How Theology Shapes Practice in Faith-Based Organisations Supporting Families in New Zealand

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Abstract

The biblical imperatives for Christians to love their neighbour (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31), care for widows and orphans (Jam 1:27), seek the good of the communities in which they are located (Jer 29:7), and respond to the basic needs of those around them (Matt 25:36-40) have resulted in a range of responses to social needs from adherents of the Christian faith. A number of mainstream Christian denominations and individuals within New Zealand, motivated by their faith, have sought to respond to social needs, including those of families. They have institutionalised their responses, establishing organisations dedicated to carrying out humanitarian endeavours on their behalf. However, institutionalisation brings with it a number of significant challenges for these faith-based organisations (FBOs). Financial pressure, requirements from government agencies and professional bodies, complex relationships with the church, and the distractions of daily operational activities, all influence the way that FBOs engage with their foundational faith commitments. This raises the question: How does theology shape practice in faith-based organisations providing support to families in New Zealand?

Having identified FBOs with national scope, I selected two as major case studies and three as minor cases. The study of each FBO involved a survey of their online presence and publicly available documents and publications. References to faith-based values and mission in these sources revealed an espoused theological position which the FBO publicly portrayed. Five interviews for each of the minor cases and ten interviews for each of the major case studies were then conducted. Interviewees were selected from service centres in the Waikato and Auckland regions of New Zealand’s North Island, and from a representative cross section of the FBO with regard to length of employment, seniority, and personal faith affiliation. The interviews revealed the operant theology expressed in the practices of the agency. This allowed an analysis of the coherence between the espoused and operant theology of the FBO, and a cross-case analysis enabled industry trends to be identified.

While I was looking for how theology shaped practice, I found that the effect practice had on theology was a more significant feature in most of the FBOs. Although a strong value of compassion motivated most participants, and some referenced this in biblical or theological terms, a theological view of family was only weakly developed in most interviewees. The effects of practice shaping theology resulted in increasingly complex relationships between FBOs and the church and in organisational mission drift. Resource dependence, along with management structures and leadership, influenced both the risk of mission drift and the health
of the relationships between the church and “their” FBO. The extent to which the FBO’s activity was considered a ministry of the church also influenced this relationship. Explicitly stated mission, values, and policy statements had a negative correlation with mission drift, as did the celebration of organisational origin stories. This thesis concludes with a discussion on some of the implications of these findings for the faith-based social service sector and for church ministry.
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Now you, the reader, can plainly see why I boldly claim that my support team was the best!
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Chapter 1. A Christian Social Response

In 2013, while on a family holiday at the beach, I received a phone call from a friend informing me that his marriage was over and that his family was going to be irrevocably fractured. Within hours my wife and I had left our own family, flown to be with my friend, and in the midst of sitting with him in his hurt, I felt that I should confront him about some issues. Over the next two days I witnessed the beginning of a long road of healing in that marriage. Today that marriage is strong, loving, and honest. My friend and his wife now help other people in distress, they are involved in church leadership, and they have had two more children. I am both amazed and privileged when I consider the role that I was able to play in that critical time. Although my response was motivated in part by love for a friend, how I responded was a direct result of my faith and my theological conviction of the value of families. However, if I hadn’t been there, who could they have turned to, what support would have been provided, and what Christian ethic would have driven that support?

In the course of my previous research investigating the impact of fatherlessness on the way that individuals relate to God as father, I discovered the significant influence which upbringing and home environments can have on child outcomes; providing support to families matters both theologically and sociologically. The value that I personally place on the family unit, along with the weight of evidence that highlights the sociological impact of families failing, is a significant motivator for me in undertaking this research. An equally strong motivator is a conviction that faith ought to matter in everyday life. Jeremiah instructed the Israelites in exile to seek the welfare of the city (Jer 29:4-7), Jesus insisted that loving your neighbour was the second greatest commandment (Matt 22:39), and James 2:14-26 instructs believers to demonstrate their faith with actions. This is not to suggest that other aspects of faith do not matter, but rather that the most meaningful faith is experiential, reasoned, and practical. John Stott wrote that

> to live under the cross means that every aspect of the Christian community’s life is shaped and coloured by it. The cross not only elicits our worship (so that we enjoy a continuous, eucharistic celebration) and enables us to develop a balanced self image (so that we learn both to understand ourselves and to give ourselves), but it also directs our conduct in relation to others.¹

Both my personal experiences and research reinforce this faith-based conviction, but my experiences also make me cautious about the institutionalisation of Christian responses to meet family needs. I have seen first-hand the challenges that faith-based agencies founded on

Christian principles face when they begin to engage with a secular market, access commercial or government funding, and seek to meet key performance indicators as measures of success for trustees and funders alike. The desire to scale a Christian response, even when clearly motivated by a theological conviction, still poses the risk of removing the “Christian” from that response.

Christian faith-based organisations (FBOs) make up the majority of non-governmental agencies that provide social services in support of families in New Zealand. A wealth of material in social science publications from diverse countries explores various aspects of FBOs, and much of that research acknowledges the role that faith communities play in providing social care. However, there is a distinct lack of research on how their faith, their theology, influences their practice.

While canvassing industry stakeholders in the process of planning this research project, I was informed that the intersection of faith and practice within FBOs was a consistent challenge, particularly for those who work in the social service sector and provide support to families. A manager of a large FBO noted that the role and influence of faith in practice was the central challenge facing FBOs and encouraged me to pursue my line of enquiry. The public discussions which were taking place around the subjects of same-sex marriage and transgender rights at the time were placing pressure on Christian groups to articulate their positions on these and other sensitive issues.

As a consequence, the question of how faith shapes practice for FBOs was a topical concern. At the same time, a number of organisations were distancing themselves from faith-based roots in an apparent attempt to avoid controversy. In some cases, the shifts in organisational mission were unconscious enough to be called “mission drift,” the unintentional change that an organisation may experience over time and which causes it to deviate from the established vision and values. It was a phenomenon that I was aware of at the start of this research, but was not something that I intentionally set out to investigate. However, the comments from

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I wrestled for some time with the appropriate terminology to describe these Christian-based agencies. “Christian non-governmental organisations” seemed to fit, but the term “NGO” in a New Zealand context has connotations of international aid work and peace keeping operations. Consequently, I have chosen to use “faith-based organisation” (FBO), a term used by a number of writers on the subject. For example, the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC) uses “FBO,” and Ronald Sider and Heidi Unruh, in an article in the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, went to considerable effort to define the term. I use the term with the caveat that I am specifically talking about Christian faith. See Rick James, “What is Distinctive About FBOs?” INTRAC Praxis Paper 22 (Feb 2009): 1-22; and Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, “Typology of Religious Characteristics of Social Service Educational Organizations and Programs,” Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 33, no. 1 (March 2004): 109-134.
industry stakeholders suggested that mission drift was a significant concern for the industry. This perspective was borne out over the course of the project as it became apparent that mission drift was a pervasive and compelling challenge for each of the participant FBOs. However, although mission drift became a significant finding of this project, the primary focus was the impact of theology on the practice of FBOs. Given the paucity of research on the way in which faith influences practice in FBOs, and the interest and need expressed by key industry representatives, I undertook to research “how theology shapes practice in faith-based organisations supporting families in New Zealand.”

In this thesis I explore the way in which the espoused theology of FBOs which provide support to families in New Zealand is reflected in their practice. Does their faith matter? Do theological convictions make a difference in practical terms to the way that FBOs function as they provide support to families in New Zealand? In order to provide a context for the study I began by analysing the theological and social factors that I expected to motivate those working in the faith-based sector providing support to families. I investigated the theological and biblical perspectives of family, concepts of social justice, and the sociological data and demography of families in New Zealand. This work is detailed in Chapter 2.

The first challenge in addressing how theological factors influenced the practice of FBOs was to determine the classification of a “faith-based organisation.” Given that the main focus of the research was to identify how theology shapes practice rather than solely if theology shapes practice, an FBO did not need to be primarily “Christian.” However, the intent was also to investigate how a Christian theological ethic is worked out in practice in an organisational context as the organisation’s staff engages practically to meet social needs. Consequently, it was still important that the agencies selected were based on clearly Christian ideals. Put another way, was the emphasis on the “F” or the “B” in FBO? Was the agency currently and proactively influenced by its faith, or was its faith only something on which it was based; it was an important part of its history but has little active influence today?

Satisfied by the framework provided by Ronald Sider and Heidi Unruh, I determined to include FBOs under either of these criteria – both faith-based and possessing an historical faith affiliation. However, the stated significance of their faith as a motivator for practice would be identified in the first of the two research questions:
**RQ1** - *Do the leaders and other staff at FBOs providing support to families in New Zealand believe that theology shapes practice in their organisation?*

**RQ2** - *How does theology shape practice in FBOs providing support to families in New Zealand?*

Having identified the population of FBOs that fit these criteria, I selected a representative sample of five organisations with national scope as case studies for the project. This provided a significant representation of the sector, which is relatively small in New Zealand. Although there are many local agencies which would fit into the category of FBOs, and some of these would consider themselves to be national organisations, I attempted to identify only those agencies that either directly provided service coverage to most of New Zealand, or which were part of a nationalised network which provided such coverage. Some of these organisations were closely affiliated with church denominations, while others were established by Christian individuals. I included samples of both. In Chapter 3, I explain how I identified the range of FBOs serving families in New Zealand and how I selected the five FBOs I studied in depth.

The investigation of the five case studies began with an analysis of their websites, online profile, and publicly available documents such as trust deeds and annual reports. These documents revealed espoused theological positions and motivating vision and values. However, the values that are communicated publicly by an organisation, whether they are faith-based or not, do not necessarily correlate to either practice or the values which are truly held by the individuals within the agency. Consequently, in order to determine how theology shapes practice in these FBOs, it was necessary to establish the motivations of the individual staff members, as well as their perception of the values that motivate and drive the organisation in which they worked. Having identified the espoused theological position of the organisations, both in their public image and from the perspective of the staff and managers, I was able to correlate that theological position to their practices. This data was collected through a series of interviews with staff members, managers, and board members of each FBO.

In the semi-structured interviews, in which the interviewees were able to lead the discussion to a large degree, the pervasive nature of mission drift emerged as a concept. Interviewees demonstrated a strong ethos of compassion and love for the vulnerable, but only some
identified this as a faith-based theological perspective. Theological positions relating to family were very weak and underdeveloped in most interviewees.

Although I had set out to investigate how theology shaped practice, the way that practice shapes theology became a more pervasive and compelling story. Many of the employees and managers of the FBOs expressed concerns relating to the nature of the relationship between the church and the FBO. The interviewees were aware of the causes of relationship tension and the influence that this had on them, both personally and as an organisation; they were generally able to articulate these observations with a degree of clarity and insight. Mission drift was an even more prevalent characteristic within the FBOs, although it was generally described and revealed as a series of symptoms rather than as an organisational phenomenon. Most interviewees perceived mission drift in the micro-context, often commenting on a policy or cultural change, rather than being aware of the organisational drift occurring in the macro-context. Awareness of larger organisational changes that had moved the FBO away from its foundational values tended to occur after the changes had already taken place. It is the unintentional nature of these organisational changes which defines them as “mission drift.”

As a project in practical theology, this research was not intended to be normative. I approached it from the perspective of a practitioner within the Christian social service sector, with the objective of exploring the complex interplay between theology and practice in FBOs. I wanted to investigate how faith influences practice in an organisational context, rather than how faith should influence practice. Nonetheless, it was likely that in the process of investigating, observing, and reporting on the role of faith within these organisations, the increased awareness of the issues would impact the practice of the agency. This is particularly true of the observations relating to mission drift, which is by definition an unnoticed process; awareness is the first step in arresting the effects of mission drift. That, however, was not the intended purpose of this research. Instead, this investigation was designed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge relating to the nature and practice of FBOs. Its utility lies in the self-awareness that it can bring of the influence – or lack thereof – of faith within the faith-based sector, and it provides a resource for churches seeking to institutionalise a social service. Of particular note, the findings relating to both mission drift and the relationship between an FBO and the church provide support to existing scholarship. Additional factors not widely reported in other research which influence mission drift and church relationships were also observed and provide a basis for a more nuanced understanding of these subjects than previously available.
Chapter 2. Family Well-Being: The Current Climate and Research

By definition, the FBOs which are the subjects of this research are, or possibly were, motivated by faith-based convictions. Given the nature of their work, it was almost certain that this would include a conviction that families are of value. This chapter seeks to outline the context for such a conviction. I argue that the value of families, marriage, children, and parents is established in scripture and that in our time, a Christian commitment to social justice must include concerns about the family and a focus on nurturing the well-being of families and children. In order to make this case I outline the biblical and theological perspectives of family, contending that the biblical depiction of marriage and family is complex, reveals an evolving theology, and is strongly influenced by culture. I survey sociological data on family, marriage, parenting, and divorce and provide a summary of New Zealand’s demography surrounding these topics. Although it should be evident from the discussion, where the data supports traditional nuclear family structures as a mechanism for achieving optimal outcomes statistically for children, this is not to disparage those in alternative family structures. In particular, the challenges associated with single parent families should in no way undermine the value of single parents, who are often heroes and heroines forced into solo combat with deadly dragons confronting their families and without the backup of a spouse. Finally, I argue that Christians, after the model of Jesus, are called to commit themselves to social justice and that this ought to include a commitment to supporting families.

Families Matter

It is likely that the statement “families matter” would be vigorously endorsed by most people in most cultures. Such a seemingly simple statement should give cause to pause for thought because the potential for misunderstanding is great. What does “family” even mean? Why do they matter? To whom do families matter? Concepts of family and the roles within a family are heavily culturally influenced. Although there may be agreement that families matter, what two people mean when they make such a claim may be critically different. This tension is particularly relevant within the New Zealand context at present. In light of shifting societal attitudes regarding the role and nature of marriage and families, typified by the Property Relationships Amendment Act 2001,1 Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act

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2013, and the international ripples of influence from the June 2015 US Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage,\(^2\) it is apparent that “family” is becoming an increasingly fuzzy term.

