women, mostly middle-aged, and invariably motivated by their faith and desire to help their neighbor in need” (Steinitz, 2006, p. 101).

The fact of the matter is that CFBOs are not only able to compel people to serve on moral grounds, but are also directly dependent, for the most part, on the “repertoires of social and human capital that characterizes their work” (Tadros, 2010, p. 6).

Berger, in her exploratory analysis of religious non-governmental organizations also concluded that CFBOs are structurally organized to appeal to morality and use this influence to affect change. She states:

These horizontally and vertically organized networks constitute highly effective channels of communication as well as human and financial resources, attesting to the wealth of RNGOs’ social capital. Unlike secular NGOs, which must build their networks from the ground up, RNGOs often attach to existing infrastructures from which to recruit human and financial resources, appealing to people on the level of moral duty rather than pure rationality (Berger, 2003, p. 35).

Berger recognizes that secular NGOs providing humanitarian services also appeal to morality to mobilize public opinion. However, she makes a distinction, stating that, “religious NGOs are more directly able to raise moral issues and tap into religious discourse, thereby fuelling a sense of moral duty, indignation, or outrage, which makes change possible” (Berger, 2003, p.35). This influence is due the role that religion and faith hold in the lives of people.
POSITIVE IDENTITIES

Developing positive identities in OVY is the second advantage CFBOs have over other secular NGOs. Globalization has greatly increased the effectiveness in which humanitarian services are being distributed around the world and as a result, many of the more essential human needs such as food, housing, and health care are being addressed in vulnerable populations with more efficiency and success than ever before. Positive identity development is now an element of rehabilitation that otherwise would not have been emphasized given the sheer multitude of needs in the OVY population. Tsang, Hui and Law (2012) discuss five components of positive identity, which they correlate with self-esteem: “(1) security, the feeling of strong assuredness; (2) selfhood, the feeling of self-worth and accurate identity; (3) affiliation, the feeling of belonging and social acceptance; (4) mission, the feeling of purpose; and (5) competence, the feeling of self-empowerment and efficacy” (p. 5).

CFBOs have an established method of promoting positive identities due to the emphasis that Christianity puts on “charity and mercy…[which are] rooted in the belief in the absolute value of the human person” (Ferris, 2005, p. 313). Having a sense of value is related to each of the five components of positive identity but more directly addresses security and selfhood. CFBOs, as extensions of the larger Christian church body, are founded upon principals of community and positive group affiliation. Core to Christian belief is that each person is also created for a purpose or mission (Jeremiah 1:5a,, Jeremiah 29:11, New International Version), which is synonymous with the inherent value of each person. And finally, competence is stimulated through the actual services and skills training provided by CFBOs.
The extensive history that CFBOs have in distributing humanitarian services with an emphasis on positive identity has created a common theme within Christian rehabilitation models. Due to the extensive investment associated with identity development (i.e. raising a child), it must be prefaced that only those vulnerable children who live with or are in frequent contact with CFBOs are likely to be the beneficiaries of positive identity. Identity development is naturally stimulated through the relationships that make up the family (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008, p. 20) so only those CFBOs that make up the primary community or family unit within a child’s life are likely to effectively influence identity.

A CFBO that provides food to a slum community with vulnerable children on a weekly or monthly basis may not have developed the intimate and trusting relations necessary to effect identity perception within the child. On the other hand, a CFBO that operates a halfway house for homeless children is likely to have much more contact with OVY. This increased contact can be used to share religious teachings addressing self-worth, provide skills training that bolsters self-empowerment, and build relationships and legitimate group association giving a sense of affiliation and belonging. Collectively, these experiences also point to a more promising and purposeful future.

The actual time of contact required before this trust can be fostered is not consistent from child to child. Therefore, it is difficult to determine at what degree of contact with CFBOs a vulnerable child’s sense of identity begins to improve. It can only be assumed that the frequency and conditions of contact between OVY and CFBOs extends beyond casual interactions and brief encounters. For the sake of this study, those OVY who have come from the streets and/or are now primarily supported through the
services of an CFBO, (i.e. orphanages, schools, training centers, etc) are the primary group of OVY referred to during the course of this specific chapter.

