

# A NEW MISSIONARY METHOD: LATIN AMERICA AS A MISSION FIELD

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**Abstract** Missionary work has been an integral part of community development in Latin America. However, does missionary work actually impact community development in Latin America today? While missionary methods, particularly holistic missiology, were significant to community development in the past, new, modern methods of development have evolved that do not include religion; consequently, this has largely discontinued the use of missionary work in development. This research is important because it examines whether holistic missiology is still relevant as a method of community development and whether it should continue to be utilized by agents for community development today.

My hypothesis states that holistic missiology does positively impact community development in Latin America, meaning that it is still significant to development. I then compare two cases—Bolivia and Costa Rica—using secondary sources and interviews respectively to gather data although this is not a comparative case study and the Bolivia case is simply used as a reference point. Based on evidence from the Bolivian case, I explore holistic missiology in modern-day Costa Rica through interviews with Costa Ricans and missionaries in Villa Briceno, Costa Rica. While this study evidenced that holistic missiology does have a positive impact on community development, it is to a small degree in many cases, meaning that it is not one of the best approaches to community development. However, because there was a positive impact, holistic missiology is still relevant to community development today. It still affects the communities, even if it is in a small way.

## **A New Missionary Method: Latin American as a Mission Field**

How has holistic missiology impacted community development in Latin America? Since the age of exploration, the threads of cultures have been interwoven. Many cultural aspects come together to build up communities, religion included. In the past, missionary work was an integral part of community development in Latin America. However, missionaries often have differing ideas of how to carry out evangelization. Traditional mission history emphasized the role of the missionary as the bringer of civilization to Indians (Langer and Jackson 1995, 3). Yet, overtime, missionary work evolved into much more. Nowadays, the role of the missionary is different from that of their sixteenth-century counterparts. Missionaries now seek not only to evangelize but to develop communities as well. This method is known as holistic missiology.

Nonetheless, a puzzle exists of whether missionary work actually impacts community development in Latin America today. While missionary methods, particularly holistic missiology, were

significant to community development in the past, new, modern methods of development have evolved that do not include religion; consequently, this has largely discontinued the use of missionary work in development (McGavran 1984, 6). Hence, scholars constantly debate the role of mission in community development—does it make a difference? Is holistic missiology still relevant as a method of community development, and should it continue to be utilized by agents for community development today?

This research is important because it addresses community development, an important topic in international affairs today. Historically, religion and missionaries have had an important role in social movements, such as conversion and increasing education, which made way for community development. However, in many people's eyes, the role of missionary work has faded as new methods of community development have arisen. Therefore, the puzzle that exists is whether missionaries using the contemporary method of holistic missiology are still important to community development. Is holistic missiology still relevant to community development?

My hypothesis states that holistic missiology does positively impact community development in Latin America, meaning that it is still significant to development. I examine various methods of missionary work that aim for community development before settling on holistic missiology as the most contemporary and comprehensive method. I then compare two cases—Bolivia and Costa Rica—using secondary sources and interviews respectively to gather data although this is not a comparative case study and the Bolivia case is simply used as a reference point. Community development did occur in Bolivia in the past due to holistic missiology. Based on evidence from the Bolivian case, I explore holistic missiology in modern-day Costa Rica through interviews with Costa Ricans and missionaries in Villa Briceno, Costa Rica. Does holistic missiology still positively impact community development?

The type of impact detected could have important implications. If holistic missiology does have a significant and positive impact on community development, then it would demonstrate that this method is a relevant and useful approach to community development. If holistic missiology still positively impacts development, then it would provide evidence that contemporary missionary techniques are still important to modern-day international development. However, if there is not a significant positive impact, this would reveal that holistic missiology might not impact community development on its own and must work alongside other forces, such as political policies and monetary contributions. Missionary methods might be outdated and irrelevant to the current development efforts in communities. Regardless of the results, this study will add to the current understanding of development methodologies and could help lead to improved approaches to community development.

## **The Puzzle of Missionary Methodologies**

To understand the role of missionary work in the current puzzle of community development, one must first understand past missionary method. Religion and missionary work are historically important for community development in Latin America, and scholars have discussed several methods that were used. At some point, each method had a significant impact on community development. However, it is uncertain if they are still relevant today. This paper will examine these missiology methods in order to analyze the dynamics, impacts, and implications of each on community development. Based on this analysis, the paper will assess which approach most comprehensively promotes community development in Latin America.

Before I explore these methods, it is necessary to operationalize missiology, evangelization, and community development. John F. Gorski defines missiology as “the specialized branch of theology that accompanies, analyzes, and gives direction to the missionary activity of the church” (Gorski 2004, 60). Evangelization is defined as the process in the Christian religion which seeks to spread the knowledge of the Gospel throughout the world. Community development is defined as social, cultural, and religious actions that consciously and successfully improve the livelihoods of underprivileged communities, an adaptation from theologian Steve de Gruchy’s operationalization of social development. Community development involves any activities that improve aspects of local communities and that provide individuals with skills they need to effect change in their own communities (Gruchy 2005, 29).