In response to this “muddying of the water,” many advocates of the state supporting traditional nuclear families have become increasingly entrenched in their position. Similarly, those promoting the agenda of the “liberal left” at times appear borderline militant. This is not surprising when one considers the warnings surrounding positional bargaining put forward in the best-selling publication by members of the Harvard Negotiation Project. They state:

> When negotiators bargain over positions, they tend to lock themselves into those positions. The more you clarify your position and defend it against attack, the more committed you become to it. The more you try to convince the other side of the impossibility of changing your opening position, the more difficult it becomes to do so. Your ego becomes identified with your position. You now have a new interest in “saving face” — in reconciling future action with past positions — making it less and less likely that any agreement will wisely reconcile the parties’ original interests.\(^3\)

The caution is that if one holds a position and seeks to defend that position in light of a counter-position, the two perspectives become polarised and entrenched. Despite its basis in the world of business negotiation, this warning is even more applicable when not only ego are invested and at stake, but also personal values and faith. Consequently, in this brief investigation of biblical and theological perspectives of marriage and family, I endeavour to be principled rather than positional in my approach.\(^4\) This approach reveals a biblical case for an ideal model of marriage and family, but because of the way in which perspectives of marriage and family develop throughout the scriptural account, and the fact that alternative models were permitted, it would be unwise to suggest that this model is exclusive; there may be a gold standard, but it is not the only standard.

In his article which attempts to present a biblical theology of marriage and family, theologian and Christian educator Kenneth Gangel notes that in the poetical and prophetical scriptures there is a heavy reliance on family language and imagery to describe God’s relationship with practical issues for individuals during relationship breakdown, this legislation was significant in New Zealand, as it was the first to treat the dissolution of a de facto relationship in the same way as divorce.


\(^4\) Fisher, Ury, and Patton, *Getting to Yes*, 41–45. Fisher, Ury, and Patton explain that a positional approach pits one view (and therefore one person) against the other and requires give and take in order to reach agreement — neither party wins. A principled, or interest based, approach attempts to “separate the people from the problem,” allowing parties to come alongside each other and view the problem together. In the case of a biblical discussion on marriage and family, one can acknowledge individual prejudices or assumptions, but still set them aside in the pursuit of attempting to discover what the Bible actually says rather than what he *thinks* it says.
Israel. He states, “This forces us to pay tribute to the hermeneutical principle of proportion. God always speaks to us in language that we understand and He seems to assume that we understand language related to family.”\(^5\) This places the concept of family in the very important position of being a vehicle through which attributes of God’s nature are revealed. If, as Gangel implies, there is an assumption that the first readers of the biblical text understood both the language and the implications of the family relationships being utilised to communicate God’s nature and His interaction with His people, then cultural and contextual understandings of “family” have significant influence on the natural reading of the text.

This perspective forces a degree of humility in the hermeneutic process. Firstly, given the diversity of family structures depicted within the scriptures, it may be unwise to suggest that there is an overarching “biblical theology of family.” However, caution must also be applied to ensure that a position at the opposite end of the spectrum is not postulated, in which a radical diversity of family models is promoted in scripture. Secondly, socially and culturally contextualised understanding of the family ought to be carefully considered when drawing conclusions from the biblical text.

More significantly, however, is the acknowledgement of the importance that family plays in our understanding of God. The biblical reliance on the language of family to describe God and His engagement with humanity places a significant weight on family relationships as vehicles to reveal God. Given this premise that families in some way reveal God, and God intends to use them to do this, the family unit becomes something which Christians may consider sacred.\(^6\) The Book of Common Prayer of The Episcopal Church exemplifies this in its liturgy for marriage ceremonies, in which it refers to the union as “Holy” matrimony and states that it “signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church.”\(^7\) This reference is almost an exact quote from the letter to the Ephesians, and provides an explanation of what the author means when he says that marriage “is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church” (Eph 5:32). Reformed evangelical blogger and author Douglas Wilson, addressing the role and responsibility of the husband in a marriage relationship, elaborates on this concept further:

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\(^{6}\) J. Waterworth, ed. *The Council of Trent: The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, trans. by J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 194. This conclusion finds support in Session 24, Canon I, of The Council of Trent, which decrees that “if any one saith, that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelic law, (a sacrament) instituted by Christ the Lord; but that it has been invented by men in the Church; and that it does not confer grace; let him be anathema.”

Every marriage, everywhere in the world, is a picture of Christ and the church. Because of sin and rebellion, many of these pictures are slanderous lies. *But a husband can never stop talking about Christ and the church.* If he is obedient to God, he is preaching the truth; if he does not love his wife, he is speaking apostasy and lies — but he is always talking. If he deserts his wife, he is saying that this is the way Christ deserts His bride — a lie. If he is harsh with his wife and strikes her, he is saying that Christ is harsh with the church — another lie. If he sleeps with another woman, he is an adulterer and a blasphemer as well. How dare a faithless sinner slander the faithfulness of Christ to His bride?8

Although there is an inherent complexity within the discussion of metaphor and the transmission of attributes, the extent to which marriage reveals Christ’s relationship with the church or vice versa, this powerful and emotive statement is instructive in that it reveals the depth of feeling that many Christians hold toward the family. It may be impossible to determine a normative “biblical theology of family,” and any treatment of the subject ought to be undertaken with an appropriate level of humility and caution. However, although we may debate what “family” means, it seems clear that both theologically and biblically, families matter.

**Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Marriage**9

An investigation of marriage, sex, and family from a Christian perspective is complex and at times seemingly contradictory. In particular, the life and example of Jesus poses something of a quandary for the Christian when it comes to defining an orthodox position on family and marriage. The very definition of sanctification for Christians is to become more like Christ (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 1:11; 2 Cor 3:18), yet Jesus was a single man with an itinerant ministry and he was crucified at a relatively young age. Unlike the patriarchs of Islam and Judaism, two other belief systems which draw on the scriptures of ancient Israel,10 Jesus never personally

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9 When one speaks of giving “biblical perspectives” on a topic, it is easy for the word “biblical” to be interpreted as meaning “orthodox” or some other nuance of a claim to objective accuracy; “biblical” can be a dangerous word. I do not intend it to be used this way. In this subtitle, the emphasis should be on the plural “perspectives,” rather than the word “biblical.”


As religious systems [Islam and Judaism] are simple: God creates, reveals his will through law, and rewards or punishes human behaviour.... Equally simple and straightforward are those traditions’ views of sex.... Both Torah and Qur’an are unequivocally in favor of marriage, even while recognizing the reality of divorce. These traditions view family as an unambiguous blessing from God and approve of heterosexual activity within the bounds of marriage, while rejecting sex outside marriage, whether polygamous or monogamous.

In asking the question of how Christians, who read the same sacred texts, came to such diverse and nuanced conclusions, Johnson and Jordan propose that it was as a result of the cultural context in which the writers of the New Testament were located, and the life and example of Jesus as compared to Moses or Mohammad.
demonstrated a family model which adherents can seek to replicate as an ideal. Moreover, Jesus’ resurrection and the promise of eternal life for those who accept him creates a significant eschatological emphasis, which at times promotes an uneasy tension with the physical and relational realities of daily life. This difficulty is apparent through the Pauline epistles, where misunderstanding and Hellenistic philosophy and culture regularly threaten to undermine a proper perspective in the lives of the early Christians. Paul addresses some of the implications of these new attitudes – both in the hedonistic indulgence of the flesh and in the suppression of sexual desires – as they relate to family, sex, and marriage, in his first letter to the Corinthians; it is also addressed in the letter to the Ephesians, although Paul’s authorship of this epistle is of some debate. Paul’s singleness also complicates his advice in the sense that he was unable to model many aspects of his teaching on the topic. However, despite the tensions often implicit within them, it is these teachings of Jesus and Paul, along with the Jewish Scriptures, that provide a basis for a Christian ethic of marriage and family.

When Jesus and Paul talk about marriage, divorce, and family, they are drawing on a long tradition in the Hebrew Scriptures. The concepts of marriage and family find their origin in the very first chapters of Genesis. God creates male and female in His image, instructing them to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28) and have dominion over the created order. In Chapter 2 the creation of woman is in response to man’s loneliness (Gen 2:18), and the two are deemed “very good” (Gen 1:31). Michael Berger, associate professor of religion at Emory College, observes that “between the first two chapters, there emerges a sense that the union of a man and woman was inherently good, intended since creation for the purposes of procreation and companionship (whether practical or emotional).” However, even this opening depiction of marriage and family is not without controversy. Some contention surrounds whether Genesis 2:24 is a continuation, and ultimate culmination, of the creation account of Genesis 2:4b-23, or if it is a secondary redactional gloss. The implication of this

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11 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 918; Dallas Willard, *Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (London: William Collins, 1998), 299. Millard Erickson offers a traditional view of sanctification in which “the individual’s spiritual condition is progressively altered; one actually becomes Holier.” However, Dallas Willard clarifies that sanctification is not so much becoming like Christ, but rather living your life as Christ would live it if he were you.
dissonance is that the purpose of the passage is ambiguous.\textsuperscript{15} In his discussion on the subject, the Italian biblical scholar Angelo Tosato notes that it “gives rise to doubts as to what exactly the author intends to explain: Marriage (a social institution) or ‘love’ (a natural drive)?”\textsuperscript{16} A number of textual, theological and culturally grounded positions surround the topic, not least of which is, in a patriarchal society,\textsuperscript{17} the ill-fitting depiction of a man leaving his parents to join his wife and not the other way round.\textsuperscript{18} However, they are beyond the scope of this discussion.\textsuperscript{19} It is sufficient to note that the inaugural biblical reference on the union of a man and a woman, although presenting this union as foundationally good and for the purpose of procreation and companionship,\textsuperscript{20} does not clearly establish marriage as an institution or elucidate the central purpose of the kind of relationship exemplified by Adam and Eve.

Given that the Old Testament writings span more than one thousand years and a range of different contexts communicated through a variety of literary genres, determining an overarching view of marriage and family is challenging. With the exception of the Mosaic Law, the Old Testament provides case studies of family and marriage, rather than teaching on it specifically. The examples of family life are often not exemplary; the purpose of the text is not to provide a framework of how lives ought to be lived, but rather recount how they were lived.\textsuperscript{21} Providing an insight into an Ancient Near Eastern cultural norm, Marten Stol, a historian who specialises in the social and economic history of the Old Babylonian period (1900-1500B.C.), notes that the Sumarian Hymn to Gula includes the stages of a woman’s life in ancient Mesopotamia: “I am daughter, I am bride, I am spouse, I am housekeeper.”\textsuperscript{22} The way in which this depicts a woman’s status as being closely related to the men around her and the responsibilities she carries, is consistent with the outline of a wife of noble character found in Proverbs 31. Old Testament scholar Victor Matthews suggests that a similar list

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} One might argue that Jesus’ use of this passage to respond to a question on divorce (Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7) would support the interpretation that this refers to marriage, although Paul’s usage in Eph 5:31 is less conclusive.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Tosato, “On Genesis 2:24”: 398. Italics in original.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Victor H. Matthews, “Marriage and Family in the Ancient Near East,” in Marriage and Family in the Biblical World, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 1. In his exposition of Marriage and Family in the Ancient Near East, Victor Matthews acknowledges that “there are some who suggest that matriarchal social structures existed or even dominated the ancient Near East, [but] the weight of evidence indicates that male dominance was the rule and that patriarchal lineage and inheritance systems were the norm in both Egypt and Mesopotamia.”
  \item \textsuperscript{18} One explanation of this could be that the union is intended to be the establishment of a new social unit.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Tosato, “On Genesis” provides an excellent overview of these positions. See also Bernard Mallia, “Back to Genesis with Love,” African Ecclesiastical Review 19, no. 3 (Jun 1977): 149-155.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} It is worth noting that while the instruction given to Adam and Eve at the culmination of the first creation account in Gen 1:28 is concerned with procreation as a sign of God’s blessing, Gen 2:24 seems more concerned with union and companionship.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} In the same way that they are not necessarily exemplary, they might also be seen as providing a critique of what can go wrong.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Marten Stol, “Private Life in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, ed. Jack M. Sasson et al. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1995), 486-487.
\end{itemize}
could be created for a man in the same period: “I am son, I am bridegroom, I am husband, I am head of household.”

He also highlights that the marriage arrangements were negotiated by the patriarchal heads and were used not only to produce children, but also to establish social and economic networks. Thus there was a cultural expectation that each individual would play a role within their family and community in a way that contributed to its survival and advancement.

The ancient Israelite understanding of family was not only as a social unit, but as a part of the nation. They perceived themselves as one large kinship group made up of tribes, which in turn consisted of clans comprised of patriarchal houses. An example of this is found in Joshua 7:16-18 where Achan, a married man with children and possessions of his own (Josh 7:24-26), is described as being of the tribe of Judah, of the clan of Zerah, and of the family of Zabdi. In addition to establishing the goodness and purpose of a marital relationship, the Mosaic law which governed this tribal system condemned a variety of illicit sexual practices including incest (Lev 18:1-17), intercourse during menstruation (Lev 18:19), sex with another man’s wife (Lev 18:20; Deut 22:22), male homosexuality (Lev 18:22), and bestiality (Lev 18:23). Cross-cultural marriage was discouraged in order to protect the Israelite’s monotheistic faith (Deut 7:1-5; 23:2-9). The law also established a framework for fair treatment and protection of wives. They were not to be disadvantaged or mistreated if another wife was taken (Ex 21:10; Deut 21:15), a Jewish slave taken as a wife was no longer to be treated as a slave (Ex 21:7-9), and remedies were established to discourage a man from falsely accusing his new wife of pre-marital sexual activity simply because he disliked her and wanted to divorce her (Deut 22:13-19). Although marriage appears to have been primarily contractual between a man and a woman’s father, it also seems that intercourse was synonymous with marriage if it occurred prior to wedlock (Deut 22:28,29). God is described as hating divorce and the associated dissolution of covenant (Mal 2:13-16), but the law nonetheless provides criteria for rightful divorce (Deut 24:1-2). Moreover, elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures God is depicted as having divorced Israel due to her unfaithfulness (Jer 3:8), but a few verses later he offers to take her back (Jer 3:12-14). Similarly, both Ezekiel 16 and the metaphor of Hosea’s marriage to Gomer, depict God pursuing and reconciling with Israel, His unfaithful bride, despite her promiscuity. These texts provide a collection of seemingly contradictory perspectives of marriage and divorce which are strongly culturally

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26 Some translations use the family name “Zimri.”
grounded, making them very difficult to translate to a contemporary context. Throughout, however, the contractual and covenantal aspect is consistent, as is the intention to provide protection to vulnerable parties, although not at the expense of corporate holiness.\(^{27}\) Additionally, Berger notes that “monogamous marriage becomes the metaphor of the God-Israel covenant,”\(^{28}\) although perhaps the reference to monogamous marriage ought to be rephrased as “the marriage between a husband and his wife,” given that monogamy was not necessarily a cultural norm.