**Origins of the Study of Identity**

Within the field of psychology, studying the nature and development of identity began with Sigmund Freud (Tsang, Hui & Law, 2012, p. 1), an Austrian neurologist and psychotherapist who lived during the late 19th and early 20th century. Freud’s theory (Lerner, 2013) emphasizes that human development consists of a number of different stages. Each stage of the identity formation process is classified by specific developmental traits and tasks. Achieving success over a task (i.e., children feeling taken care of during vulnerable and adverse circumstances) provides the foundation for successful achievement of one’s self-identity. Freud’s early writings were later expanded upon and made popular by Erik Erikson’s theoretical expositions (Tsang, Hui & Law, 2012, p.1), which also concur that personal identity develops during the course of a series of life stages.

Erikson (1994) is now considered the most prominent theorist to draw attention to the concept of identity. His contribution consists of the identification of eight specific stages in which individuals engage with the identity formation process: infancy, early childhood, childhood, puberty, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood. Unlike Freud, Erikson’s theory describes the impact of social experiences throughout the course of a person’s lifespan rather than ending with adolescence.

During each stage, the individual must face what is identified as a psychosocial crisis that involves confronting a fundamental question about one’s being and existence (Erikson, 1994). For OVY working through the adolescence stage, an identity crisis
occurs when questions are raised about their views of themselves, how others view them, and their sense of purpose and reason for existence. Positive identity development occurs when a crisis is resolved in favor of a healthy resolution to the questions (Erikson, 1994).

**Defining Identity**

Since Erikson and Freud, many different studies and additional research has been conducted (Tsang, Hui & Law, 2012, p. 1). Today, the different definitions of identity are as varied as the amount of ideas and impressions brought to one’s mind at the mention of the term. Identity has become much more broad in its definition, taking on different qualities within different academic and scientific circles. “Psychologists most commonly use the term ‘identity’ to describe ‘personal identity’ or the idiosyncratic things that make a person unique” (Tsang, Hui & Law, 2012, p. 1-2). S. Sharma and M. Sharma (2010) describe identity as “an umbrella term used throughout the social sciences to describe an individual’s comprehension of him or herself as a discrete, separate entity” (p. 119). Dr. Grotevant, professor of psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, defines identity as the “distinctive combination of personality characteristics and social style by which one defines oneself and by which one is recognized by others” (as cited in Tsang, Hui & Law, 2012, p. 1-2). Tsang, Hui, and Law (2012) distinguish between definitions, noting that, “Cognitive psychologists tend to focus on the awareness of self and the capacity for self-regulation, while sociologists examine social identity and role behavior” (p. 1-2).

The reality is that identity must be defined within the context of its use, especially when making an analysis. Therefore, based on my research and the lives of the OVY to which the term refers in this case, I have resolved to define identity as the way one sees
themself and the social role to which one adheres within a given social context as a result of this self-perception.

**Identity or Identities?**

*Early Childhood in Focus*, a series of publications produced by the Child and Youth Studies Group at The Open University in the U.K. analyses the concept of identity in a document titled *Developing Positive Identities*. Editors Liz Brooker and Martin Woodhead emphasize the importance of positive identity development in their introductory letter to the reader: “Developing a positive identity is fundamental to realizing every child’s rights. It is at the heart of early childhood policies and practices as well as being a core topic for social research” (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008, p. ix).

Throughout *Developing Positive Identities*, there is an echoed sentiment regarding identity as multi-faceted and inclusive of many different processes. As mentioned earlier, there are different definitions of identity, but Brooker and Woodhead (2008) make another distinction by saying that the standard of defining one’s identity can then be reapplied within the distinct social environments that make up an individual’s life (p. 10). Identity can have many different expressions depending on the environment and conditions: personal identity, cultural identity, and familial identity. Erikson (1994) also notes that identity can be examined at the ego, personal, and social levels. According to Tsang, Law, and Hui (2012), “the enhancement of positive identity development in young people can be achieved at both the individual and the social levels” (p. 5).

Identity itself is multi-faceted and unique to each person’s experiences. Therefore the positive stimulation of such identity must be broken down to the fulfillment of two
core human needs: the need to feel valued and the need to be unique (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008, p. 6). These two ideals are central to the ideology of CFBOs.