### *Missionary Methodologies*

Over time, scholars have discussed various missionary methods that have contributed to community development in Latin America. These approaches can be categorized into three main schools of thought: post-imperial missiology, managerial missiology, and holistic missiology (Escobar 2002, 18-19).

#### *Post-Imperial Missiology*

Post-imperial missiology, also known as liberation theology, involves a critical interpretation of mission history and re-examination of missiological methods (Neill 1966, 445). Theologian Stephen Neill states that, in this methodology, missionaries must realize the need to alter their methods while still emphasizing the traditional calling of conversion. This is what liberation theologians call inductive method: “begin with a description of the world and the church within it, reflect on the situation from a biblical perspective, and act to bring the world and the church more in harmony with this biblical version” (Cleary 2005, 179). Post-imperial missiology combines conversion with service—working to better the communities of the people through post-colonialist frameworks (Warren 1967, 77).

While post-imperial missiology has several strengths, it is not very relevant to contemporary development. The main reason is because it focuses on conversion as a primary goal. In development today, conversion is not significant and, many times, is not relevant. Post-imperial missiology continues to denounce indigenous versions of Christianity, and pushes for conversion to traditional biblical perspectives (Orta 1998, 168). Nowadays, building up skills and livelihoods in the community are more important than converting the communities to Christianity (Escobar 2002, 17-18). Post-imperial missiology is not important to modern-day community development because it lacks a “theology of freedom” (Kater 2001, 739).

#### *Managerial Missiology*

Managerial missiology uses the approach that the Christian mission is a “manageable enterprise” that can affect community development using statistical data (Escobar 2002, 19). It uses statistics, marketing techniques, and managerial objectives. The goal is to evaluate missions realistically in order to comprehend how much mission activity certain communities need. It studies social factors that stimulate numerical spiritual growth and develops an effective strategy of community development based on these factors. Managerial missiology uses quantifiable methods to evaluate missionary action, and sees potential converts as consumers.

However, managerial missiology is also not relevant to development today. It sees societies

as static and does not take into account the contexts of individual communities (Escobar 2002, 19). Rather, it sees the communities as numbers and as converts who can be “consumers” for Christianity. Therefore, scholars sometimes see managerial missiology and its “management” view of mission as too dehumanizing. It, like post-imperial missiology, does not work to build up the livelihoods of the communities as much as it focuses on converting them to Christianity. Thus, because conversion is no longer seen as a vital aspect of community development, managerial missiology is no longer significant to the development puzzle.

### *Holistic Missiology*

Holistic missiology is a method of dynamic missionary action, meaning it stresses contextual issues, considering the ethnic, social, and ecclesiastical situations of the areas and designing its methods of community development based on these factors (Escobar 2002, 19-20). In this method, missionaries guide the creation of new structures within communities and view this as an opportunity to forge new communal ties. It focuses on how the local communities pull new expressions of faith from their culture in not only biblical but local forms as well (Langer and Jackson 1995, 36-37).

Therefore, holistic missiology is the method that is most relevant community development in Latin America today. Escobar states that “the essential aim of mission is not solely the conversion of individuals, but rather the establishment of the visible church,” which is done through the building of community structures based on biblical support. Three features characterize Latin American missiology: participation in missionary acts, structure based on biblical models, and acknowledgment of the relationship that exists between the people’s faith and their interaction with social structures (Escobar 2002, 37-38). Because holistic missiology focuses on building up community structures, which in turn can build up livelihoods, this method is still important to development today. Holistic missiology is the most contemporary missionary technique, and it reflects both a historical and modern-day relevance to development. Holistic mission work allows for adaptation and emphasizes the role of the individual and the community while factoring in theology.

### **How to Explore Holistic Missiology**

Because the holistic missionary method is the most relevant method to community development today, this paper will analyze the impact of holistic missiology on community development in Latin America. The research will examine this puzzle with the question: How does holistic missiology impact community development in Latin America?

I hypothesize that holistic missiology positively impacts community development in Latin America. The independent variable is holistic missiology, and the dependent variable is community development in Latin America. Based on previous research, I expect to find a relationship between holistic missiology and community development. In the past, holistic missiology has always had a positive and significant impact on community development. While modern-day development is different from past approaches, I hypothesize that holistic missiology will still have a positive impact on community development because this method emphasizes examining the context of communities and building up community structures rather than simply converting followers. It focuses on the effect of missionary action on the community, rather than just on individual human beings.

### *Case Selection*

To examine the impact of holistic missiology on community development, I studied two cases of mission work utilizing this method. One case took place in Aymara-speaking communities in Bolivia in the late 1980s, while the other was in Villa Briceno in rural Costa Rica from 2006-2010. These cases were chosen for several reasons. Missionaries in Bolivia used holistic missiology by accounting for the context of the Aymara communities and by working to establish equivalence between Aymara and Christian identity, while using local features to build community structures (Orta 1998, 165). The missionaries in Costa Rica used holistic missiology by evaluating the context of the area and then building community structures based on context and biblical models. Both have attempted to use holistic missiology to build up communities. Additionally, Christian missionaries from the United States conducted both cases.