Many of the views of marriage and divorce from the Hebrew Scriptures are reiterated in the New Testament, but the confusion is not entirely resolved. The metaphorical link between God and his bride is re-established to incorporate all believers including the Gentiles (Eph 2:14-16; 5:27-32). Jesus teaches that divorce followed by remarriage equates to adultery (Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18), but makes a concession for the case of sexual immorality (Matt 5:31-32; 19:9). Matthew 19:1-12 and its parallel at Mark 10:1-12 contain Jesus’ clearest teaching on marriage and divorce. He was apparently weighing in on a Jewish controversy in which the Shammai and Hillel rabbinic schools were debating whether the grounds for divorce given in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 referred to a woman’s “unchastity” or simply being displeasing to her husband.\(^{29}\) Jesus sides decisively with the Shammai, insisting that sexual immorality was the only grounds for divorce. It is noteworthy that Jesus’ response implies a monogamous framework; if a man illegitimately divorces his wife and then remarries, Jesus insists that he is committing adultery, a crime which requires the offender to still be married. In a cultural context within which a polygamous family structure was acceptable the offender would not be seen as an adulterer, but rather as one who had married a second wife. However, Jesus’ response appears to be specifically intended to address those who would use Deuteronomy 24 as a legal loophole to satisfy adulterous ambitions, rather than a commentary on family structures. Referencing Genesis 2:24, he explains his position on the basis that the covenantal union between a man and a woman is established by God and is not to be broken.

Moreover, he explains that the concession for divorce in the Mosaic Law was only given due to their “hard hearts,” and that this was not the intention from the beginning (Matt 19:8). Much like Jesus’ view of anger (Matt 5:21-26), lust (Matt 5:27-28), lying (Matt 5:33-37), and revenge (Matt 5:38-48), in which he raises the standard above that required by the law, this teaching assists in clarifying the contentious legal stipulations of marriage and divorce under

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\(^{27}\) Compare the story of Ruth, in which a foreign woman is afforded protection in accordance with Israel’s kinship laws, with Ezra 9 and 10, where the foreign wives are divorced en masse and sent away.

\(^{28}\) Berger, “Judaism,” 3.

the Mosaic Law. It also reveals a developing standard throughout the scriptural narrative which, while still addressing behaviour, is increasingly concerned with matters of the heart.

Paul’s epistles demonstrate instances of the early church struggling to apply this emerging Christian ethic on marriage, sex, and family in their various cultures. Luke Johnson, a New Testament scholar, and theologian Mark Jordan, note that, as a consequence of this developing theology, “it is not surprising to find in Paul’s letters elements that do not entirely agree.” Of particular note amongst these letters are excerpts from 1 Corinthians and Ephesians. To the church in Corinth, Paul takes exception to their failure to admonish the believer engaging in sexual immorality (1 Cor 5:1-5). Given that incest was against the law in Roman society but legal prosecution was private and restricted to those of similar social status, evangelical biblical scholar Bruce Winter insinuates that it is likely that this individual may have been one of the wealthy patrons of the church. In a culture in which it was socially unacceptable, and in some situations, illegal, to critique those of a higher social order, Paul insists that within the body of Christ, social standing is irrelevant (cf. Gal 3:28). He once again challenges the church’s adaptation to culture as he confronts them on their attitudes to sex in a city which had a temple to Aphrodite in a position of prominence, along with the requisite temple prostitutes, and a reputation as a place of sexual immorality. Confronting hedonistic dualism, Paul asserts that sexual sin, far from being a harmless indulgence of the flesh, instead corrupts, enslaves, and destroys the unity between the believer and Christ (1 Cor 6:12–20). Likewise, the emphasis on Christian unity underpinning the discussion creates a moral code in which the behaviour of individual believers influences the community as a whole; for Paul, a suggestion that “I can do what I like as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone,” would be an incongruous position to hold for those “in Christ.”

However, Paul cannot be accused of supporting the position of the stoic and cynic traditions, with their deep suspicion of sex even within marriage. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul insists that within marriage, sex is not only permissible, but a duty (1 Cor 7:2). Strikingly, he also establishes mutuality in this duty; both the husband and the wife have a duty to one another.

30 Johnson and Jordan, “Christianity,” 94.
31 However, it is noteworthy that he makes no claim to having any authority in upholding or condemning the moral standards of those outside of the faith community (1 Cor 5:12,13).
33 Christopher Marshall, Paul and Corinthian Christianity (Auckland: BCNZ, 1995), 6, 7. There is some debate as to whether this reputation was entirely deserved or was a result of propaganda from their trade competitors, but either way, given the content of the letter, the environment was of some influence to the believers and therefore it was of concern to Paul.
and each submits their body to the other (1 Cor 7:4). Paul also reiterates, with the parenthesis that it is an instruction from God and not himself, that a married Christian couple must not divorce (1 Cor 7:10, 11). By way of concession that some will disobey this directive, he then adds that if they do, they must remain unmarried or be reunited.\textsuperscript{34}

In the letter to the Ephesians, the author once again makes a case for submission within marriage, but whether that is to be considered “mutual” or otherwise is a source of some debate. Although Ephesians 5:22-33 is at times caricatured as a proof text supporting chauvinistic oppression of women, the real discussion centres around whether “submit to one another” (Eph 5:21) refers to everyone submitting to everyone else, or some submitting to others; the kind of “submission” the author has in mind, whether that be one of status or one of roles, is also of debate.\textsuperscript{35} However, discounting any suggestion that this gives permission for a man to behave as a tyrant or dictator within his marriage, even the most patriarchal interpretation of this text requires a husband to sacrificially love his wife and protect her, to his own detriment if necessary (Eph 5:25-29). Despite the debate surrounding submission and obedience, the author requires both husband and wife to consider the other more important than themselves, putting the other first in the same way that Jesus was prepared to die for his bride, the church (Eph 5:32).

Some in the early church chose a life of celibacy in order to leave everything behind and answer Jesus’ call. Peter Brown, a historian specialising in late antiquity (250-800 A.D.) references Matthew 19:12 when he notes that there were “young males who ‘have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.’ The intensity of their mission rendered them ineligible for marriage.”\textsuperscript{36} However, it wasn’t until nearly a century later that a follower of Jesus claimed to base his own celibacy on Jesus’ example.\textsuperscript{37} Although most Christians admired the commitment and witness of these dedicated few, “the silent majority of those who awaited the coming of the kingdom were careworn and decent householders.”\textsuperscript{38} Clement of Alexandria was an outspoken advocate of marriage and family in the late second

\textsuperscript{34} It is worth clarifying that this does not contradict the Mosaic teaching of Deut 24:1-4, which instructs that a divorced woman cannot remarry her original husband if she has been married to someone else in the interim.


\textsuperscript{37} Ignatius, \textit{Letter to Polycarp}, 5.2.

\textsuperscript{38} Brown, \textit{The Body and Society}, 44.
century and wrote that the married Christian “becomes the image of God, by cooperating in the creation of another human being.”\(^\text{39}\) Clement’s writings demonstrate a developing theology within the church which increasingly espoused the value of marriage and family.\(^\text{40}\) However, this position was complicated by the gradual emergence of a celibate priesthood. In the year 366 at the Synod of Elvira, Pope Damasus ordered that married priests were to abstain completely from their wives. His Papal successor, Pope Siricius, abandoned his wife and children in order to become Pope, while his eventual successor, Pope Anastasius I, was married, according to the Kephas Married Catholic Priests organisation,\(^\text{41}\) and he was succeeded by his son. The married priesthood within the Roman Catholic tradition was effectively ended at the Second Lateran Council in 1139. Although celibacy has been more recently described in papal writings as “a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls, whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, due to an undivided heart,”\(^\text{42}\) it is reported with some regularity in various media that contemporary pontiffs have insisted it is not an issue of dogma and is therefore not essential to the priesthood.\(^\text{43}\)

**Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Parents and Children**

Throughout the biblical narrative and within church history, a steadily evolving theology surrounding marriage, sex, and divorce is apparent. There is no one simple, static position, and there is evidence of the influence of culture at every step. However, this is less true, although not entirely absent, in the presentation of parental roles and the value of children. As was alluded to by Clement of Alexandria above, in ancient Israel each individual was viewed as bearing the image of God (Gen 1:27) and carrying the mandate to deputise on God’s behalf as governors within the natural order (Gen 1:28-30; Ps 8). Consequently, Old Testament scholar Daniel Block notes that

> to beget and bear children means more than mere procreation; it signifies co-creation — God involving father and mother in the creation of images of himself.... As divine creations children were viewed as special treasures,


blessings, gifts granted graciously to parents, and the more children one had, the
greater the sense of divine favor.\textsuperscript{44} This is illustrated in the Adamic blessing (Gen 1:28), the Noahic blessing (Gen 9:1), and the
multiple iterations of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:2; 15:1-6; 17:6; 22:17,18; 26:3-5, 24;
28:13-15). Implicit with the blessing of children was the responsibility to raise them faithfully. Parents were to teach their children God’s commands (Deut 6:6-9; 11:19), training them and disciplining them appropriately (Prov 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13,14; 29:15; 29:17). Similarly, children were to honour their parents (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16; Prov 30:17). Children are a central blessing and are a significant purpose of marriage in the Old Testament context.

In the New Testament children no longer occupy the significant position they had in the Hebrew Scriptures. Ethicist and religious scholar Stephen Post notes that “to some extent, the paradigm of adoption was intended to undercut the Jewish emphasis on biological lineage; Christianity discounted the importance of lineage and descent, which had been prominent in Jewish religious identity.”\textsuperscript{45} References to children in the New Testament are limited, and most scholars agree that the account of Jesus calling the children to himself, a text often used to attest to the New Testament valuing children, uses children as a model of how followers of Jesus should be.\textsuperscript{46} However, this does not speak to a reduction in their value, but rather a shift in the primary method with which God envisions building His Kingdom.\textsuperscript{47} Where in the Hebrew Scriptures God’s primary method was procreation, in the New Testament it is transformation. In terms of the role and function within the family, however, not a lot changes. Children are required to honour and obey their parents (Matt 15:4; Eph 6:1-2; Col 3:20). Fathers are not to provoke their children (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21), and they are to manage their children (1 Tim 3:4) and provide for them (1 Tim 5:8). The Epistles only reference “family” (πατριά, patria) once, in Ephesians 3:14-15, and this usage does not clearly relate to a biological unit, but rather refers to a social grouping with common ancestors.\textsuperscript{48} Despite this fact, Paul’s letters are permeated with kinship terms. Biblical scholar Stanley Porter suggests that in addition to the usual terms of “mother,” “father,” “brother,” “sister,” “child,” “son,” “daughter,” and “firstborn,” given the Roman law on family at the time, terms such as “slave,” “servant,” “bastard,” and “orphan” also ought to be considered family terms in the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[44] Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” 80, 81.
\item[46] Rubio, A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family, 56.
\item[47] Gal 3:28 affirms that those included in God’s Kingdom (in Christ) are no longer limited to the biological offspring of Israel.
\end{footnotes}
New Testament. He continues, suggesting that although there are many instances within the epistles which refer to proper behaviour in various family situations, “there is a much larger familial framework at place within the New Testament.” Porter states that “figurative use of ‘family’ language permeates the epistolary material of the New Testament to the point of constituting a basic framework for analyzing fundamental relationships in the early church.”

Just as the Jewish Scriptures regularly rely on family relationships as vehicles to explain the way that God relates to Israel or humanity in general, Paul also relies heavily on family relationships as vehicles to explain relations within the Christian community of believers. In this way the concepts of brotherhood and sisterhood, the role of children within a family, and the function of the parent (principally the father) are regarded as essential both practically and symbolically. Similarly, throughout the Christian tradition children have remained valued and due protection based on the image of God that they bear. Calvin states that

unless men regard their children as the gift of God, they are careless and reluctant in providing for their support, just as on the other hand this knowledge contributes in a very eminent degree to encourage them in bringing up their offspring. Farther, he who thus reflects upon the goodness of God in giving him children, will readily and with a settled mind look for the continuance of God’s grace; and although he may have but a small inheritance to leave them, he will not be unduly careful on that account.

Adrian Thatcher, a theologian from the University of Exeter, paraphrases Calvin when he states “all children have rights and all parents — Christian, Muslim, whatever — have obligations.”

**Polygamy - A Brief Case Study**

Although these examples of teachings from various sources within the Christian tradition refer primarily, but not exclusively, to the context of family consisting of a husband, a wife, and their children, it is interesting to note that they do not necessarily limit the family to *only* the husband, wife, and their children. Since the latter half of the twentieth century there have been significant changes to Christian views of marriage, sex, and family, and these have not been consistent across different cultural contexts. Societal changes have influenced many of

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52 An example of this is Paul’s use of “brother” to refer to fellow believers. Romans 10:14–18 relies heavily on this language to describe other believers generally, and Paul also singles out individual believers who he identifies as his “brother” (1 Cor 1:1; 16:12; 2 Cor 1:1; 2:13; Phil 2:25; Col 4:7; 1 Thes 3:2). The use of “brother” in this way is not restricted to Paul’s writings in the New Testament. It also appears in Hebrews (8:11; 13:23), James (1:9; 2:15; 4:11), 1 Peter (5:12), 2 Peter (3:15), and 1 John (2:9-11, 3:10, 15, 17; 4:20; 5:16).
these changes and they remain contentious, topical issues in many Christian circles. Consequently, any attempt to demonstrate the influence of culture in defining a theological position on any of these issues could be met with an emotive response. By contrast, although the theology surrounding polygamy has been strongly influenced by culture at various points, there is limited social rhetoric on the issue at present. As such, it is a topic which is relatively easy to investigate objectively. A brief survey of the theological positions on polygamy, and examples of ways that they have been challenged and processed throughout church history, is instructive in helping to identify some of the challenges of interpreting scripture within different cultural climates and the ways in which different cultural views, particularly surrounding marriage, sex and family, can influence it.