The absolute value that Christianity places on the human person (Ferris, 2005, p. 313) stems from seeing God as the creator of all human beings and that God has created each person for a specific purpose: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart” (Jeremiah 1:5a, New International Version). “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11, New International Version). For OVY to identify with the idea that God has created and individually fashioned them stimulates a sense of value and of being unique. This influences negative patterns of thinking, including how OVY see themselves, and promotes the development of positive identities. According to Tsang, Hui and Law (2012), self-perception is key to the stimulation of a positive identity:

(The) evaluation of oneself, often called self-esteem, can influence identity formation and the emotions and performance related to it. Positive self-evaluation typically energizes a person while negative self-evaluation, especially when it is prolonged and hinges upon attributes that cannot be easily changed or acquired, can disturb person’s emotions and performance (p. 5).

The Vulnerable Child Complex: Negative Self-Identities

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child states that a child’s standard of living should be, “adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (Assembly, 1989) and it is ultimately the accumulation of all these developmental processes that make up a child’s personal identity (Brooker & Woodhead,
When these needs are not met, like in the case of children who live on the streets, a negative self-identity is developed, wherein OVY interpret their circumstances as reflecting their worth and capabilities (Redding, 2003, p. 3). As a result, OVY are less able to meet the challenges of growing up in an adverse environment (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008, p. 48), no doubt operating out of the self-perceived negative identity. OVY experience abuse, abandonment, and exploitation and are forced into circumstances that dwarf their social, emotional and cognitive development (Redding, 2003, p. 3). These adverse childhood experiences can then affect the child’s self-esteem. Self-esteem, or “the evaluation of one’s worth, contributes to the orientation to explore by freeing the person to take risks and consider options” (Grotevant, 1987, p. 206). This exploration of options is central to the development of a child’s identity as stated by William Penuel and Tim Davey (1999). They argue that:

Identity formation, from a sociocultural perspective, involves people choosing from among the variety of historical and cultural resources available to them for living their values, making a commitment to a particular life course, and grounding their hope in the future (p. 222).

When children are prevented from engaging in this decision making process and are instead forced into a life of begging on street corners, their identity development is stifled along with their self-esteem and self-perception; thus creating what can be identified as a negative sense of identity. The problem for OVY is that the very conditions that qualify them as “vulnerable” are also the conditions that produce negative self-identities.

One study interprets this negative identity as a matter of self-efficacy. “Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people’s beliefs about their capability to produce designated
levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). When OVY are forced to encounter adverse childhood experiences that threaten their ability to exercise control over their life circumstances, they miss out on a central component of social and cognitive development, which not only affects the way they perceive situations but also affects themselves (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). In other words, the life circumstances typical among OVY correlates with developing a negative self-identity:

When children live in a family, community or society characterized by inequalities and/or conflicts, they may experience exclusion or discrimination, and these experiences will shape children's growing identity, their sense of who they are, where they belong, and how far they feel valued and respected (Brooker & Woodhead, 2008, p. 4).

Negative self-identity, while still a new topic of study as it pertains to international humanitarian work, is certainly a relevant issue to address.

**Holistic Development**

Developing positive identities is a central theme found in Christian theology. One could make a comparison between positive identity and the idea of becoming a new creation upon conversion. In the Christian Bible, there is a popular scripture used to describe the transition from non-believer to believer: “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Corinthians 5:17, New American Standard Bible). This is used to describe the new identity that accompanies salvation, namely that one is no longer under the burden of sin but rather defined by a new identity that, by all accounts, is comparatively positive.
However, one might question whether or not CFBOs can influence a vulnerable population that refuses to be converted to the Christian faith. The overemphasis on proselytizing is discussed in the chapter regarding CFBO weaknesses; but it can be noted that the positive identity/new creation idea is central to the notion of holistic development, a key focus of CFBOs working with any population or community.

There is a distinct difference from secular NGOs in that CFBOs “look at the holistic development of an individual” (Lipsky, 2011, p. 31), rather than just changing the outward behavior. In addition to education, health care, food, shelter and skills training, CFBOs also provide for religious teachings that emphasize self-improvement, psychological support, and healthy coping methods. As will be expanded upon in the next chapter, CFBOs maintain moral authority within the communities they operate and are thus able to affect people beyond their actions by appealing more to their moral duty. It is rather a matter of the heart, a focus that is much deeper. Again, this is an extension of the fact that CFBOs are concerned with the holistic development of the individual, and not just the beneficiary’s actions or way of life.