The differences between the cases also contributed to their selection. First, the cases took place in different countries, which means the identities of the people and the social and economic contexts of the areas were different. Also, they took place in different time periods—one in the late 1980s and the other in the 2000s. These differences could contribute to the analysis of how holistic missiology impacts community development. If the hypothesis holds true in both cases, this would show how holistic mission work has impacted community development in two very different places in Latin America.

These cases are typical of holistic missiology elsewhere in Latin America. Holistic missiology has been used in many Latin American countries, and many persons involved in development are looking to use this method in the future. These cases were chosen because they are samples of two diverse Latin American communities, which could show that holistic missiology can be utilized in any context and community.

### *Methodology*

The primary focus of the research will be an analysis of the Costa Rican mission project and its impact on the development of the community of Villa Briceno. The Bolivian case was chosen as a reference point. Holistic missiology did occur here and had a positive impact on community development. In contrast, the Costa Rican case has not been previously studied. The research will analyze the use of holistic missiology in the Costa Rican case using the Bolivian case as a control group to see if what happened in one context (Aymara-speaking communities in Bolivia) holds true in a different context (Villa Briceno, Costa Rica).

The study will gather data through secondary sources, such as articles, books, and studies done on the Bolivian case and examine it to explore the use of holistic missiology and its positive impact on the Aymara-speaking communities. A positive impact did occur here, but the research is exploring how it occurred. The findings will be compared with the results from the analysis of the Costa Rican case to determine if the Costa Rican missionaries had a positive impact on community development.

The analysis of the Costa Rican case of holistic missiology will draw its data from interviews about work done by the missionary organization Costa Rica Mission Projects in the rural and

impoverished area of Villa Briceno. The data comes from interviews of the missionaries involved and of members of the community. The researcher conducted the interviews both over the phone and through Skype. The missionary interviews took place in English, the interviews of the Costa Ricans in Spanish. The interview questions for the missionaries consist of questions about their project in Villa Briceno, dynamics between themselves and the community, and their opinion of the impact on the area. The questions used to interview the community members ask about the mission project, their personal feelings, and changes in the community. Overall, seven interviews were conducted—three missionaries and four community members. This was fewer than desired; however, these were the only subjects that would respond. Thus, this is a limitation to the study.

## **Comparing Uses of Holistic Missiology**

### *Aymara Communities in Bolivia*

The Aymara are an indigenous ethnic group found in the Andes in western Bolivia. They lived in the region for centuries before becoming a subject people of the Spanish. Missionaries have long worked with the Aymara communities, and, for decades, these missionaries simply sought to convert the Aymara to Christianity, without caring about the impact on the community. However, in the 1980s, missionaries in rural Aymara-speaking communities began a different approach: inculturation, or holistic missiology. In recent years, Christian missionaries have tried to establish equivalence between the Aymara identity and the Christian identity. The missionaries used the context of the Aymara communities and culture to emphasize traits that reflected Christian values, such as their worship of Pachamama, who is seen as the origin of life and divinity (Orta 2004, vii). Missionaries tried to establish equivalence between the concept of Pachamama and the concept of God to increase understanding in the Aymara. The missionaries incorporated aspects of their traditions into religion, such as making offerings to Pachamama to assure a good harvest or cure illness. They also took into account Aymara mythology, including legends about the origins of things, such as the wind, hail, mountains, and lakes. Lastly, the missionaries took the Aymara idea of a god who taught the people their customs, languages, and the rules for a moral life, and tied that into concepts of Christianity. The evangelization done in these communities accounted for Aymara locality, ethnicity, and tradition. The missionaries used Aymara traditions to construct metacultural methods by adapting their efforts to a specific cultural context (Orta, 1998, 167). This demonstrates their use of holistic missiology.

This use positively impacted community development in several ways. Their method of holistic missiology strived to recuperate indigenous culture. For example, the missionaries embraced the ways of the Aymara ancestors, once considered idolatrous, as Christian, which led to a revival of Aymara traditions. Holistic mission work in these areas also practiced social action and promoted communal solidarity and justice (Orta 1998, 168-169). They emphasized the importance of helping one another and providing services to the community. These services included education, small jobs, and improved health care (Poma 1995, 443). The missionaries taught that communal was better than separate, and this helped to tighten the communities in both religious and social contexts. Father Alonso, a foreign missionary, demonstrated this in his sermon when he stated, "Which is more Christian? Communal or separated? Communal! This is seen not only in Christianity, but in your past as well" (Orta 1998, 168). The missionaries built up a nature of solidarity between the Aymara people, which strengthened

communal ties and, consequently, communal structures.