Polygamy was a culturally accepted norm within ancient Israelite culture. Consequently, Mosaic Law included instructions concerning the treatment of two wives (Deut 21:15). Despite this fact, rabbinic teachings discouraged polygamy in areas where Roman, and latterly Christian, influence made the position difficult to defend.55 There was also no evidence of polygamy among early Christian communities.56 However, despite this early absence of polygamous relationships, there have been significant discussions on the issue throughout the history of the church. Augustine states that “a plurality of wives was no crime when it was the custom; and it is a crime now, because it is no longer the custom.”57 Elsewhere he declared that “the holy fathers of olden times after Abraham, and before him ... thus used their wives ... where the reason was for the multiplication of their offspring, not the desire of varying gratification.”58 Augustine did, however, concede that the good purpose of marriage is better promoted by one husband with one wife, than by a husband with several wives, is shown plainly enough by the very first union of a married pair, which was made by the Divine Being Himself, with the intention of marriages taking their beginning there from, and of its affording them a more honourable precedent.59

Thomas Aquinas referenced Augustine as he clarified that, although a plurality of wives was lawful, it was against the natural law, written on the heart, and a dispensation could only be

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granted by God, the giver of that same law, for the purpose of multiplication of offspring.\(^{60}\) In 1558 the Council of Trent decreed in Canon II of the sacrament of matrimony: “If anyone saith, that it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time, and that this is not prohibited by any divine law; let him be anathema.”\(^{61}\)

With the debate continuing throughout the Reformation period,\(^{62}\) the degree of embroilment surrounding the topic ought to promote caution for the theologian and exegete alike. The reaction of some commentators to polygamy within the scriptures is instructive in reminding us that personal opinion, beliefs, and context can influence interpretation. As an example, in Kenneth Gangel’s study on a biblical theology of marriage and family, he opens with a caution that “both writer and reader must be careful not to read into the revelation which appears in the Pentateuch and Historical Books our advantageous understanding of the New Testament.”\(^ {63}\) Just a few paragraphs later he references Lamech’s marriage to two women (Gen 4:19) and states:

"Both male and female were expected to follow God’s monogamous pattern.... How destructive of God’s central purpose is the curse of polygamy. Yet it becomes so common among the ancients as to be culturally acceptable by the time of Abraham. God created one wife for one man, but man in his sin was not satisfied with that arrangement.\(^ {64}\)

Although Gangel’s position could be supported by an assumption that God’s pattern of creating one wife for Adam was intended to be normative, to the critical reader it appears that he is doing exactly what he has just cautioned against; he is transferring a broader theological context and his own cultural background to inform his position. This example ought to be well noted in the current context in which questions are asked about the biblical position on de facto relationships, sex before marriage, and same-sex relationships and families.

**Society Influences Theology**

As the case study of polygamy demonstrates, society inevitably influences theology. Theology only needs to be developed and espoused for that which is relevant and confronting

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62 Irwin Altman and Joseph Ginat, *Polygamous Families in Contemporary Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 42. Examples of this are the condemnation of polygamy by Calvin and the Catholic Church alike, but Martin Luther made allowance for it in order to retain the support of the social and political elite. Following the Central European 30 year war in 1648, which saw a decimation of the male population, the church made an allowance for men to take second wives over a 10-year period so long as their behaviour remained “seemly” toward them and they supported them.
in a particular social context. For example, eating meat sacrificed to pagan gods is not a pressing issue in western society. Consequently, despite the fact that Paul addresses this issue in some detail in his first letter to the Corinthians, there is not a strong contemporary theological dialogue on the issue amongst most western Christians. However, there have been significant social shifts on a number of issues surrounding family, sex, and marriage over the last fifty years, which have placed pressure on the church to redefine and consolidate the theology surrounding them. It appears, though, that the initial response of most Christians confronted by these challenges is to rely on personal convictions and tradition rather than developing a reasoned theological position. The challenge for theologians is to allow society to inform theology, but not form it. Theology must be relevant, but still biblical.

Johnson and Jordan provide a summary that is central to the point being made that Christian views of marriage and family are often poorly grounded, even if they are fundamentally believed, and they are under pressure by a society which challenges them. They write that, in the latter half of the twentieth century, some obvious changes in view of the family concern contraception and divorce.  

\[\text{More diffuse changes, but in some ways more profound, have affected women’s roles in marriage and family. As women have gained their civil rights, and then more of their share as full members of Christian churches, they have been less willing to accept a view of marriage in which they are treated as perpetually incomplete or immature human beings. For the longest time Christian teaching on marriage has been written by men on behalf of women. Now women can teach in their own voices.... Most recently, Christian teachings have been challenged by the blunt questions about their old denigration of sexual pleasure. A few decades ago the challenge was posed by “premarital” sex: Should a man and a woman who would soon be married have sex with each other before the wedding day? In retrospect that question seems charmingly naive. The fiercest of fights now rage around the sexual activity of avowedly lesbian or gay Christians.... Both extramarital and same-sex unions are proxies for a much larger controversy that will prove decisive for future Christian teaching, whether it considers itself progressive or traditionalist. It is a controversy about the fundamental logic of justifying sex through marriage.... At the heart of this controversy is this question: can Christians approve sexual pleasure that is not subordinated to procreation or contained within the marriage of one man and one woman?}\]

This summary highlights a number of issues which have been, and in some cases continue to be, the subject of significant debate within many Christian contexts as a result of social shift and influence. These issues have raised the question of what exactly is a “biblical definition of family” and have provoked questions among Christians.

The challenge that these issues present for Christians in New Zealand has been further compounded by the fact that there has been legislation passed as a result of these social trends. These include legislating for de facto and civil union relationships, and same-sex marriage. Speaking on polygamy, Augustine stated that “the only reason of its being a crime now to do this, is because custom and the laws forbid it.”67 For the New Zealand Christian community, the questions surrounding the legitimacy of same-sex marriage and relationships outside of wedlock are no longer hypothetical scenarios which can be avoided simply on the basis that they are against the law. Alongside the obvious question of whether God conceived of same-sex unions and whether sexual relationships equate to marriage,68 Christians must determine whether covenantal commitment and companionship, or procreation outside of covenantal commitment, can be separated from the function of procreation within a marriage relationship. There are complex implications for infertile heterosexual relationships and couples who live together outside of marriage that flow out of this discussion. However, despite the complexity inherent within the discussion, this type of challenge is not uncharted territory for the Christian church.

Prior to the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act in England, divorce was administered by the ecclesiastical courts and rarely approved. This Act made divorce a civil affair and it became administered by the civil courts. In addition to making divorce far more accessible, it functionally recategorised marriage within the law as a contractual arrangement rather than a covenantal sacrament. The recent legalisation of same-sex marriage in New Zealand and Australia (2013 and 2017 respectively) may have the effect of creating a legal environment in which a similar transition takes place in relation to marriage. Both New Zealand and Australia have instantiated a protection for celebrants who are ministers of religion and hold their marriage license under the umbrella of the religious organisation. They may not be compelled to marry same-sex couples.69 However, this nonetheless marks a legal departure from a traditionally held theological position. Such significant societal shifts, both historical and contemporary, demonstrate the way in which society influences the church and ultimately places pressure on theology and theological positions.

67 Augustine, “Reply to Faustus the Manichaean,” 289.
68 This is particularly topical for those relationships which have been ratified by law such as in the case of civil unions and de facto relationships which have existed for longer than two years.
Christian theology of marriage and family has always been complex and messy. However, it is likely that most of those who are raised in Christian homes grow up simply thinking that their family views and experiences are the norm. Previously unaware of the biblical and theological uncertainty around marriage and family, the public debate on these topics has forced Christians to attempt to define and justify a theology of family. It seems apparent that the vocal minority at both ends of the spectrum tend to revert to rhetoric and opinion, opting for either fundamentalism or Universalist inclusion. However, for those who engage with the topic sincerely, it is likely that they will find the value of family no less important than they had first assumed, but they may also find their normative assumptions challenged.

This is the theological and cultural framework in which FBOs supporting families in New Zealand are operating. Leaders and staff may feel threatened, confused, or angry as a result of the social milieu. Although it is highly likely that they will share the almost universal position that families matter, in keeping with the Christian tradition and in response to the shift in socially accepted norms surrounding same-sex relationships, family, and sexual identity, they may be less certain as to what “family” actually is. In addition to the biblical and theological complexity surrounding marriage and family, there is a significant amount of data on the sociological impact of various family structures, divorce, and parenting approaches, with which FBOs are forced to grapple as they support families in the New Zealand context.

The Context: Sociological Data and New Zealand’s Demography of Families

In the opening of the discussion of biblical perspectives of marriage and family I suggested that the biblical account reveals an ideal standard for families, but not an exclusive one. Although a family consisting of a married couple and their children is often assumed, and most of the biblical teachings on marriage and family address those relationships, many other family structures are not formally opposed; but some are. The sociological evidence canvassed below supports the suggestion that there is an ideal standard, although admittedly some alternative family structures are difficult to research due to their scarcity. For FBOs supporting families in New Zealand, the existing research is important for two reasons. Firstly, it provides data that defines the importance of families from perspectives other than a faith position. Secondly, it demonstrates areas where support to families may be strategically useful, revealing opportunities for FBO contribution or intervention. Looking at the sociological data surrounding families, and providing an overview of the demographic context in New Zealand, allows FBOs, who are asking, “What do families need?” to identify both the
vulnerabilities of families and the level of need present in New Zealand. It is impossible to canvas every conceivable family structure. Rather, due to its pervasiveness within society and the ready availability of data, I survey research which compares the nuclear family to other family structures. The existing research on this topic is exhaustive; I am only able to canvas a small sample of the existing body of literature. Throughout the discussion I provide a snapshot of New Zealand’s demography in relation to these topics.

**Divorce**

Divorce has a significant influence on families and as such is likely to be an area of interest to the agencies looking to support them. Divorce rates in New Zealand, which have included the dissolution of civil unions since their inception in 2005, escalated rapidly in the 1970s to reach a high of 12,000 divorces in 1982, a rate of 17.1 divorces for every 1000 existing marriages.\(^{71}\) Since that time their prevalence has decreased and they have remained relatively stable from 2010 to 2015, with 8,250 divorces taking place in 2015, a rate of 9.3 divorces for every 1,000 existing marriages.\(^{73}\) The decline and stabilisation of divorce rates is welcome given the significant impact of divorce, particularly on children. In 2015 there were 3,633 divorces involving children under 17 years of age which comprised a total of 6,510 children.\(^{74}\) Although this is a preferable pattern compared with the approximately 9,000 children per annum involved in divorce from 1990 to 2004, at which point the number of children involved began to decline, for those who are caught in divorce there are a variety of risk factors.

American sociologist Paul Amato is a prolific researcher on the influence and consequences of divorce. He has carried out a meta-analysis of research from the 1990s. He found that “children from divorced families scored significantly lower on a variety of outcomes, including academic achievement, conduct, psychological adjustment, self-concept, and social competence.”\(^{75}\) However, he also notes that people’s reactions to divorce vary greatly.

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\(^{72}\) Statistics New Zealand, “Divorces (marriages and civil unions) (Annual-Dec).”

\(^{73}\) Statistics New Zealand, “Divorce Rates (total population) (Annual-Dec).”


Divorce causes some to “experience temporary decrements in well-being, and forces others on a downward trajectory from which they might never recover.”76 In more recent research in their fields of social psychiatry and behavioural science, Taina Huurre, Hanna Junkkari and Hillevi Aro conducted a cross sectional study to determine if there were any long term psychosocial, well-being, or life trajectory disadvantages to adult children of parents who had divorced before the children were 16 years old. They found that “shorter education, unemployment, divorce, negative life events and more risky health behaviour were more common among subjects with a background of parental divorce.”77 These ongoing effects are consistent with the observations made by Amato that some longitudinal studies “found that the gap in psychological well-being between offspring from divorced and non-divorced families grew larger — not smaller — with the passage of time.”78 The findings of sociologist Hyun Sik Kim also corroborate this conclusion. Utilising the multi wave Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Kindergarten Class 1998 to 1999, Kim carried out a robust investigation into the consequences of parental divorce for child development. Employing an approach which allowed divorce to be described as a process rather than an event, he analysed data “pre-, in-, and post-divorce” and found a limited level of educational impairment and a negative effect on interpersonal skills both in- and post-divorce. He also found that children of divorce “were more likely to struggle with anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, and sadness.”79 The negative effect of divorce on both internalised behaviours and interpersonal skills neither disappeared nor were exacerbated post-divorce.80 Amato notes that there has been some suggestion that the negative influence of divorce would decrease as divorce became more common, with less stigma attached to it. However, he found no evidence to support this proposition. He states:

During the 1990s, the number of people touched by divorce increased, school-based programs for children of divorce became common, and mediation and education courses for divorcing parents became mandatory in many states. Given these trends, one might expect studies conducted in the 1990s to reveal a continued closing of the gap in wellbeing between children with divorced parents and children with married parents. An examination of studies conducted in the 1990s, however, does not support this hypothesis. 81

76 Amato, “The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children,” 1269.
78 Amato, “The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children,” 1279.
81 Amato, “The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children,” 1278.
However, three years after Amato published this article, psychologists Stanford Braver and Jeffrey Cookston claimed that the situation had changed dramatically, with longitudinal research on the impact of divorce beginning to surface, and that “the various releases appeared to be quite inconsistent in what they showed about the long-term ‘legacy’ of divorce.”\footnote{Stanford L. Braver and Jeffrey T. Cookston, “Controversies, Clarifications, and Consequences of Divorce’s Legacy: Introduction to the Special Collection,” \textit{Family Relations} 52, no. 4 (Oct 2003): 314.} In light of this critique, it is noteworthy that in 2010 Amato published a follow-up report from his previous work, in which he states: “Although many of these studies [from within the last decade] replicate earlier findings, links between divorce and forms of child well-being have remained relatively constant across decades.”\footnote{Paul R. Amato, “Research on Divorce: Continuing Trends and New Developments,” \textit{Journal of Marriage and Family} 72, no. 3 (June 2010): 653.}

Despite the usual correlation between divorce and a range of negative outcomes, it is also possible for parental divorce to lead to positive outcomes for some children, particularly in high-conflict marriages.\footnote{Amato, “The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children,” 1278.} In sociologist Tami Videon’s investigation on the influence of an adolescent’s relationship with their same-sex and opposite-sex parent during parental separation, she found that “separation from a positive same-sex parent relationship led to increased delinquent behavior, and separation from a negative same-sex parent relationship led to decreased delinquent behavior compared to adolescents who continued to live with their same-sex parent.”\footnote{Tami M. Videon, “The Effects of Parent-Adolescent Relationships and Parental Separation on Adolescent Well-Being,” \textit{Journal of Marriage and Family} 64, no. 2 (May 2002): 498.} The quality of the family environment and relationships prior to divorce has a significant influence on the consequence of divorce on children. E. Mavis Hetherington, formally a psychology professor at the University of Virginia, summarises: “Although divorce leads to an increase in stressful life events, such as poverty, psychological and health problems in parents, and inept parenting, it also may be associated with escape from conflict, the building of new more harmonious fulfilling relationships, and the opportunity for personal growth and individuation.”\footnote{E. Mavis Hetherington, “The Influence of Conflict, Marital Problem Solving and Parenting on Children’s Adjustment in Nondivorced, Divorced, and Remarried Families,” in \textit{Families Count: Effect on Child and Adolescent Development}, ed. A. Clarke-Stewart and J. Dunn (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 204.} Although the overwhelming consensus of research demonstrates a consistent disadvantage for children of divorced parents compared with those from non-divorced families, it is important to note that the pre-divorce family environment is critical in determining whether parental separation may produce positive outcomes for children.
While divorce affects children, it also negatively influences a range of factors for the divorcees themselves. Compared with consistently married individuals, research has found that those who divorce, on average, have higher rates of both chronic and acute health issues, lower levels of mental health, and increased rates of alcohol consumption. It is noteworthy that the apparent level of influence of divorce varies according to the different outcomes being measured, and drawing sweeping conclusions as to the impact of divorce based on any specific outcome is misguided. There is also some debate as to whether the negative impact of divorce should be understood as a temporary crisis or a state of ongoing chronic strain. Noted sociologists Alan Booth and Paul Amato found that the levels of stress associated with negative outcomes escalate in the period leading up to divorce and then decline over a period of around two years to levels similar to that of the married. Antithetically, Linda Waite, Ye Luo, and Alisa Lewin, who are also sociologists, found support for a state model, a perspective in which both “getting divorced is stressful, and being divorced is stressful.” They state that we see no clear pattern of improvements in emotional well-being for those who were divorced or separated for more than two years, compared to those who were divorced for a shorter time, either among those who at the first observation rated their marriage as happy or among those who rated it as unhappy.