Tadros affirms this fact in her report. She states that; “FBOs are repertoires of spiritual sustenance and social networks” and they “have a comparative advantage over their secular counterparts in that they adopt a more holistic approach that addresses both the spiritual and material aspects” (Tadros, 2010, p. 1). Being holistically minded in the rehabilitation of OVY is necessary, especially for those OVY who have been living on the streets for a considerable amount of time. A complete shift is what OVY of this nature require, a shift that will ultimately be undermined if rehabilitation measure only appeal to one side of the issue, i.e. outward behavior. Being more indigenous and
grassroots, another unique quality of CFBOs (Tadros, 2010, p. 1), provides the environment for relationships and trust to flourish, conditions that are required in order for CFBOs to address the holistic needs of OVY. This is especially true for children that are neglected by the very adults who are expected to be trustworthy as their parents, caregivers or state sanctioned guardians.
LOGISTICAL ADVANTAGES

A final component in assessing the advantages of Christian organizations is addressing those logistical and organizational components that are not inherently spiritual or moral in practice, but still unique to CFBOs. The logistical advantages that will be addressed include the use of social capital to facilitate projects and distribute services, continued operation under budget shortfalls, and assimilation to cultural norms. These specific logistical advantages have been highlighted in the variety of academic sources used in this literature review, distinguishing them from other potential logistical advantages. These advantages legitimize the work of CFBOs and help to distinguish their unique characteristics as compared to secular organizations. As stated by Lipsky (2011), “Anecdotal evidence suggests FBOs may provide higher quality services than their NGO and government counterparts” (p. 31). Coupled with the previously mentioned advantages, the analysis that follows addresses the specific qualities of CFBOs that contribute to the “higher quality of service.”

Use of Social Capital

CFBOs are institutionally structured to support the needs of the poor. Churches are fundamentally constructed on the assimilation of people, creating the congregational unit that supports the practices and events of the church and other CFBOs. “Their large constituencies give faith-based organizations the potential to play a powerful role in advocacy and public awareness” (Ferris, 2005, p. 325). Tadros (2010, p. 6), in her critique of FBOs, even notes that the increasing academic literature regarding FBOs continues to point to the collection of social and human capital that characterizes their work. “The grassroots connectedness with communities who follow the same faith is also
attributed to FBOs.” Being a moral institution certainly helps to attract a broader and more consistent constituency (Lipsky, 2011, p. 29). Seeing as faith provides a common ground for people of different walks of life to meet (Lipsky, 2011, p. 34), it allows them to connect and unite in pursuit of common goals founded upon pious principals, like helping the poor. In short, CFBOs are “repertoires of spiritual sustenance and social networks” (Tadros, 2010, p. 1) and this ultimately distinguishes them from secular NGOs and gives credibility to their services. This is especially the case when working in extremely poor areas, especially during crisis situations. “Churches are found everywhere, in every village and neighborhood of the country” (Steinitze, 2006, p. 98), making them uniquely positioned to facilitate humanitarian service efforts and distribute resources to the most marginalized.

In a publication by the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (2012), it states that “FBOs are well positioned to leverage the investments of local, national, and international donors due to their respected and trusted status in local communities, established networks, and access to rural and hard-to-reach populations” (p. 13). It is recognized that the characteristics of CFBOs make them flexible in working with difficult to reach populations, OVY being chief among them, in part due to their ability to mobilize energy and resources (Lipsky, 2010, p. 34). Again, this ability is largely due to the existence of large social capital backing CFBO efforts, resulting in more efficient and faster means of response.

In fact, “churches can often respond faster and more effectively than government institutions, especially to local conditions” (Steinitze, 2006, p. 98). Seeing as OVY, especially children who are homeless, are difficult to track due to their constant migration
patterns, CFBOs are better positioned to act when immediate needs or emergencies come up. Ferris (2005) agrees, stating that, “Local faith communities are among the first to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs of affected people — long before international organizations are able to move relief assistance in” (p. 325). The position that CFBOs have within society coupled with the abundant social capital that supports their cause provides an advantage over other organizations working to help OVY.