The missionaries also sought to increase Aymara involvement in the church through faith groups. Various rituals of community, along with evangelization, marked these gatherings. Locals first came due to the draw of community rituals but, eventually, began participating in not only the faith groups but also church services (Orta 1998, 171). Entire families would come together to attend these groups, and, consequently, the bonds of family in the communities were reinforced. Additionally, the missionaries increased involvement by having Aymara catechists, those who were trained to instruct others in the Christian faith, lead the faith groups. The community approved and appointed these catechists and often saw them as authority figures, which led to a more structured community (Orta 2004, vii). Missionaries also involved themselves in the community by participating in traditional rituals, attending community gatherings, and providing services, such as education and health, to the communities (Poma, 1995, 443). Hence, the Aymara saw them as facilitators of development as well as church representatives.

Because this study defines community development as social, cultural, and religious actions that improve the livelihoods of underprivileged communities, there was definitely a significant positive impact on community development in the Aymara communities. Through their work, the missionaries increased community involvement, reinforced family bonds, and brought the community closer together, thereby strengthening the institutions and foundations of the community. They improved education in the communities, provided health services, and sometimes offered the people work, which they did not have many opportunities for, as relatively isolated peoples in a new and competitive world (Poma 1995, 444). The missionaries used social services, culture, and religion to help the community and to increase the people's livelihoods. Consequently, their use of holistic missiology did have a positive impact on community development in the Aymara-speaking communities in Bolivia.

#### *Villa Briceno, Costa Rica*

From 2006-2010, Costa Rica Mission Projects, a Christian mission organization, went into Villa Briceno, Costa Rica to conduct missionary work. The missionaries invited mission groups from the United States as volunteers. Villa Briceno is a small, rural, and very impoverished area in southern Costa Rica. In the past, the United Fruit Company existed in the area but it later pulled out, leaving Villa Briceno in complete poverty. Costa Rica Mission Projects rebuilt a recreational center, or camp, as a gathering place, renovated a church, and built a classroom, all for the entire community to use. The group also employed holistic missiology. Rather than simply trying to convert the people, the missionaries worked to build up the community by building institutions, along with trust (Bailey 2011).

The purpose of this analysis is to examine whether the missionaries' impact on the community goes beyond the construction of buildings. How did the use of holistic missiology impact community development in Villa Briceno? How did it affect the livelihoods of the Costa Ricans in the community? Was there a positive impact? In this modern case of community development, is holistic missiology still a relevant method? The study examines these questions first through interviews with the missionaries and then through interviews with the Costa Ricans in the community. I interviewed three missionaries and analyzed their responses to determine if holistic missiology had a positive impact on community development, beginning with the head missionary.

## WIL BAILEY

Wil Bailey is the founder and head missionary of Costa Rica Mission Projects. He is in charge of many of the decisions for the mission projects. He also coordinates the groups of volunteers from the United States that come on short-term trips to help. He answered several questions about the mission project and the community.

*INTERVIEWER:* In terms of your focus, how much was placed on religious development and how much was placed on community development?

*WIL:* We provide churches with the infrastructure they need to develop the ministries that God has called them to in their communities. We hope that our presence in Villa Briceno was a blessing to the whole community, not just the church. However, generally, our focus was more church specific than community specific.

*INTERVIEWER:* What were the dynamics like between you and your fellow missionaries and the people of the community?

*WIL:* As far as the community goes, we were most directly involved with the church family. However, during the years we spent in Villa Briceno, we were constantly visiting the local store for snacks and doing activities with the children at the local school. We often heard stories and comments about how excited the volunteers were when they felt like they had gotten to know some of the local people, and vice versa.

*INTERVIEWER:* How did the community change over the four years of the project? What kind of change occurred? Did more people begin attending church functions?

*WIL:* I honestly do not know the answer to the first part this question. The church in Villa Briceno has grown during the time since we worked there. There has been about a twenty percent increase.

*INTERVIEWER:* In your opinion, what impact was left on the community due to the project and the volunteers that came?

*WIL:* Ultimately, only time will tell. I hope that our efforts motivate each church to rethink what they are capable of as far as their own vision for reaching out to their neighbors. The buildings are important, but embracing the fact that we are all part of a Universal Body of Christ is much more important (Bailey 2011).

This interview was interesting because, even though he is the founder and head of Costa Rica Mission Projects, Wil did not glorify the work done by the project. He seemed very honest in his answers. Based on his responses, it seems as if the project focused more on religious development than community development. Also, it seems like the missionaries had more contact with community members involved in the church than those who were not. His statement that, "We think it is



important that the volunteers from the States have the opportunity to interact with the local people, and worship services are a major way we see that happen,” reinforces this (Bailey 2011). Hence, most of the community involvement they had was with locals involved with the church prior to their arrival. Additionally, Wil admits that he does not know if there was an impact due to their work. He says more people did begin attending the church in Villa Briceno since the completion of their mission project, but there is no evidence that it was a cause of their work. Also, his answer “Ultimately, only time will tell,” indicates that no noticeable impact on community development occurred as a direct result of their mission work. They locals and the missionaries formed relationships, and the church itself was improved, but based on Wil’s interview, their work had more of an impact on religious development than community development in Villa Briceno. However, Lauren, the next missionary interviewed, was of a somewhat different opinion.