In their investigation of how health is influenced by divorce over time, Frederick Lorenz and a team of statisticians, psychologists, and sociologists, found evidence to suggest that both crisis and chronic dimensions exist. They note that psychological distress is more reactive to acute stressors and therefore manifests rapidly, whereas physical illness takes longer to present.

Consistent with the effects of divorce on children, in certain circumstances the effects of divorce can be positive for the divorcee. Paul Amato and fellow sociologist Bryndl Hohmann-Marriott found that men and woman in high-distress marriages (rarely engaging with their

94 Lorenz, “The Short-Term and Decade-Long Effects of Divorce on Women’s Midlife Health,” 121.
spouse in positive activities, having frequent disagreements, having a high risk of experiencing violence, and perceiving their relationship to be unstable) report improvements in happiness following divorce.\textsuperscript{95} However, these positive influences are in comparison to the previous state of distress; they have an impact on the strength and duration of the divorce effects, rather than mitigating them entirely.\textsuperscript{96} Waite, Luo, and Lewin clarify this position, stating that their results

do not support the hypothesis that disruption of a marriage rated as unhappy, even among those who experienced violence in their marriage, leads to improvements in emotional well-being. In no case did those who divorced or separated show higher well-being than those who remained married, and on some measures they show lower well-being.\textsuperscript{97}

This research is particularly noteworthy as it also measures the effect of separation while remaining married. For men in particular, separation led to a statistically significant decrease in global happiness, increase in depressive symptoms, and an increase in alcohol consumption, all at rates greater than those who divorced.\textsuperscript{98} Caution must be applied when interpreting the results from research on divorce, as it is difficult to determine whether the results are an outcome of causation or selection; Amato raises this concern by asking, “[D]oes divorce lower people’s wellbeing, or are poorly functioning people especially likely to divorce?”\textsuperscript{99}

Regardless of the answer to this question, for FBOs seeking to support the wellbeing of families, both as a unit and as the individuals that make them up, their cause is best served by promoting marital unity, working to enhance relationships within the family, and avoiding divorce in most cases.\textsuperscript{100} Consequently, it is important to understand the factors that contribute to divorce in order to attempt to mitigate them. A number of studies have noted that predictors of marital disruption include low levels of love and trust between spouses, domestic violence, infidelity, a weak commitment to marriage, and frequent conflict.\textsuperscript{101} The


\textsuperscript{96} Amato, “Research on Divorce: Continuing Trends and New Developments,” 659.

\textsuperscript{97} Waite, “Marital Happiness and Marital Stability,” 209.

\textsuperscript{98} Waite, “Marital Happiness and Marital Stability,” 208.

\textsuperscript{99} Amato, “The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children,” 1275.


research of psychologists Thomas Bradbury and Benjamin Karney is particularly instructive when considering the question of how to support families and avoid divorce, as it suggests that there are a number of relatively easy, proactive steps that a couple might take to significantly reduce the likelihood of divorce. It provides an answer to the question of what a couple can do to help themselves rather than focusing simply on what they must stop doing. Their findings support the notion that “resolution of marital problems is less important than how spouses define and understand the context in which their differences of opinion are discussed.”

Consequently, Bradbury and Karney argue that pre-marriage counselling is useful for promoting communication skills and highlighting the necessity of positive interaction, but that this counselling is particularly important for those with divorce in their family of origin, as it gives them opportunity to explore and moderate their normative interactional processes. They also note that within marriage, the negative influence of poor marital problem-solving skills can be mitigated “if the spouses are able to infuse their problem-solving discussions with humour, showing genuine enthusiasm for what the partner is saying, and express feelings of warmth and affection.” This argument, which suggests that a focus on conflict within marriage is limiting and emphasis should instead be placed on the transformative processes, is central to the conclusions made by psychologists and family and behavioural researchers Frank Fincham, Scott Stanley and Steven Beach. They assert that family researchers have paid too much attention to conflict and too little attention to positive interpersonal processes, such as forgiveness, commitment, sacrifice, and sanctification in understanding marital quality and stability.

**Stability of Alternative Family Structures**

Despite instances of divorce in New Zealand having declined over the last 30 years, family breakdown is still a critical concern. A contributing factor for the downward trend in divorce rates is likely to be the declining general marriage rate, which, in 2015, reached an all-time

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104 Bradbury and Karney, “Understanding and Altering,” 867.

low of 11.3 marriages per 1,000 unmarried adults.\(^{106}\) Given that the population of 0-18 year olds is continuing to increase — as of the end of 2015, there were just over 1.1 million children under the age of 18 in New Zealand\(^ {107}\) — it is apparent that child rearing is increasingly occurring outside of marriage. Statistics New Zealand supports this suggestion, noting that the number of two-parent families in New Zealand is forecast to decline from 41 percent of all families in 2006, to 30 percent of all families in 2031, “partly because of continuing trends toward single parenting.”\(^ {108}\) However, the fact that a nuclear family may not be formalised through a marriage or civil union is not necessarily a concern based on sociological data or from some Christian faith perspectives (although this would certainly be a contentious claim). A number of studies comparing outcomes of children raised in various family structures rely on a standard of cohabiting biological parents with their children as the control, rather than marriage per se. For example, Ohio State University sociologists Catherine Ross and John Mirowsky’s investigation of parental divorce on life-course disruption and adult depression used “individuals who grew up with both parents” as the control. Compared with those who grew up with both parents, they found that adult children of divorce have lower levels of education, occupation status, and income, higher levels of economic hardships (both current and past), more often marry young, divorce and re-marry several times, find themselves in unhappy relationships, and mistrust people in general.\(^ {109}\)

It is difficult to determine if the separation of families with parents in a de facto relationship causes the same negative outcomes for children and parents as divorce does. The factors resulting in negative outcomes in divorce — exposure to high levels of interpersonal conflict, a decline in positive emotions, reduction in economic well-being, behavioural problems in children leading to increased distress for parents, and a loss or weakening of social support networks\(^ {110}\) — suggest that the influence of the dissolution of a de facto relationship may be comparable to that of divorce. These factors seem to be associated with relationship and family breakdown rather than dissolution of the institute of marriage specifically. One negative influence that may not be the same is the heightened level of stress experienced in divorce by those who believe it to be an immoral act.\(^ {111}\) Additionally, the implicit suggestion

\(^{111}\) Booth, “Divorce and Psychological Stress,” 396.
in research which uses the criteria of “individuals who grew up with both parents” in the place of “married couples with children” is that the latter is simply a sub-set of the former.

While the outcomes for children of stable cohabiting parents, regardless of their marital status, may be more positive than for children of families which have experienced separation or divorce, the primary concern with de facto relationships is not the quality of the care for children, but rather the inherent instability of such relationships. In her review of a number of studies on the subject, Pamela Smock, a sociologist and demographer, notes that “only about one sixth of cohabitations last at least three years and only a tenth last five years or more.”

Similarly, demographer Cynthia Osborne and sociologist Wendy Manning joined Pamela Smock and analysed data from the *Fragile Families Study*, finding that 49% of cohabiting parents had separated within 36 months after a child’s birth, compared to 11% of married parents. However, in the New Zealand context, it is not uncommon for cohabiting couples to ultimately marry. In his doctoral dissertation investigating the changing trends of cohabitation and marriage in New Zealand, sociologist Stephen McTaggart notes that some choose cohabitation as a forerunner to an eventual marriage and states that an expanding percentage of the New Zealand population now cohabit before marriage, or live together in short to long-term arrangements. In 1996, 25 percent of couples in New Zealand aged between 15 and 44 and in an intimate relationship were cohabiting. By 2006 this rate had increased to 40 percent.

Despite the fact that marriage provides a relationship with additional security, there is debate surrounding the influence of premarital cohabitation on marriage. Although support exists for the association of premarital cohabitation with increased risk for divorce and marital distress, the “cohabitation effect,” some studies have found that it leads to negative marital outcomes only when the cohabitation is with someone other than the eventual marital partner, or when there are non-marital births. Alternatively, research psychologists at the Centre for Marital and Family Studies at the University of Denver, Scott Stanley, Galena Rhoa des and Howard Markman argue for the existence of “relationship inertia” in which couples who would not marry are willing to cohabit due to a perceived lesser commitment, or sometimes

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simply “slide” into cohabitation, and eventually the natural building momentum of the relationship leads to marriage with the associated increased risk factors. They suggest that those who are engaged prior to cohabitation will experience greater marriage quality and stability due to their decision to commit to one another, than those who slide into cohabitation and marry as a result of relationship inertia. Amato clarifies, “Couples have lower standards for cohabiting partners than for spouses as well as lower levels of commitment to cohabiting partners than to spouses.”

The lack of stability which tends to accompany alternative family make ups was assumed by statistics New Zealand in their report on National Family and Household Projections: 2006(base)-2031. It projects an increase in the number of one-parent families of 0.4 percent a year “due to increasing numbers of separations and divorces, increasing rates of childbearing outside couple relationships, and more complex shared-care arrangements with parents residing in different households.” This is of concern given that a 2016 report released by the Ministry of Social Development states that “sole-parent households with dependent children have the highest income poverty rates of all household types, typically around 60% compared with a population rate of 17%.” The effect of decreased family stability has far reaching consequences economically as well as sociologically. The accumulation of costs associated with these effects is also significant. As an example, in 2012 the financial cost of family breakdown in the UK was estimated to be £46 billion. This figure was £10 billion more than the government’s defence budget and equates to £1,541 per tax payer annually. Consequently, if the support provided by FBOs can reduce family dissolution or help to mitigate the related negative effects, there may be real financial benefit for the economy.

Despite the fact that this chapter has focused on family structure and stability from a biblical, theological, and sociological perspective, this is not to suggest that the function of supporting families is necessarily centrally focussed on supporting or promoting families to stay together. The quality of parenting that a child receives has a notable influence on their outcomes.

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121 Bryan Perry, Household Incomes in New Zealand: Trends in Indicators of Inequality and Hardship 1982 to 2015 (Wellington: Ministry of Social Development, August 2016), 130.
Parental involvement and interest influences academic attainment, with mothers and fathers having independent, significant roles to play. Recent research has found that both positive and negative parenting affects brain structure and neurological development in children. Numerous studies have shown parental praise to correlate positively to a variety of psychological and social advantages including self-esteem and self-efficacy (however, praise of ability rather than effort may lead to negative effects in the event of future failure at a task). Conscientiousness and openness to experience, compliance (although praise needs to be balanced with consistent, quickly delivered reprimands or negative nonverbal responses), and emotional and physical well-being. Conversely, developmental biopsychiatry researchers Ann Polcari, Karen Rabi, Elizabeth Bolger, and Martin Teicher note that parental verbal aggression leads to adverse consequences that cannot be mitigated by the verbal affection of either the offending parent or their spouse. They state, “This observation lends further support to efforts to better inform parents about the potentially deleterious consequences of ridicule, disdain, and scorn of their children.”

The quality of parenting provided to a child can have significant effects on them. Assistance in providing quality parenting may be even more important for families who have been through divorce and the associated psychological stress, loss of financial capacity, increased household workload, and reduction of social support structures. Consequently, for FBOs engaging with families and supporting them, the role is more encompassing than simply helping families remain together. It also makes the scope of their influence – their “customer base” – much greater; any parent can do better, even good ones. The support that these agencies provide may be helpful to the family in crisis, but it may be equally applicable to parents who want to excel in their role. Training, equipping, and supporting parents is essential. In addition to the economic and sociological implications outlined above, training parents is consistent with the biblical tradition, which instructs parents in raising children, stating that they should consider children a blessing (Ps 127:3-5), discipline and instruct them

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123 Eirini Flouri and Ann Buchanan, “Early Father’s and Mother’s Involvement and Child’s Later Educational Outcomes,” *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 74, no. 2 (Jun 2004): 150.
(Prov 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15; 17; Eph 6:4), and teach them (Deut 6:6-9; Prov22:6). Similarly, there are also theological implications which are noteworthy when considering training and equipping parents. A number of studies have investigated the projection of parental images on one’s image of God.\textsuperscript{130} Behavioural scientists Hui-Tzu Graze Chou and Dominique Uata focused on the impact of parental discipline on the image of God and found that, for men in particular, “those with authoritative fathers were more likely to report perceiving God as loving, forgiving, trustworthy, and available than those with authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful fathers, or those with no father.”\textsuperscript{131} Psychologist Ian Birky and psychiatrist Samuel Ball concluded that the closest correlation between one’s perception of God and parental influence exists when the parental experience is expressed as a composite image.\textsuperscript{132} By training parents to be better parents, FBOs are not only helping to create an environment that is safer, more nurturing, and can provide better outcomes for children, but they are also shaping the children’s perception of God.\textsuperscript{133}

The FBOs that form the focus of this project have faith-based origins which included a conviction that families matter. The Christian perspectives of marriage and family are complex, but nonetheless establish the value of families. Moreover, sociological research into family structures and other factors that influence a range of outcomes assert the value of familiar stability in a general sense, and New Zealand’s current demography reveals significant needs in this regard. But why should the FBOs feel motivated to respond to these needs? Some Christians, myself included, believe that they, after the model of Jesus, are called to commit themselves to social justice. This ought to include a commitment to supporting families.