**Continued Operation Under Budget Shortfalls**

CFBOs have greater maneuverability and thus, greater influence within the communities they work because they “are not compromised by reliance on traditional funding streams such as international donor agencies and governments” (Lipsky, 2011, p. 30). Instead, operational budgets are a combination of volunteer labor, local donations, and overseas funding (Steinitz, 2003, p. 49). On the other hand, Benedetti (2006) notes that “a quarter of the $2.5bn U.S. government funding for relief and development in 2000 went to four NGOs of which two were Catholic Relief Services and World Vision, both religious in nature” (p. 852). This, however, relates to religious pervasiveness, as described in Benedetti’s analysis of FBOs, as a determinant of federal or governmental financial support and is not representative of the entire CFBO spectrum. A large number of CFBOs depend upon local or foreign church bodies to maintain operational budgets. In these cases, the existence of extensive social capital in the form of church congregations can ultimately make the difference between working on small-scale local projects and facilitating large scale, multi-national relief programs. The reality is that some CFBOs have extensive budgets for operations. These budgets can even be larger than the
government ministries to which they relate (as cited in Ferris, 2005, p. 311) making them influential in addressing the needs of the OVY population.

When finances are sparse, CFBOs are still influential due to their continued operation under budget shortfalls. “Local faith communities have often demonstrated that they have great capacity to mobilize limited resources and funding to benefit especially vulnerable children” (Williamson & Greenberg, 2010, p. 14). CFBOs are perceived as the moral authorities within communities, rooted in their commitment to service though faith. This moral commitment is a primary advantage in CFBO operations. However, when this commitment is juxtaposed with having to operate under minimal financial resources, we can see that CFBOs are able to see beyond the limitations and make due, often at the willing expense of those volunteering. Lipsky (2011) states that FBOs are more likely to continue providing services during budget shortfalls because “their commitment to the cause is rooted in faith” (p. 31).

The commitment to the cause is ultimately a stronger motivator than adhering to service limitations imposed by limited budgets. In short, “Churches are there for the long haul, even if program funding is irregular or drops off” (Steinitz, 2003, p. 50).

Considering the conditions of OVY can worsen as they transition into adulthood (Aptekar, 1994, p. 198), CFBOs are in a position to intervene and provide the resources necessary to transition them into lives of dignity and productivity. Being committed to the rehabilitation of vulnerable children, even with irregular or insufficient funding, is what distinguishes CFBOs from their secular counterparts.

**Assimilating to Cultural Norms**

A final component to this chapter is the fact that CFBOs consistently assimilate to
the cultural norms of the country of operation. It should be prefaced, however, that cultural assimilation is only to the extent that it does not infringe upon the abiding principals of the faith. But with regards to language, food, attire, and the “understanding of local context” (Lipsky, 2011, p. 29), CFBOs are commended for their cultural assimilation.

The spiritual foundation for this characteristic can be rooted back to the biblical principal of being “all things to all people” (1 Corinthians 9: 19-22, New International Version). Paul, the author and a key figure in the early Christian church, emphasized the importance of Christians not only understanding, but also becoming like those they wish to serve. It is this mantra that has motivated many church participants to help others. This scripture also references proselytization, a practice to be discussed in the following chapter, but the foundational premise behind cultural assimilation is evident. And it is this characteristic that has added much success to the endeavors of CFBOs.

On a more practical level, Lipsky (2011) expresses that “FBOs have a better understanding of the local context” (p. 30) for a few different reasons. She expresses that in many cases, they are often “the only presence, especially in remote communities” and that “they have been there the longest; or they are able to wield the most influence” (Lipsky, 2011, p. 30). She continues with the importance of cultural assimilation, using health care services as an example:

Understanding of the local context is critical to organization effectiveness.

In the health context, FBOs may have a unique understanding of the societal context in which a disease spreads. They may have long-standing relationships with the most marginalized members of a community that allow
them to access additional information and advocate or implement programs with cultural sensitivity and greater effectiveness (Lipsky, 2011, p. 30).

Beyond the provision of services, CFBOs and their assimilation to local cultures can also be seen in how Christian teachings are shared with beneficiaries. For example, “In many recently founded independent African churches, as well as in older mainline churches, Africans are adapting Christian theology to their own context, and synthesizing Christian teachings with African values and culture” (Steinitze, 2006, p. 95). This enculturation of Christian teachings, as described by Steinitz, connects cultural contexts with the faith component used to address the physiological and emotional needs of people.