#### LAUREN DUNAGIN DE ALVAREZ

Lauren is a missionary with Costa Rica Mission Projects. She began working with them two years before the Villa Briceno project. Her responses were quite different from Wil’s in that she believes that their use of holistic missiology did have a positive impact on community development, making it relevant to development today.

*INTERVIEWER:* In terms of your focus, how much was placed on religious development and how much was placed on community development? Why?

*LAUREN:* I would say that the same amount of focus was placed on religious and community development. It is a religious organization so, for example, we had Bible School for the kids, which helped us form relationships with both the kids in the community and their parents. It was a pretty equal amount because we reached out to the community but we also worked to share the Gospel. Our main goal was to make connections with the community, but also to do construction.

*INTERVIEWER:* What were the dynamics like between you and your fellow missionaries and the people of the community?

*LAUREN:* I, and the other missionaries, became good friends with a lot of the people in the community because we were there for four years. The locals were open and wanted to get to know us. The kids were open and wanted to hang out. They were very welcoming and made me feel like a part of the community. Even now, some still keep in touch with me.

*INTERVIEWER:* How did the community change over the four years of the project? How did the people in the area become more involved in the community? Did more people begin attending church functions?

*LAUREN:* People did become more involved with the church. Sometimes it was because they were curious about what was going on and why so many gringos were there. Some would come in their spare time and help build because they felt like the work we were doing affected them.

*INTERVIEWER:* In your opinion, what impact was left on the community due to

the project and the volunteers that came?

*LAUREN*: I feel like the community understood the purpose of the construction of the camp. I also feel like the community was able to form relationships with people from a different country. Overall, I feel like there was a positive impact (Dunagin de Alvarez 2011).

Lauren's responses gave the impression that there was a more noticeable impact on community development due to the mission project. She also answered that they placed the same amount of focus on religious development as community development. While they obviously worked to share the Gospel, they also reached out to the community to make connections and to do construction work. She stressed that the relationships formed with the Costa Ricans in the area had a positive impact. According to her, more people became involved with the church; however, the only reason given was that many were curious about the Americans. This does not seem as if the locals joined because of the missionary efforts to spread the Gospel. However, no matter what the locals' reason for joining the church, the fact that they missionaries' work did lead more Costa Ricans to join the church could have led to strengthened ties and structures within the community. So, while Lauren says there was an impact on community development, it was mainly through the creation of new relationships, which could have strengthened community ties and could have brought the locals closer together. It also could have led the Costa Ricans to see outsiders in a more positive light. Hence, while there was a positive impact, it was to a somewhat smaller degree. Karen, the third missionary interviewed, seemed to agree with Lauren in a few ways regarding their work.

#### KAREN WINTERCAMP

Karen is also a missionary for Costa Rica Mission Projects. The first project she worked with them on was in Villa Briceno. She has worked on one other project since then. Therefore, her responses to the questions are from a fresh perspective of mission work. Also, because she has only been involved in two projects as a missionary, this led her to compare the two.

*INTERVIEWER*: In terms of your focus, how much was placed on religious development and how much was placed on community development? Why?

*KAREN*: I think that there is about the same amount on each. When we worked in the community, we wanted to share God's love and message. We also witnessed their religion and the way they worshiped. This built a sense of community between the Costa Ricans and us. They reached out to us, and we did the same to them. However, we were also very focused on the construction part. Our main goal every day was to work on the construction of the buildings.

*INTERVIEWER*: What were the dynamics like between you and your fellow missionaries and the people of the community?

*KAREN*: In Villa Briceno, we got to know many members of the community. They were open to us and wanted to hang around the groups. However, this has been different at the other project that we have worked at. Sometimes, working in the

city, there is not much of a connection at all.

INTERVIEWER: How did the community change over the four years of the project? What kind of change occurred? How did the people in the area become more involved in the community? Did more people begin attending church functions?

KAREN: I think more people became involved. People from the community came to the worksites to help us build. When the children got out of school, they come see what the “Americans” were doing.

INTERVIEWER: In your opinion, what impact was left on the community due to the project and the volunteers that came?

KAREN: I think in Villa Briceno, there was a positive impact on the community development. It is such a poor area that any work done will help. I think that the people were truly grateful that we were there. However, in the project in the city, it did not seem like the community changed at all and there wasn't really an overall impact (Wintercamp 2011).