**Supporting Families as a Component of the Christian Social Justice Ethic**

Despite the complexity surrounding the biblical and theological perspectives of family, there is little debate that families are held in a position of importance and value. When people place


\textsuperscript{133} Peter Dobbs, “The Impact of Fatherlessness on the Way One Relates to God as Father” (Master of Theology Thesis, University of Otago, 2014). This was the area of research I investigated for my Master of Theology thesis.
value in a thing or an ideal, they will be predisposed to support or advance the cause of that which they value. In extreme cases, this support can even be to the detriment of the individual; such self-sacrificial support reveals deeply held convictions which supersede even personal wellbeing and happiness. There have been numerous instances throughout church history of Christians serving the weak, the vulnerable, and their communities, at times to their own detriment. Examples of this include the provision of free public education under Emperor Charlemagne in the eighth-century, and the Jesuit schools of Ignatius in the sixteenth-century, Francis of Assisi’s dedication to the poor in giving away all of his possessions, Vincent de Paul’s tireless efforts to free slaves in North Africa, as well as establishing hospices and other charities in Paris, and Mother Theresa’s lifelong commitment to the poor and infirm in Calcutta. These reveal a deeply held commitment to social justice which is central in the teachings of Jesus. Although there is rich history of social justice advocacy within Christendom, whether or not caring for families rightly fits under the umbrella of Christian social justice is less clear.

The Christian commitment to social justice, sometimes referred to as the upside down kingdom, is most comprehensively communicated in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. In this address, Jesus undermines popular cultural perceptions of the time and establishes blessing upon the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who seek righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted (Matt 5:1-11). He goes on to insist that by enacting these priorities, his followers in some way reveal God and cause others to glorify Him (Matt 5:13-16). In his book addressing the contributions of Christianity throughout church history, theologian Jonathan Hill notes that it seems that Matthew was keen to “spiritualize” this kind of teaching. In his eyes, when Jesus talks about the poor being blessed, he doesn’t mean the actual poor — people with no money. He means those who feel poor — those who are depressed or without hope, or who feel far from God.

This “spiritualisation” is not a departure from the mandates contained within the Mosaic Law which establish certain protections for the actual poor and underprivileged, but rather Jesus’ sermon demonstrates a value system which evolves throughout scriptures of the Old and New

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136 Hill, *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?*, 133.
137 Hill, *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?*, 177.
138 Hill, *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?*, 158.
139 Hill, *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?*, 139.
140 For example the gleaning laws contained in Lev 19:9-10, 23:22, and Deut 24:19-22 required land owners to be intentionally inefficient at harvest time in order that excess would remain to be collected by the foreigners, orphans, and widows. This law is seen worked out in practice in the story of Ruth (Ruth 2).
Testament. Clarifying that his teaching is not intended to replace the Jewish Law (Matt 5:17-20), Jesus raises the standard of expected behaviour in his followers by promoting a principle of humility and love in which anger is condemned as akin to murder (Matt 5:21-26), lust is associated with adultery (Matt 5:27-30), honesty is required (Matt 5:33-37), revenge is condemned and enemies are to be loved (Matt 5:38-48), and giving, praying, and fasting are to be done with humility and inconspicuously in order to avoid any public acknowledgement or reward (Matt 6:1-19). These principles are in keeping with the Mosaic Law. Examples of similar teachings in the Jewish Scriptures include instruction to return your enemy’s ox or donkey (Ex 23:4-5), to treat foreigners fairly (Ex 23:9; Lev 19:33-34), and to care for the disadvantaged (Ex 22:22-23; Lev 19:9-14; Deut 24:10-22; 27:19). The marked distinction between these laws and the teaching of Jesus is the shift from prescription to principle. Jesus broadens the application of the teaching to something more than action in a specific context, becoming instead an attitude of heart which his disciples are asked to carry with them in all contexts.  

How the teaching and principles of Jesus apply to an outworked Christian code of conduct is a significant consideration. In Jesuit theologian Roger Haight’s article on the theology of the social gospel — a movement located primarily in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries which advocated Christian values in social contexts — he states, “No one could deny that the Church has a mission in the United States. But does the Church have a mission to the United States?” Addressing the theology of social gospel advocate Shailer Mathews, Haight notes that a significant aspect of the understanding of responsibility to society comes from a particular anthropological world view. “Human beings are not merely individuals but are individuals-in-society.... Society is an organism, and individual human beings are not isolated atoms but parts of a common social existence.”

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141 R.E. Clements, “Christian Ethics and the Old Testament,” Modern Churchman 26, no. 3 (1984): 14-15. In making a statement like this, one runs the risk of implying that the Jewish Scriptures solely speak as a legal document. Clements states, “To insist that [the Old Testament] uniformly offers us a low, or sub-Christian, ethical picture is as inadequate as is any attempt to insist that it can all be Christianized and interpreted in such a fashion as to show that the Bible has a completely consistent ethical standard.” The Jewish Scriptures consist of varied material which resists being systematised. Clements highlights the dangers of relying on limited and isolated facets of law in order to create norms or principles, which are in turn regarded as divinely sanctioned absolutes. As an example he references the categorical imperative view of the fourth commandment, the Sabbath command, and states, “The consequent confusion that has arisen for Christians over the question of obedience to the fourth commandment, is simply one illustration of this interpretive shift.”


143 Haight, “The Mission of the Church,” 480. This perspective is striking in its similarity to Ludwig von Bertalanfly’s “Systems Theory,” developed in the 1960s in opposition to modernism’s reductionist “cause and affect” world view. Systems Theory views organisms as components of a larger process. No individual or part can be understood in isolation, as any action or movement from one entity will affect other entities also. It is a study of dynamic processes and interaction rather than of the specific parts themselves. The theory went on to
Mathews’, theologian and Baptist pastor Walter Rauschenbusch, similarly advocates for a social gospel, but he additionally notes that confronting social injustice is not merely the responsibility of an individual, or even that of an “individual-in-society,” but also that of the social institutions which humans create and which take on a semi-autonomous nature. Consequently, as noted by Haight, when the two theologians address sin, “[For Mathews sin is selfishness ... [but Rauschenbusch is also able to] describe a super personal sin, a kingdom of Evil that is located within the institutions and social structures that shape human existence itself.”\footnote{Haight, “The Mission of the Church,” 481.} Correspondingly, Rauschenbusch became a social ethicist and advocated for social change. As an American Baptist minister working in some of the poorest communities in New York City, he insisted that the purpose of Christian faith was to emulate Christ in his self-sacrificial and revolutionary service of others and pursuit of social justice. Revealing a somewhat stoic sentiment, he states:

It is part of the doctrine of vicarious atonement, which is fundamental in Christianity, that the prophetic souls must vindicate by their sufferings the truth of the truth they preach.... The championship of social justice is almost the only way left open to a Christian nowadays to gain the crown of martyrdom. Theological heretics are rarely persecuted now. The only rival of God is mammon, and it is only when his sacred name is blasphemed that men throw the Christians to the lions.\footnote{Walter Rauschenbusch, \textit{Christianity and the Social Crisis in the 21st Century: The Classic that Woke Up the Church}, ed. Paul Raushenbush (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 335-336.}

As if confirming the legitimacy of elements of Rauschenbusch’s claim, sixty years later, on the eve of his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous “I’ve been to the mountaintop” speech at Mason Temple, in which he reiterated his commitment to social justice as an extension of his Christian ministry:

Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will.\footnote{Keith D. Miller, \textit{Martin Luther King’s Biblical Epic: His Final, Great Speech} (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 182.}

Despite this high view of self-sacrificial social justice advocacy and action as a natural outworking of the Christian faith, and despite the rich history of the practice throughout church history, a commitment to social justice is by no means universal within the Christian tradition. A notable example of Christian elements promoting policy which undermines individual freedom and worth is the position of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) on...
apartheid in South Africa in the mid twentieth-century. The DRC Federal Missions Council stated:

It is the conviction of the majority of Afrikaans speaking South Africans and the majority of the members of the DRC that the only way of ensuring the continued survival of the nation is by preserving the principles of racial separation. Racial integration on an extended scale, on the other hand, must result in the lowering of standards culturally, morally and spiritually.¹⁴⁷

Ultimately it was the DRC leadership who advised the government on how to implement the apartheid.¹⁴⁸ Many other churches condemned the practice and lobbied against separatist legislation.¹⁴⁹ However, DRC members held a significant amount of political sway. It was not until the DRC General Synod of 1990 that they recanted this position, stating that apartheid “cannot be acceptable on the basis of Christian ethics because it is in conflict with the principle of neighbourly love and endangers the humanity of all involved.”¹⁵⁰ The DRC is not alone in experiencing tension between social justice and pragmatism, political influence, or a range of other potential influencing factors. Working for social justice is often difficult, and history has a tendency to be bipolar in its judgement of Christian responses to social needs, belying the complexity of the situation. For example, Kenneth Barnes, professor of history at the University of Arkansas, discusses the response of the protestant church to the Nazi state and the centralised, Nazi controlled, Deutsche Evangelische Kirche. He cautions that “scholars have portrayed participants in the conflict as either protagonists or antagonists, firmly on the side of Hitler’s Reichskirche or in the rebel camp outside it. The literature tends to vilify theologians and churchmen associated with the national church and make heroes of confessing Christians.”¹⁵¹

An explanation for some of the variation in Christian commitment to social justice worked out in practice may be found in the works of German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He warns:

A Christian ethic will have to begin by asking whether and to what extent it is possible at all to treat the ‘ethical’ and the ‘Christian’ as a theme, for that is not by any means so self-evident as one might assume from the confidence with which this repeatedly has been and is being done.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Masuku, “Prophetic Mission of Faith Communities During Apartheid South Africa,” 151.
Bonhoeffer goes on to caution that any suggestion that morality is always self-evident is true only in a broad sense; it is infinitely complex in its detail. Explaining that there is a time and a place to deliberate and decide between something that is on principle good and that which is not, he warns, “The ‘ethical’ as a theme is tied to a definite time and a definite place.”

Old Testament scholar R.E. Clements supports this position and notes, “Jews, as well as Christians, have always been well aware that isolated actions and moral expressions cannot be picked out and made into universally applicable examples.” Despite the fact that he was concerned primarily with the economic rights of individuals, in opposition to socialist thinking, these observations are consistent with the concept of social justice that Pope Pius XI outlined when he first coined the phrase in *Quadragesimo Anno*.

These observations of contextualised ethics ought to provoke caution in judging others’ ethical positions with regard to questions of social justice. This may be a particularly applicable warning in relation to the subject of marriage and family in the current social climate.

Despite the lack of consensus as to the importance of social justice or the way that it ought to be outworked in various contexts, many Christians hold the conviction that social justice is an integral component of the Christian faith. Debate remains, however, surrounding the centrality of social justice to a Christian faith in practice. For many evangelical Christians, the primary focus of Christian behaviour in response to the gospel should be evangelism. Care for the poor may be seen of significant value, but as a platform for evangelism or as a way to show holistic care to people rather than as an end in its own right. In their exposition of the relationship between social justice and Christian evangelistic mission, pastors and theologians Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert conclude, “The mission of the church is to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey his commands now and in eternity to the glory of God the Father.”

In contrast to this statement, systematic theologian Rodica Stoicoiu refers to the 1971 Synod of Bishops when she asserts, “The mission of the church is a mission of justice.... The mission of the church to bring forth

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155 Pope Pius XI, quoting Pope Leo XIII, stated, “‘To establish a rule of pay in accord with justice, many factors must be taken into account.’ By this statement he plainly condemned the shallowness of those who think that this most difficult matter is easily solved by the application of a single rule or measure - and one quite false.” Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, Encyclical letter, May 1931, Sec. 66, 67 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno.html> (23 October 2016).
the reign of God does so by way of justice.”¹⁵⁷ Many Christians would not see these two positions as mutually exclusive, but the question of primacy remains; can one rightly pursue the conversion of an individual or community and *not* address issues of social justice? Conversely, can one work for social justice without the ulterior or secondary motive of conversion? In an essay detailing his experience of cross-cultural ministry amongst the Mixtecs of southern Mexico, Robert Thiessen outlined his journey from applying an “evangelistic gospel,” where the “real” work was only achieved when commitments to Jesus were made, to a more holistic approach acknowledging the importance of meeting physical and social needs as part of ministry. He recounts an interaction with another missionary couple who, upon hearing the nature of his work, contended, “How dare you try to change these people’s ancient spirituality?”¹⁵⁸ They saw social justice as essential, but any evangelistic endeavours were considered an intrusion and degradation of culture; it was not only secondary, but antithetical to their primary mission. This is the extreme end of the “social gospel” spectrum.¹⁵⁹ Faith-motivated individuals within the FBOs being investigated in this study would fit somewhere on this continuum of ministry motivation. It was likely that their personal convictions in this regard would contribute to their attitudes and practices in their work.

Additional to the lack of consensus around whether advocacy and action on behalf of the disadvantaged is a core or a secondary function of Christian faith in practice, it also may not be immediately apparent that supporting families could fall under the umbrella of social justice. Where social justice is usually seen to be the support, protection, or advocacy for those who are oppressed or marginalised in some way, supporting strong families may not necessarily comfortably fit within this construct. The prevalence of fractured families within contemporary New Zealand society, along with the fact that social justice usually focuses on the support of a minority, may also contribute to making this connection difficult to see.

Although theologian Rob Fennell’s discussion on theological foundations for social justice does not make the link to supporting families, he highlights a principle which makes supporting families an important element of social justice. He states, “To see another human being, or a whole group or nation, suffering, impoverished, degraded or deprived of agency in

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¹⁵⁹ It may be that the variation in views surrounding the importance and role of social justice is related closely to differing eschatological perspectives. The postmillennial role of the church in bringing about God’s rule on earth now, compared to the importance of winning individual disciples within the paradigm of dispensationalist, could certainly account for this disparity to some extent.
their own lives, must necessarily stir us to cry out and to act in solidarity with them toward their liberation and life abundant.”

Given the economic and sociological impact of family breakdown and dysfunction, supporting families would certainly appear to meet this brief.

In a survey of the writings of the Russian Orthodox philosophers Pavel Florensky and Sergius Bulgakov from the time of the Russian Revolution, Christian scholar Alfred Siewers expounds the support of traditional marriage as an expression of social justice. He summarises,

The Christian tradition of marriage between a man and a woman can be understood as expressing social justice in the civil realm, in light of [Florensky and Bulgakov’s respective] definitions of identity in terms of relationship, and of society as a household. Both models support traditional marriage as an embodied symbol of relationship among human beings, nature, and God as expressed in Christian culture for centuries in lived intergenerational experiences. Such intergenerational perspective of faith and social justice provides an argument for traditional marriage as a public institution based on an ethos of socioeconomic as well as spiritual sustainability.

Bradford Wilcox, a sociologist and director of the U.S. based National Marriage Project, expands on this concept of marriage as a social justice issue. He notes that marital breakdown leads to inequality in a range of measures. As an example he points to economic implications, stating that one reason median family income in the United States has remained so stagnant is that there are more and more families headed by one parent, who ordinarily can’t bring as much income into the home as two parents could. Likewise, declines in the percentage of men who are working full-time are also connected to the retreat from marriage in America.