Steinitz expands by again referencing CFBO humanitarian efforts in Africa: “Modern religious leaders in Africa must link Christian values and principles to their own African culture, traditions and experience in order to give meaning to the challenges presented by HIV and AIDS, and other contemporary ills” (Steinitz, 2006, p. 96).

With regards to OVY, cultural assimilation is also of significant importance, especially when confronting those children associated with popular labels like “AIDS orphan” or “street child.” The unique identity of OVY can be lost in the label of their condition and it is, therefore, highly important for workers of any organization to be assimilated into the culture of those children being helped. As stated by Roger Magazine (2003), author of Action, personhood and the gift economy among so-called street children in Mexico City, “There is no universal ‘street child’” and the lives of these children must ”must be understood in their cultural contexts” (p. 316).

In addition, cultural understanding helps workers know how to work with OVY
who have developed certain survival mechanisms during the course of their vulnerable circumstances. Especially with regards to those children living on the streets without adult supervision, there is a tendency to distort information or manipulate the emotions of workers in order to maintain an element of control in the relationship (Aptekar, 1994, p. 200). The distortion of information can impede efforts to provide help. However, CFBOs are less likely to succumb to this distortion due to their close interaction with local culture and the desire to understand OVY not just according to their outwardly vulnerable circumstances, but also with empathy for the struggle and the cultural boundaries within which these children operate. For example, rehabilitating OVY that occupy the slum streets of Calcutta is most effective when workers are able to understand the cultural implications of the situation, i.e. the caste system or effects of rapid development and economic growth. As organizations prone to cultural assimilation, CFBOs are well positioned to address such a situation.
WEAKNESSES

A final component of this thesis is to discuss the weaknesses of CFBOs. These weaknesses include lack of professional training for volunteers, ineffective methods of analyzing results of services and overemphasis on proselytizing. According to Lipsky (2011, p. 30) in her analysis of FBOs and health care in sub-Saharan Africa, the work of CFBOs can be invaluable, but only when they are credible and influential. Improving the infrastructure of churches and related CFBOs in collaboration with the development of hospitals and schools can strengthen the social well-being of OVY (Mmbando et al., 2009, p. 19). Steinitz (2006, p. 100) also states that developing a more sustainable response to the care of OVY is essential for preventing the increase in OVY numbers. What follows are four distinct weaknesses identified by the academic community that, if addressed, can improve the overall success of CFBOs around the world, especially in helping the OVY community.

Lacking Professionally Trained Staff

Chief among those areas of improvement identified by Steinitz, senior technical officer for faith-based programs with Family Health International in Namibia, is the inexperience of volunteer staff. She advises that volunteers and other staff should be properly trained for their work with CFBOs:

Volunteers must be adequately trained and their tasks clearly defined in order to avoid poor quality work, frustration, over dependency and burnout. Volunteers need support by way of ongoing encouragement. They also need monitoring and supervision to ensure effective implementation, accountability, problem solving, and the provision of new skills (Steinitz, 2006, p. 101).
In many CFBOs, there exists a team of motivated, caring, and well-meaning staff members. But many of them lack technical training and the skills necessary to properly engage with the OVY community. While specialized training may not be necessary for the distribution of food, for example, training is certainly needed when addressing the more personal and sensitive issues surrounding OVY rehabilitation, namely counseling and psychological support.

Clement Silungwe, correspondent for the Network of Organizations for Vulnerable and Orphaned Children in Malawi compiled a report titled *Strengthening CBOs/FBOs Capacities for OVC Care and Support*. This report seeks to improve the capacity of CFBOs and other service providers in order to improve OVY access to aid, support, and protection (Silungwe, 2010, p. 6). Chief among those improvements are what Silungwe identifies as limited technical skills. The document reports that across 15 districts, 90% of workers never received training and there were individuals who oversaw centers for vulnerable children without the proper knowledge and experience (Silungwe, 2010, p. 20). Additionally, volunteers lacked managerial skills and “were only trained in three organization capacity areas, though some of them don’t remember the areas in which they were trained” (Silungwe, 2010, p. 33).