Karen's responses make for interesting analysis. She says they placed an equal amount of focus on religious and community development, but, like Lauren, the “community development” she talks about is construction and building connections with the Costa Ricans. She does not say anything about more people becoming involved in the church, but simply talks about locals coming to the worksite and hanging out with them. This was her view of increased involvement. In addition, while she says there was a positive impact on community development, the reason she gives is because it is a poor area and that any work done would help. Therefore, while there was a positive impact because of the group work, it seems that work done by any group would help because Villa Briceno is so impoverished. Additionally, Karen's comparison between the project in Villa Briceno and the project they did after in Alajuela, a big city, gives the impression that the area matters. According to her responses, in Villa Briceno, the missionaries formed relationships and made an impact in Villa Briceno, but not in Alajuela. Thus, it seems that the impact on community development could depend on the location of the project or the level of poverty and not solely on the work of the missionaries.

The last four interviews were of Costa Ricans who live in the area of Villa Briceno and who had daily contact with the missionaries. They saw firsthand the impact of the missionaries' work on the community, and did believe that there was a positive impact.

#### GIKE AGUERAS ROJAS

Kike is a Costa Rican living in the community in Villa Briceno. He is currently twenty-one years old and is a member of the church in Villa Briceno that the missionaries worked with.

INTERVIEWER: What were the missionaries doing in the community? What did they do on a typical day? What do you believe they were there to do?

KIKE: The groups did construction most of the time, building a church, classroom, and so on. I think they were there to build structures that would help the community.

INTERVIEWER: What were your feelings about the missionaries and their work? Do you know how others in the community felt?

KIKE: Personally, I like the missionaries and their work. I made a lot of good friends and I felt very blessed with all the things I learned while they were doing their work. I think the others in the community were very thankful for all the work and the programs that the missionaries did in the community and the church.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think your community is better off, worse, or the same due to the missionaries' work? Why? How did you see your community change?

KIKE: I think the community is better. We made friends with the missionaries, and some of us still keep in touch with them. They also built buildings to help our community. We were very grateful (Agueras Rojas 2011).

Kike's responses reinforce that, overall, the missionaries mainly developed relationships with people in the community. He stresses that he was good friends with the missionaries and that other people liked them as well. He was also involved with the missionaries at church services and functions, but he was a church member before the missionaries' arrived. He says that the community is better off because the missionaries constructed buildings that would benefit the community. There was a contribution made by the missionaries' work to the development of the community. Kike's interview gives the impression that these projects and buildings brought the people closer together. It is evident that the missionaries established strong connections with people in the community and constructed buildings for community use, and there was definitely an impact on the community socially.

#### HUGUITO GONZALEZ

Huguito is a twenty-six year old community member in Villa Briceno, as well as a member of the church before the arrival of the missionaries.

INTERVIEWER: What were the missionaries doing in the community? What do you believe they were there to do?

HUGUITO: They built a camp, worked on the church, and build a room at the school. They also worked with evangelism and distributed food and sometimes clothes. They had Bible School which also helped the children.

INTERVIEWER: What were your feelings about the missionaries and their work? Do you know how others in the community felt?

HUGUITO: The missionaries and the groups were a great help in the community. I think all the people liked when they came and would join in the church because they were there. Ticos and gringos shared together and became friends. We went to eat ice cream several nights and we shared devotions. They went to church with us. We had meals with them a lot too.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think your community is better off, worse, or the same due to the missionaries' work? Why? How did you see your community change?

HUGUITO: With the arrival of the Americans, the community saw many benefits,

especially because we are in a rural area of the country. There was an impact because of the work of the gringos (Gonzalez 2011).

Huguito spoke of works the missionaries performed besides construction. He mentioned that they also evangelized the inhabitants, provided bible school, and distributed food and clothes to the community. The food and clothes distribution could have improved the livelihood of some poor families in the community for a short time. However, this was temporary, as the distribution would have ended after the missionaries left. He too focuses on the friendship of the missionaries and volunteers, describing how they went to church and fellowshiped. He did say that more people joined in church but his reasoning was that the “gringos” were there. This reinforces what Lauren said in her interview: some of the locals’ may have come to church and the worksite, but many times it simply had to do with curiosity rather than evangelization. Lastly, Huguito states that the community saw benefits particularly because they are in a rural area of the country, giving the impression that their location had much to do with it. Thus, if an impact on community development did occur, there is no evidence that it was solely due to the missionary work. He did express that the missionaries’ work helped increase unity in the community but this is one small step towards community development. The next Costa Rican interviewed, Felipe, was of a similar opinion.

#### FELIPE BARBAS

Felipe is twenty-four years old and lives in Villa Briceno. He too was a church member prior to the arrival of the missionaries.

*INTERVIEWER:* What were the missionaries doing in the community? What did they do on a typical day? What do you believe they were there to do?

*FELIPE:* They were building a camp and doing repair work. They also were helping poor people with food and preaching the Gospel. They also prayed for the community.

*INTERVIEWER:* What were your feelings about the missionaries and their work? Do you know how others in the community felt?

*FELIPE:* I liked the missionaries and the groups a lot. People usually liked them because they were helping us.