Even though a correlation between supporting families and social justice may not be immediately apparent, it is not difficult to make a case for such a correlation from a theological, philosophical, or sociological perspective. Moreover, the pursuit of social justice might also be understood in terms of social well-being. It was likely that the participant organisations and individuals within this study, unless they were involved in political or social activism, would relate more naturally to this broader conceptualisation of the topic; rather than righting social wrongs, they may perceive themselves to be responding to social needs.

162 W. Bradford Wilcox and James K.A. Smith, “Marriage is a Social Justice Issues: A Conversation with Brad Wilcox about the Social Revolutions that have Generated Economic Inequality,” Comment (Jun 2015): 44.
By providing support to families in New Zealand, the FBOs at the centre of this research may be assisting in reducing social and economic costs and promoting principles which are foundationally Christian. However, although what they are doing is important, central to this study is the question of *why*. Why do they do what they do? Why do they *say* that they do what they do? Are these questions the same or different? What underlying motivations do organisational and individual practices reveal? In order to investigate this intersection of faith and practice, I utilise the language of *espoused* and *operant* theology. These terms, along with questions surrounding practical theology, are defined as part of the following chapter.
Chapter 3. Grounding the Project: Definitions and Methods

This investigation focuses on the stated theological beliefs of FBOs that provide support to families in New Zealand and their practices, which unavoidably reveal motivations and deeply ingrained values. It is this complex intersection of faith and practice which is the locus of the research. The purpose of this chapter is to define and explain the research methods employed throughout the project. In doing this, I detail how this research fits within the domain of practical theology, explore espoused and operant theology as concepts necessary for engaging with the subject, briefly outline some applicable issues of organisational theory, explore qualitative research methodologies, and detail the specific research approaches which were utilised.

Definitions

This Project as Practical Theology

Scottish practical theologians John Swinton and Harriet Mowat define practical theology as “critical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world, with a view to ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.”¹ I have adopted this definition to describe the framework within which my research is situated. Of particular note is the second half of the definition, in which a purpose statement is provided. This is the “why” of the investigation. However, I do not consider the focus of my analysis to be anything as broad as “the church.” The participants are a handful of groups of individuals, many of whom identify as members of the church, and who collectively declare a Christian foundation for their work.

Not all definitions of practical theology fit quite so comfortably with my intended focus. As a vibrant and diverse field, different scholars frame the domain in slightly different ways, in accordance with their research interests and outlooks. Although there is no single or universal definition of practical theology, there are a number of common features that are important within the field. Practical theology has at times consisted of homiletics, Christian education, liturgics, and pastoral care, and it draws on the knowledge and expertise of the social sciences.² However, there is an inherent risk in borrowing from other domains. When social sciences are allowed to inform theological study, they may increasingly begin to form the

¹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, Practical Theology and Qualitative Research (London: SCM Press, 2006), 6.
² Jeff Astley, Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2002), 2. See also Sinclair B. Ferguson, and David F. Wright, eds. New Dictionary of Theology (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 525, 526.
theology as well; in this way communication theory may form homiletics, education theory may form catechetics, and psychology may form pastoral care and counselling. Where sociology of religion utilises these sociological methods to analyse beliefs or practices, practical theology applies a normative theological lens to the analysis, while still relying on tools and practices from other domains.

Practical theology also differs from other forms of academic theology in that it begins in human experience rather than scripture or Christian beliefs. New Zealand Catholic theologian Neil Darragh states that “practical theology ... begins not from Christian beliefs but from contemporary living and part of its process is to re-investigate assumed Christian beliefs.... It is specifically concerned with a result in transformative local practice rather than knowledge of local theology itself.”³ Similarly, Jeff Astley, a British practical theologian, clarifies that practical theology does not remain within the discipline of systematic theology, but neither is it to be thought of simply as the application of theory or “as a slide from theory, principle or tradition down to practice.”⁴ Rather, he asserts that “the starting point and the finishing point are both located in the same place, and practical theology begins and ends with the practice of the Christian faith as its practitioners experience it.”⁵ A case could be made that all theology is necessarily grounded in human experience, but practical theology is self-aware and intentional in this approach. Moreover, it is likely that many Christian ministers would consider the content of many of the messages they deliver from the pulpit to be “practical theology.” Consequently it is important to acknowledge that academia does not have a monopoly on the phrase “practical theology.”

Due to the fact that this study investigates the theology and practice of organisations, it could have been approached within either the schema of sociology of religion or that of academic practical theology. The primary factor which made practical theology a better choice was that I expected the individuals within the organisations to hold, and be influenced by, a theology of family. I also intended to allow the biblical and theological perspectives of family and Christian social justice ethics to influence the research approach and the evaluation of findings. One potentially complicating element of positioning this research within the practical theology domain is the assumption that practical theology arrives at transformative practice. Where practical theology is often referred to as a cycle of theological reflection

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⁴ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 2.
⁵ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 2.
which starts and ends in practice, this project would not complete an entire rotation of that cycle. It is possible that organisational practice or theology within the FBOs may change as a result of this research. However, although I approached this study from the perspective of a practitioner within the faith-based sector, and with the intent that the findings would be practically useful for the industry, the objective was not to be an agent of change. This is not to suggest that the findings would not *teach toward* transformation; there is little point in conducting research if there is no application on some level, and to suggest so would undermine the relevance of practical theology.

Bonnie Miller-McLemore, professor at Vanderbilt University, is one of the leading contemporary contributors to practical theology. She states, “Understanding knowledge as it arises in practice has become central to contemporary education. Practical theology’s longstanding efforts to develop methods to study theology in practice and to teach toward transformation contribute to this discussion and strengthen practical theology’s position.” In this research, however, any transformative practice will occur outside of the scope of the project. Despite the absence of such a subsequent step, I must personally acknowledge a strong transformational motivation. Although I was functionally investigating how the FBOs present a faith perspective and how they represent Jesus both in and to society (or possibly if their policies and practices were rooted in Christian faith at all), there is an implicit question in the research of how they might do this better: How can they represent Jesus to society better? For this reason I looked for definitions which made an explicit reference to transformation. However, the definitions of practical theology typified by Astley and Darragh, which include transformative practice as a stated aim, overemphasised the importance of transformation within the discipline. Instead, Swinton and Mowat’s definition, which I adopted, strikes a balance and explicitly states that the reason for the investigation is to work toward transformative practice, “ensuring and enabling faithful participation in God’s redemptive practices in, to and for the world.” However, it also suggests that it is sufficient that this may be a driving motivator and not necessarily a required outcome; “with a view to.”

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7 For example, I ruled out Gerben Heitink’s definition of practical theology as “the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society” due to the absence of any transformative focus. Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 123.
8 Swinton, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 6.
Christian Hermans, chair of pastoral theology at Radboud University Nijmegen, and German theologian Friedrich Schweitzer identify that there are a number of different paradigms within practical theology which stem from the concept of praxis. They ask the practical theologian to consider whether the praxis of faith in question is that of the individual believer, the church, the church in relation to society, or the church in relation to other religions. This research addressed the praxis of faith of a subset of “the church,” specifically FBO’s, in relation to society. Additionally Hermans and Schweitzer ask: “Is it about the praxis of the past, the present, or the possible?” While this research considered the impact of the past and potential ramifications for the future, the primary focus was the present. The implication of these questions is that practical theology can have variation in both its approach and the intended outcomes of the research. Consequently, the researcher must clarify these positions for any investigation within the discipline.

This study focuses on organisational practice as it relates to the espoused theology of FBOs, but it must also be recognised that organisations per se cannot hold theological positions any more than they can actually do anything. People are the agents of all policy, practice, and publications; “organisations” in this sense are the sum of the policies, practices, and publications of the people who make them up. Organisations may be referred to as either singular or plural. The Gregg Reference Manual provides the following example: “Brookes & Rice has lost its lease. It is now looking for a new location. Or: Brookes & Rice have lost their lease. They are now looking for a new location.” Within this research, when discussing an organisation, I wanted to emphasise the collective of individuals that make up the FBO. Consequently, I have tended to refer to the FBOs as plural and acknowledged their collective agency through the use of plural pronouns (“they” and “their”). The current praxis of these collectives of individuals and their interaction with each other and their clients was the focus of this research.

Hermans and Schweitzer also identify the key questions that remain at the core of all academic practical theology: “Where are the crossroads? Where are new emerging perspectives? What are the challenges for our field?” These questions are at the heart of this research. The intersection of faith and practice is central to this investigation and the subject matter, and both the role of religious values in the public domain and the theology of families

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are themes which are topical and developing. Theological views of family are being strongly influenced and challenged by current social trends, and as a result theological positions on the topic are being redefined and established. This is representative of broader challenges facing practical theology: What are the roles of scripture, theology, and dogma in the face of evolving cultural challenges and pluralism? How should the church respond to voices which promote inclusion and acceptance at the expense of traditional moral values and seek to edit voices of opposition in the name of justice? Moreover, what is the basis for that response? Is the position of Eastern Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas reasonable when he asserts, “There is no dogma of our Church that does not have something to say about the actual problems of humanity”? A more flexible approach is suggested by Scottish theologian Duncan Forrester, as he advocates that scripture and its interpretation be held loosely:

The Word does not supply a direct and unequivocal answer to all Christian moral practice. Indeed, the attempt to encapsulate the divine requirements in dogmatic rules or formulae and to apply these to situations tends to foreclose discussions of the issue; the answer is given before the question is heard. Wisely, the tradition of moral theology takes the Bible as a general guide only.

The implications of this challenge are of significant relevance to the process of theological reflection at the heart of practical theology, but the effect of this challenge also extends to other disciplines, as church leaders grapple with the direction in which influence is transmitted with regard to doctrine.

Vice President of the Catholic Theological Society of America, Bradford Hinze identifies this paradigmatic conflict within the Catholic tradition when he notes that the Second Vatican Council affirmed doctrinal development to respond to cultural context. Conversely, other Catholic theologians, such as Joseph Ratzinger, assert that:

Catholic Christian identity in its wholeness has been whittled away and sacrificed for the sake of relevance. Rather than promote further development of doctrines, these theologians have campaigned to retrieve and restore what has been lost of those doctrines already developed.

Whether or not the specific concerns of the theologians that Hinze highlights are valid is a secondary issue here. Hinze’s observation alone is sufficient to demonstrate that there is a

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range of views on how scripture, theology, and dogma engage, and ought to engage, with society, and that the field is contested. The philosophical dissonance demonstrated by the quotations of both Zizioulas and Forrester, and the differing opinions within Hinze’s brief survey of voices in the Catholic Church, reveal the complexity inherent within a discussion on the way that theology is used to view culture, or vice versa. Vasiljevic cautions that “without theological awareness, sensitivity and criteria, the transmitting of the message of the Gospel into the world and time (the so-called ‘enculturation’) can be a very hazardous endeavour.”

Although the research here does not explicitly focus on this particular challenge facing practical theology, it does in places touch on it and provides case studies of how these challenges are worked out within segments of the faith community operating in areas which are being particularly challenged in this regard at present; views on family, sex, and marriage have in many ways become highly contested. What this study does focus on, however, is the intersection of faith and practice, which is the central concern of practical theology. Consequently, exploring, developing, and defining language as a tool to explore this domain is an important element of the investigation.

Espoused and Operant Theology and the Classification of FBOs

The first research question which guides this study is: “Do the leaders and other staff at FBOs providing support to families in New Zealand believe that theology shapes practice in their organisation?” Although this question is binary in nature, it is an important starting point in the exploration of espoused theology — that which is stated — and operant theology — faith and values revealed through actions. It draws an implicit assumption about the existence of organisational theology. Given that theology is essentially the reflection and articulation of faith, and an organisation is a conceptual entity which comprises individuals, rather than a personal entity in its own right, it is complex and potentially problematic to talk of an organisation’s theology. This question of individual versus organisational identity is addressed below. However, “vision and values” are equally abstract concepts and are commonly attributed to organisations; there is a precedent for assigning formalised, yet abstract, attributes to conceptual entities. Written “vision and values” statements in publicity material and websites are examples of this. Yet it is likely that individuals within an organisation will hold a variety of perspectives regarding their own vision and values. Similarly, the question of whether an “FBO believes” that “its theology” shapes its practice will fall into two categories; the formal position of the agency and the perspective of individual employees and volunteers.

A number of sociological studies have focussed on FBOs or “faith communities,” and offer generalised, normative assumptions surrounding religious groups, their practices, and their influence. For example, psychologists Bret Kloos and Thom Moore draw on the research of Maton and Wells when they note that “90% of congregations in the U.S. have programs directed toward community needs.”

Similarly, John Terry, a specialist in clinical-community psychology, and his co-authors summarise a number of studies and state that there are “significant benefits when faith-based organizations (FBOs) deliver social services, as acknowledged by ecological theory, federal policy initiatives, and recent conceptual papers.” Despite the body of social science material explaining various aspects of faith-based organisations, much of which acknowledges the role that faith communities play in providing social care, there is a distinct lack of research on how their faith, their theology, influences their practice. Mark DeKraai and his co-authors from the University of Nebraska's Public Policy Centre, state that faith communities have a long tradition of delivering care to orphans, unmarried mothers, the elderly, and others, “guided by theology.”

Kloos and Moore recommend that due to a range of statistically proven sociological benefits correlating to religious participation, social psychologists should partner with religious organisations. They also note that religious institutions are effective partners for advocating social change, promoting values of social justice, and creating a sense of community.