Rick James, a consultant for the International NGO Training and Research Centre in the U.K. specializes in the area of faith as a component of development. He has over 20 years of experience in NGO management, primarily in the areas of Latin America, Africa, and Europe, and expresses a similar sentiment to both Silungwe and Steinitz. He recognizes that many CFBOs lack skilled personnel, especially in areas of poverty and low literacy levels (James, 2011, p. 5). He suggests that the lack of skilled personnel is
because recruitment for the organization was based on loyalty to the faith rather than capability and experience. As a result, “professional staff find the low salary levels of churches unattractive and often move on” (James, 2011, p. 5). James’ observation goes beyond the work of just volunteers, but the fact remains that CFBOs are recognized as lacking proper training techniques and skills development for workers.

OVY rehabilitation requires that volunteers and staff are properly trained and have the skills to maneuver the delicate conditions that characterize the life of a vulnerable child. Too often, OVY are the victims of abuse, abandonment and exploitation at the hands of their very own legal guardians (Consortium for Street Children, 2009, p. 2). For CFBOs, and really any organization taking an active role in aiding OVY, it is essential that staff and volunteers be trained less the children fall victim to the shortcomings of yet more adults. OVY should not be restricted from the best available care due to the untrained worker.

**Ineffective Methods for Analysis**

The second weakness is the lack of empirical analysis to support the effectiveness of CFBOs in providing services. There is a “lack of existing data on operationalizing the ‘faith’ component in faith-based services as well as valid outcome measures for assessing the impact of services provided” (Fergusan et al., 2006, p. 1513). Silungwe (2010, p. 20), recognized an operational gap in her review of CFBO care for OVY in Malawi. She notes that “volunteers do not conduct home visits to the homes of the (OVY), to check issues of psychosocial, education and general (OVY) health”. Ensuring that CFBOs are able to effectively influence and serve the OVY population requires the aid of empirically relevant data and monitoring systems that follow up with aid-recipients. But it is not just
a question of having the ability to do so, but also conceptualizing how one can constructively analyze faith and other topics of a spiritual nature.

James recognizes the lack of effective methods for analyzing the work of CFBOs. He states that few CFBOs have monitoring and evaluation systems, which prevent both the organizations themselves and monitoring bodies from evaluating the effectiveness of the organizations over time (James, 2011, p.5). James does not neglect the potential advantages of CFBOs, “however, relatively little systematic and unbiased evidence exists to show how this potential has been realized in practice” (Agadjanian & Sen, 2007, p. 362), especially over a long period of time.

Ferguson et al. (2006) also recognize that, while many studies conclude that CFBOs are effective in providing services to OVY, there are few studies aimed at identifying “the specific faith components related to successful outcomes” (p. 1514). The authors highlight the fact that “most studies tend to utilize a single item (i.e., church attendance) to measure youths' religiosity” and that “given the lack of alternative conceptualizations of faith and religion employed by both clients and the agencies that serve them, it continues to be a challenge to understand the myriad ways in which (CFBOs) use faith to intervene in clients' lives” (Ferguson et al., 2006, p. 1514). Simply having the means to analyze the effects of CFBOs in aiding OVY is only one part of the issue. There are components of faith that simply cannot be quantified or analyzed. Some CFBOs even resist evaluations from independent monitors for fear of being discredited by evaluation methods rooted in efficiency principles that do not line up with religious aims (Berger, 2003, p.36).
Children are by very virtue of their limited experiences better characterized as *human becomings* rather than human beings. The work of CFBOs in aiding OVY in the transformational journey to adulthood can be dwarfed by ineffective methods of analysis. Rehabilitating OVY is not simply a product of a 5-step program but rather the result of many hours of investment. Analyzing the faith component of CFBO work will likely continue to be difficult to assess in the immediate future. In the meantime, implementing the means to analyze the operational and organizational components of CFBOs in analytically and empirically relevant ways should be implemented, especially if CFBO care is being considered comparable to large scale, government funded programs (U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, 2012, p. 13).

**Overemphasis on Proselytizing**

The final weakness is the overemphasis on proselytizing. This weakness is not as directly related with OVY, although CFBOs can hinder the quality of care provided to children by emphasizing proselytization over the provision of physical, psychological, and emotional care. Overemphasizing proselytization can also prevent the collaboration between CFBOs and other organizations (whether directly or as a reaction by those organizations to the hyper religious aims of CFBOs), thus limiting the potential aid of a given OVY community.