*INTERVIEWER:* Do you think their project aided in the development of the community? Why or why not?

*FELIPE:* Yes. The project helped in terms of infrastructure. The missionaries provided construction. They also gave out food.

*INTERVIEWER:* Do you think your community is better off, worse, or the same due to the missionaries’ work? Why? How did you see your community change?

*FELIPE:* I think the community is better. I also think people in the community got a different perspective of both the church and the Americans. They constructed buildings for us (Barbas 2011).

Felipe also spoke of how the missionaries distributed food and preached God's message to the community. However, he mainly focuses on construction work, saying the community was better off because they constructed buildings and developed infrastructure. In addition, he was good friends with the missionaries and says people generally liked them because they were helping the community. From his interview, it seems that the missionaries' work did have a positive impact on community development due to missionaries' distribution of food and building of infrastructure. While this community development may be to a small degree, it did occur. The next interviewee portrayed a greater picture of the impact of the missionary work on the community of Villa Briceno.

**DON HUGO GONZALEZ ARAYA**

Don Hugo is a well-respected leader in the community, as well as a church patriarch. He is fifty-seven years old and has been involved in both the community and the church well before the missionaries arrived.

*INTERVIEWER:* What were the missionaries doing in the community? What did they do on a typical day? What do you believe they were there to do?

*DON HUGO:* The work they did was varied. The most was construction including the camp, a church, and a classroom. They presented the Gospel in different ways. They played with the children and did Bible School. They also assorted materials to the communities.

*INTERVIEWER:* What were your feelings about the missionaries and their work? Do you know how others in the community felt?

*DON HUGO:* I had feelings of respect, appreciation, and I think a lot of people felt that way.

*INTERVIEWER:* Do you think their project aided in the development of the community? Why or why not?

*DON HUGO:* I think the work in the community has helped the development. They have constructed buildings for community use. For example, they are used for classes and for meetings. The camp is used for graduations and weddings, and sometimes other churches nearby use it.

*INTERVIEWER:* Do you think your community is better off, worse, or the same due to the missionaries' work? Why? How did you see your community change?

*DON HUGO:* I think the community is better. They built structures for us. The missionaries and the groups of volunteers also helped with sales at the store and with nearby hardware stores in the town nearby. They also bought crafts that people in the community made (Gonzalez Araya 2011).

Don Hugo is a different subject than the other community members interviewed. He is not only a patriarch within the church, but a community member as well. Nevertheless, his responses were relatively similar. He describes the work of the missionaries as including construction and social work. Social work included evangelism, bible school, and distributing materials to the community. Thus, it seems as if there was a focus on both religion and community, as the missionaries stated in

their interviews. According to Don Hugo, the work did help because the buildings were for community use for events such as class, meetings, and weddings. He also says that, while there, the missionaries and volunteers helped with sales at the store in town and bought crafts made by locals. However, this income that the missionaries provided would have ended as soon as they left the area. Thus, it was not a lingering impact on the livelihoods of the community members. Nonetheless, a positive impact did exist. Through the construction of buildings for gatherings and the establishment of connections, holistic missiology did develop the community socially.

### **Drawing Conclusions: How Does Holistic Missiology Have An Impact?**

The study examined the hypothesis, holistic missiology positively impacts community development in Latin America, using two cases: missionaries in Aymara-speaking communities in Bolivia and in Villa Briceno, Costa Rica. Both cases involved holistic missiology, and, in both cases, missiology impacted community development, though it was to varying degrees. The Aymara case had portrayed a significant impact on community development because the use of holistic missiology led to better education, more jobs, better infrastructure, and stronger family and community ties. The Costa Rican case was different. While holistic missiology did have an positive impact on community development in Villa Briceno, it was to a smaller degree.

For the purposes of this study, community development was conceptualized as social, cultural, and religious actions that seek to improve the livelihoods of underprivileged communities. Using this conceptualization, the interviews, along with the Bolivian case as a reference point, it seems that holistic missiology did have a positive impact on community development in Villa Briceno, though perhaps not a lasting impact and perhaps not on the entire community.

There were several differences between the Bolivia and Villa Briceno missionary projects. While both emphasized forging ties with the community and spreading Christianity, the missionaries in Bolivia worked to increase community solidarity as well as to help livelihoods through improved education, providing health care and jobs, thereby strengthening the foundations of the community. Meanwhile, the missionaries in Villa Briceno focused on building connections, constructing buildings for the community and, to a small extent, distributing food and clothes. These differences were the reason why the Bolivian missionaries had a stronger impact on community development than the Villa Briceno project.

While the missionaries' work in Costa Rica was important, it did not have a large effect on the entire community. The buildings are of a great use but will not improve the people's status or work towards bringing them out of poverty. Additionally, the activities in the buildings (church, school, weddings, and meetings) would most likely still have taken place elsewhere had buildings not been constructed. The buildings simply give the people places to gather so that the community could come together. The distribution of food and clothes and purchases of goods were both temporary. However, despite this, there was still a positive impact on community development. There may not be long term financial effects, but the missionaries still contributed. These projects could have brought people closer together by offering accessible community meeting places.

The connections with people in the community are also beneficial but, likewise, does not increase people's livelihoods. In their responses, the Costa Ricans largely focused on the fact that they

liked the missionaries and became friends with them. However, the establishment of camaraderie allowed people from two different countries to meet and learn more about the other. It also could have brought the locals to regard outsiders in a more positive light.

Additionally, the majority of the interviews mentioned that the missionaries worked to evangelize, provided bible school, and were involved in church services. Despite the fact that they built structures for the community, the project still focused more on religious development than community development. Also, the missionaries' seemed to be more involved with the community members who were also church members. The missionaries worked with the church and attended church services and functions; hence, they would naturally have more contact with people who were actively involved in the church. Of the many Costa Ricans contacted, the only ones willing to be interviewed were church members before the arrival of the missionaries. It appears that the missionaries did not influence the community as a whole but rather the portion of the community involved in the church.

Accordingly, the use of holistic missiology in Villa Briceno did have a positive effect but not to a large degree. The responses to the interviews reinforced that the work of the missionaries impacted people socially. Each of the responses by both missionaries and community members emphasized that the missionaries and volunteers focused on constructing buildings to establish places for gatherings and on establishing connections with the locals. Despite the smaller impact, holistic missiology did have a positive impact on the development of the communities in Costa Rica. This shows that holistic missiology is still relevant to community development today, though its impact may occur in varying degrees depending on the context and the community. Nonetheless, the use of holistic missiology for community development is still important. It could lead to stronger community ties, increased infrastructure, distribution of food and clothes (though this may be temporary), and relationships between peoples of different countries. So, holistic missiology does have a positive impact on communities in Latin America, though, as a branch of community development, its impact is to a smaller, less significant degree.

Though the Bolivian and Costa Rican cases were examples of holistic missiology, the conclusion cannot be applied to all examples of holistic mission work. There were limitations to the study due to time constraints, resources, and intervening and antecedent variables. Because so few people were willing to be interviewed, this is a small sample size of interviewees. They might not be completely representative of the entire community in which the mission project took place. Also, the interviews of the Costa Ricans took place in Spanish, so there could be errors due to translation. The role of the memory is also a factor. Even though only two years have passed since the completion of the work in Villa Briceno, people's memories could have changed. Things could have occurred since the completion of the project that might have affected the community, but due to memory, those interviewed could have attributed these changes to the missionaries' project. Additionally, the only community members who responded were church members, and all except one were in their twenties. These factors could have skewed their views, as the missionaries could have appealed more to church members and young people. HoHO

Intervening and antecedent variables also exist. The intervening variables are the location and the cultural and political contexts of the mission area, and the antecedent variable is the existence of a local church or religious ideology before the arrival of the missionaries. Each of these variables could themselves affect community development and could alter the perceived impact of holistic



missiology on those areas. This is why, in his interview, Wil stated that he did not know if there was an impact on the community because of the project. Church attendance had increased, but there was no evidence that this was due to the mission work.

If this study were to be conducted again, some changes would be made. If further time and resources were possible, interviews conducted in the actual areas would be more informative and helpful than relying on responses through the Internet and phone. Face-to-face interviews might get more community members to participate, as the interviews would seem more personal. Interviews that could not take place over the phone or computer due to access problems could be conducted. Firsthand observation of Villa Briceno would be valuable to supplement the interviews. Comparing these observations and interviews could account for lapses in people's memory and differences in their perspectives. The exploration of more cases could also occur if time and resources would allow for it.

To build further upon this research, one could examine several issues. One could examine holistic missiology in other cases or possible alterations to increase flexibility. One could also explore other development methods that might be more versatile and more likely to impact community development. Lastly, a continued study could explore the finding that holistic mission work affects communities socially, or social development, as a new hypothesis.

For scholars and political scientists, these findings are significant because they build upon knowledge used in the debate over development methods in rural communities. Some scholars argue that holistic missiology is one of the best modern approaches to development because of its flexibility and versatility in affecting community development, and some argue that it is no longer relevant to community development. This study shows that both have some validity to them. While this study evidenced that holistic missiology does have a positive impact on community development, it is to a small degree in many cases, meaning that it is not one of the best approaches to community development. However, because there was a positive impact, holistic missiology is still relevant to community development today. It still affects the communities, even if it is in a small way. Additionally, where proponents of holistic mission work would argue that it would impact community development in any context, this was not the case. The Aymara communities in Bolivia and the community in Villa Briceno, Costa Rica are quite different, and, upon examination, mission work impacted community development significantly in one but not the other. Overall, holistic missiology works in some cases but not others and might need other factors to aid in community development. Thus, this study of the case in Villa Briceno can be instructive. The findings show that holistic missiology has its weaknesses and scholars and political scientists can use this to explore improved methods of community development.

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