While proselytizing is a fundamental component of many CFBOs, especially those with high religious pervasiveness (Benedetti, 2006, p. 853), there arises a problem when this motive takes precedence over the distribution of services and support. CFBOs have also been known to use aid to attract members in order to bolster numbers rather than providing services solely on the basis of need (James, 2011, p. 5). Tadros (2010), in
her work on FBOs and gender roles notes that, “ethnographic studies suggest that, in some instances, services are used overtly or more subtly as a means of seeking to inculcate religious values and ideologies” (p. iii). During the tsunami in Indonesia in 2005, reports surfaced that CFBOs were trying to proselytize as well as provide relief to Muslims, which led to criticisms of the work of all Christians (Ferris, 2005, p. 323). Some CFBOs “make promises of help contingent upon conversion and have questionable practices such as forceful baptisms” (Benedetti, 2006, p. 853). Again, while proselytizing can be foundational in abiding by the CFBO label, it can also become a means of manipulation and abuse, reaffirming the very conditions that characterize OVY adversity.

Emanuel de Kadt, professor for the Department of Cultural Anthropology at Utrecht University in the Netherlands discusses the role of CFBOs in developing nations in his paper titled, Should God Play a Role in Development? According to De Kadt (2009), “Taking religion seriously is one matter, but it becomes seriously problematic when it is promoted as the only identity that counts, disregarding the many other components of identity that should be salient in different situations, thereby truncating a broader sense of self” (p. 784). Overemphasis on proselytizing and conversion is attributed to having negative side-effects on the development of poorer countries, especially when beliefs are rigid, inflexible and self-assured because it limits freedom by setting “parameters for social and cultural interaction notably around such development-related questions as gender, patriarchy and the maintenance of original cultures” (De Kadt, 2009, p. 784).

Christian missionaries, despite providing essential services to vulnerable populations such as OVY, operate under the religious conviction that their beliefs are the
ultimate truth. Missionaries promote and discourage behaviors under the premise that “God has told us so”, which, according to De Kadt (2009), “places clear limits on what is regarded as acceptable ‘development’” (p. 784). CFBOs that operate under this same conviction, especially without collaborating with other service providers, can also impede developmental measures in lieu of promoting religion.

Beyond relationships outside of the organizations and churches themselves, the notion of proselytizing is also controversial with regards to collaboration between individual CFBOs. Agadjanian and Sen (2007) in their review of faith-based activities in Mozambique note that church leader involvement with non-church members, specifically in HIV/AIDS assistance can be perceived as an attempt to recruit new members. “These perceptions, and the resulting tensions among church leaders and members, hinder interfaith congregational cooperation initiatives” (p. 366).

While more problems can be linked to the overemphasis of proselytizing, the main point of contention is that it prevents collaboration, both within and outside the CFBO community. Again, as some of the most vulnerable citizens within the international community, OVY are in need of as much aid as possible in order to transcend their adverse circumstances and become contributing and productive member of society. Working together towards that goal should be the aim of CFBOs and other organizations alike. Aiding OVY requires that communication and collaboration between CFBOs other service providers remains unhindered by the existence of walls such as hyper-religious pervasiveness. The emphasis should always be the children themselves and not the promotion of religious ideology.
CONCLUSION

I have conducted a literature review to discover the advantages of CFBOs in aiding OVY around the world. In summation, my research has identified three advantages: 1) moral obligation to the cause, 2) development of positive identities, and 3) logistical advantages including continued operation under budget shortfalls, assimilation to cultural norms, and use of social capital to facilitate projects and distribute services. These advantages are distinct from other organizations and distinguish CFBOs as being uniquely positioned to address the needs of the OVY population. In addition, there are three weaknesses that, if addressed, would increase CFBO influence and effectiveness in aiding the OVY community. These weaknesses include lack of professional training for volunteers, ineffective methods of analyzing results of services and overemphasis on proselytizing.

CFBOs are continuing to gain recognition in the eyes of funding agencies and governments as legitimate providers of aid to the world’s most marginalized populations. Highlighting the advantages of CFBOs in light of this increasing influence can promote more efficient means of helping OVY and other vulnerable populations. I plan to continue researching this topic and explore the possible implications of my conclusion and how it can affect the way international humanitarian work is carried out in the future, especially as a joint effort from both the faith-based and secular communities. According to Ferguson et al. (2006), “It is through inter-agency and inter-religious collaborations that real international progress will be made in caring for the children and youth on the streets of cities around the world” (p. 1526-1527).
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