This emphasis on what religious agencies or groups have to offer is understandable, but it fails to address the core question of why they operate in ways that produce these outcomes. John Terry et al. touch on this in their discussion on FBOs and the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs):

EBP and FBOs both have desired outcomes or mission statements (e.g., betterment of the community and alleviation of suffering). Contrary to EBPs, however, FBOs are not focused solely on finding significant effects of their service. FBOs may agree that knowledge and wisdom should be applied to FBOs’ practice; however, they may also emphasize that accomplishing service outcomes

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It is noteworthy that Terry et al. also outline the potential for intervention by religious communities to be harmful to some individuals. They note a number of psychological and counselling techniques that can exacerbate symptoms or promote dysfunctional behaviour in some cases. Terry, et al., “Incorporating Evidence-Based Practices,” 215.
is not the entire point of FBO service. In some circumstances, positive outcomes (e.g., a cure or abatement of symptoms) may not be possible or likely (e.g., chronic mental illness, hospice care). Nevertheless, some FBOs provide care regardless of whether this results in a positive outcome. In such situations, the lack of a positive outcome does not necessarily reflect failure of the FBO service.²¹

This observation highlights the potential disparity between operational objectives and stated theological positions; that which fundamentally drives an FBO may not always align with a perceived objective standard of evidence-based operational best practice. Theologian Kjell Nordstokke summarises this tension well in his discussion on the role of FBOs in the provision of international aid. He points out that an FBO may be asked by a funder to state what “added values” their work provides. In this respect, some FBOs would prefer the term “core values”, because these reflect what is considered to be at the heart of the organisation and not what may be considered as supplementary in regard to what they stand for or something added to what they do.²²

The question of the role of faith being either an “added extra” to the core operational practice of an FBO, or central to it, is not the only potential tension surrounding core values and performance. In his discussion on the enhancement of the developmental capabilities of civil society organisations, Deryke Belshaw summarises the findings of a number of studies, including the 2000-2002 World Bank study, *The Voices of the Poor*. He identifies a series of advantages which faith-based organisations provide in development initiatives that seek to advantage the poor and also provides reasons for why FBOs may have strengths over non-religious agencies. These include a propensity to endure hardship, engage with the poorest and marginalised, and have local and international networks of like minded organisations; these outcomes are largely predicated by adherence to the “golden rule”: treat others as you wish to be treated.²³ He similarly explains that spiritual and relational experiences can provide new hope, confidence, and opportunities for the aid recipients.²⁴ However, Belshaw also comments that the “practical action by FBOs may fall well short of their ethical and spiritual ideals.” In addition to noting the same potential for disparity between services and evidence-based practices as Terry et al. noted above, he also states that “the neighbour” — viz. “love your neighbour” — may be interpreted in partisan terms; hierarchical organisational policies and integration into state political structures may influence practice; and theological education and training, which often omits applied social and environmental practice, is challenging to

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²² Kjell Nordstokke, “Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and their Distinct Assets,” *Swedish Missiological Themes* 101, no. 2 (2013): 188.
²³ Deryke Belshaw, “Enhancing the Development Capabilities of Civil Society Organisations with Particular Reference to Christian Faith-Based Organisations (CFBOs),” *Transformations* 23, no. 3 (July 2006): 158.
²⁴ Belshaw, “Enhancing the Development Capabilities”, 158.
integrate operationally. Rick James, a consultant with INTRAC (International NGO Training and Research Centre), notes that

many FBOs in Europe, particularly Christian ones, have been reticent to articulate too close a connection to their faith identity. They have been anxious to portray their professionalism in development and understandably want to avoid the inherent dangers of a faith connection being abused to manipulate staff and exclude others of different faiths, or no faith.  

These examples of both the strengths and potential short-comings of FBOs in the context of social aid are predicated on, and influenced by, the prominence of the faith perspective which an agency holds, and by its organisational structure and affiliations. Given the never-ending variety of faith positions, agency configurations, and external influences, the description and categorisation of an FBO is important. Nordstokke asks “whether the term FBO is usable in analysing and evaluating development work. [FBOs] encompass a vast diversity of organisations that vary even in the way they express their ‘faith-base’.”

This raises the important distinction between what might be considered historical, nominal, in-principle, or practiced faith within FBOs.

While many FBOs uphold a certain theological ethic through either formal statements of faith and values or as espoused by their leaders, for some there may be no intent to allow theological understanding or convictions to shape activity at all. It may also be that, despite an organisational intent to separate theology and practice, the theology of the leaders and/or employees within the agency still carries influence operationally. In addition to providing a foundational starting point to assist in the investigation of the complex interplay between espoused and operant theology, asking if the FBO in question believes that theology shapes their practice provides the opportunity to define the landscape of the investigation. It may be that the members of an FBO acknowledge that their faith foundation is historical and is no longer practically enacted. In this instance, they may not have an espoused theology per se, but rather only an historical theological position. In this case, it is important for the researcher to understand what motivates them. To what extent do the vision and values, which were formational for them as an agency, practically influence their operational activity today? At the other end of the spectrum, members of an FBO may espouse a theological position which is of central importance to both their identity and their practice; in this case their faith underpins practice and is a driving motivator. Rick James cautions that the term FBO is highly problematic. He states, “For many the term ‘FBO’ conceals much more than it reveals. It gives the impression FBOs are the same. Yet FBOs are extraordinarily heterogeneous in the

26 Nordstokke, “Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and their Distinct Assets,” 191.
ways in which their faith identity plays out in their work." An “FBO,” therefore, requires more explanation than simply stating that it is “faith-based.”

Numerous efforts have been made to create typological frameworks with which to facilitate the discussion and exploration of FBOs. In 1996, political scientist Stephen Monsma annotated a number of religious attributes and practices within FBOs and ranked them on a scale of high, medium, or low on a scale of religious practices. A year later Thomas Jeavons, the director of the Center on Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership at Grand Valley State University, suggested seven dimensions for defining a “religious organisation.” He drew on applied organisational theory when he proposed that agencies be defined by considering their: organisational self-identity; selection of organisational participants; sources of resources; goals, products and services; information processing and decision making processes; the development and distribution of organisational power; and organisational field, including programme partners. In 2001, political scientist Steven Smith and sociologist Michael Sosin looked at the influence exerted upon faith-related agencies by “coupled” agencies, placing them on a continuum of high to low coupling on scales of resource dependency, authority, and organisational structure. In 2008, Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings, both of whom are political and social scientists specialising in NGOs and FBOs, provided a simplified construct in which an FBO was defined as having a passive, active, persuasive, or exclusive faith position. While this framework has significant merits, particularly its pragmatic approach, it does not allow for agencies with an historical faith position which is no longer active, to be considered “FBOs.”

Despite the evolution and development of definitions which advance both the language and analysis of FBOs, the most useful framework for this research was that proposed by theologian Ronald Sider and church-based community ministry researcher Heidi Unruh in

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27 James, “What is Distinctive About FBOs?,” 4.
30 “Coupling” refers to the extent to which an agency is linked to faith through sources of resources, authority, and cultures that represent relevant faiths.
2004. They carried out case study research of 15 congregations with active community-serving programmes and then generated a typology of social service and educational organisations based on their religious characteristics. This model was based on a number of factors including mission statements and self-prescriptive text, historical foundations, affiliations with other agencies, management structures and practices, financial considerations, and programme content. From these considerations they classified FBOs as faith-permeated, faith-centered, faith-affiliated, faith-background, faith-secular partnerships, and secular. The first four of these terms are defined as follows:

- **In faith-permeated** organisations, the connection with religious faith is evident at all levels of mission, staffing, governance, and support. Faith-permeated programs extensively integrate explicit religious content. The religious dimension is believed to be essential to the program’s effectiveness, and therefore participation in religious elements is often required.

- **Faith-centered** organisations were founded for a religious purpose, remain strongly connected with the religious community through funding and affiliation, and require the governing board and most staff to share the organization’s faith commitments. Faith-centered programs incorporate explicitly religious messages and activities but are designed so that participants can readily opt out of these activities and still expect the benefits of the program’s services.

- **Faith-affiliated** organisations retain some of the influence of their religious founders (such as in their mission statement) but do not require staff to affirm religious beliefs or practices, with the possible exception of some board and executive leaders. Although faith-affiliated programs incorporate little or no explicitly religious content, they may affirm faith in a general way and make spiritual resources available to participants. Faith-affiliated programs may have the intent of conveying a religious message through nonverbal acts of compassion and care.

- **Faith-background** organisations tend to look and act secular, although they may have a historical tie to a faith tradition. Although religious beliefs may motivate some personnel, faith commitments are not considered in the selection of the staff or board. Faith-background programs have no explicitly religious content aside from their possible location in a religious setting, and they do not expect religious experience to contribute to program outcomes.

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34 Sider and Unruh, “Typology of Religious,” 119-120.
Although any typological categorisation of agencies ought to be employed with some degree of caution,\(^{35}\) and faith-secular partnerships and secular agencies do not feature in my research, hence their omission from the list of definitions above, it is this typology which I adopted in order to provide language and a framework for the investigation. The model shares strong similarities with that of Clarke and Jennings, but the additional faith-background category is of particular importance for my study. As is demonstrated by the range of factors which Sider and Unruh considered in the process of developing this typology, in order to determine where on their spectrum an FBO sits and identify its theology and the influence that this theology has, it is necessary to investigate the organisation from multiple perspectives. The stated theological position of the agency, as revealed in formal statements of faith or vision and values, is the initial port of call in attempting to locate an FBO on this continuum. However, faith positions and motivations may also be revealed explicitly or implicitly in publicity material, policy documents, employment procedures, budgets, and programmes. They may also be revealed in practice.

In order to define the concepts which deal with the distinction between a stated faith or belief and that which is revealed by action or inaction, I have borrowed heavily from the conceptual framework developed by “Action Research: Church and Society” (ARCS), an agency established at Heythrop College at the University of London. This framework, “Theological Action Research” (TAR), is a process of partnership between a researcher and a practitioner to assess the theological motivations of individuals or agencies. TAR is an interdisciplinary tool which relies on sociological research methods and is designed to reveal “implicit” theologies embedded within practices. At its core is the assumption that theology is not simply an articulated belief structure, but it also encompasses the origins of those stated beliefs and their practical outworking. TAR is based on “the four voices of theology,” a typology which the researchers at ARCS developed and describe as normative theology, formal theology, espoused theology, and operant theology.\(^{36}\) Normative theology is the organisation’s sources of authority in defining orthodoxy such as scripture, creeds, liturgies, or official church teachings. Formal theology is the theology of theologians and emphasises critical, intellectual thought and articulation of beliefs. Espoused theology is the stated faith of the group. Operant theology is “the theology embedded within the actual practices of a

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\(^{35}\) For more on this see Bob Mitchell’s article on assessing the usefulness of frameworks for categorising FBOs. Bob Mitchell, “Assessing the Usefulness of frameworks for sub-categorizing faith-based organizations: World Vision as a Case Study,” *Pacifica* 29, no. 1 (2016): 57-70.

Within a faith-based organisational context it stands to reason that there will be some cross over between normative and espoused theology, as the agency utilises faith positions defined by their normative sources and espouses them within their own context. The TAR model acknowledges the fact that the “theologies do, themselves, ‘come from somewhere,’” and state, “We must be clear that these four voices are not discrete, separate from one another; each voice is never simple. We can never hear one voice without there being echoes of the other three.” Consequently, although this study utilises the concepts of espoused and operant theology extensively, normative theology is also evident in the stated values and positions of the participant FBOs.

A primary characteristic of TAR is a conviction that theology is not simply a belief structure or value system which is used to analyse and define practice, but rather the practice is itself theological. Practice is an articulation of theological positions and involves a dynamic interplay between these four modes of theology. For example, just as an espoused theology influences operant theology, operant theology — the practices of the organisation — in turn influences espoused theology over time, at least the way in which that espoused theology is understood. Reframing the biblical teaching that faith without works is dead (Jas 2:17), TAR clarifies that works are, in their own right, an expression of faith. Theologian Stanley Grenz explains, “True inward faith always expresses itself in outward signs.” In other words, what is in us can’t not come out, and that which comes out reveals what is in us. Faith expressed in practice is a rich source for theological reflection. However, operant theology, the theology revealed in practice, is particularly difficult to analyse. Practice, by definition, is action. It is a thing done and experienced in time. The description, observation, or quantification of practice will never completely communicate that activity as the modes of transmission change from the material to prose.

Additionally, the process of attempting to assign meaning to or draw theological conclusions from certain actions is a task wrought with challenges. Our own individual motivations for any particular action are often complex and difficult to identify, quantify, or explain. This difficulty is exacerbated still further when one is making claims of motivational correlation evidenced in a participant’s actions. In order to assist the research participant to both describe and analyse an activity, TAR utilises a process of partnership and conversation. Relying

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37 Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 54.
38 Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 53.
39 Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 54.
40 Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice*, 51.
loosely on the Kolb Learning Cycle, an event or practice is experienced, reflected upon, and learning points drawn from it for application. However, the TAR tool did not entirely fit my purposes for this research. As a dynamic and interactive process between researcher and practitioner, TAR is a tool intended to facilitate research and conversations, with a view to answering “theological questions about faithful practice in order to renew both theology and practice in the service of God’s mission.” It is the “in order to” part of this stated aim of TAR which is problematic for me. My intent was not to be a direct agent of change. Although organisational awareness and change may come about as a bi-product of my research, my primary purpose was to observe and report on the current climate rather than advocate a process of change. Consequently it is the framework of the “four voices” and the methodology for identifying, describing, and exploring theology revealed in practice, rather than the TAR process itself, which I utilised within my research and which provided language for the ruminations.

The Organisation and the Individual: Identity and Motivation

The challenge in defining theological positions of organisations, as compared to that of individuals, was a focus for both the question of identifying espoused theology and in analysing its transference into operant theology. Analysis of the connection and causation between espoused theology and operant theology within the FBOs was the focus of the second research question and was the primary focus for the project: *How does theology shape practice in FBOs providing support to families in New Zealand?* The challenges implicit within practical theology, and any investigation which focuses on the intersection of faith and practice, are additionally complicated when the scope of that enquiry is expanded beyond the individual to that of an organisation. However, it would be overly simplistic to address the issue purely organisationally. Reductionism must also be avoided, but the reality is that any agency is made up of people, individuals who each carry the theological ethic of the organisation.

Very extensive literature exists on organisational and management theories, and any attempt to provide an overview of that domain is well beyond the scope of this study. However, a basic understanding of Systems Theory is helpful in contextualising the tension between the role and function of the individual and that of the organisation as a whole. Systems Theory views organisms as components of a larger process. No individual or part can be understood

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43 Cameron et al., *Talking About God in Practice*, 63.
in isolation, as any action or movement of one entity will affect other entities also. It is a study of dynamic processes and interaction rather than of the specific parts themselves. The theory was first established in the late 1960s by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy, who opposed the reductionist cause and effect world view that “the so-called mechanistic universe was a world of ‘blind laws of nature’,”\textsuperscript{44} and instead postulated a view of “the world as organisation.”\textsuperscript{45} This opposition to reductionism became an interdisciplinary phenomenon, with numerous models being developed. These models “differ in basic assumption, mathematical techniques and intention, [but] agree in being concerned with ‘systems’, that is, problems of interaction of many variables, of organisation, regulation, goal-directedness and the like.”\textsuperscript{46}

Homeostasis and common finality are key principles of Systems Theory which are relevant to the discussion surrounding the interplay between the individual and the organisation, as are the concepts of sub-systems and supra-systems. In the context of Systems Theory, homeostasis relates to the maintenance of systemic equilibrium based on information exchanges between the system and the external environment.\textsuperscript{47} Common finality “considers organizations as a set of parts interacting with each other, organized and managed to reach the same final goal.”\textsuperscript{48} In this framework an FBO is understood as a system which comprises sub-systems and individuals. All individual employees or participants within an FBO are understood to belong to their own family and cultural systems, with their own systemic and family of origin influences. Similarly, the FBO itself is part of larger societal systems which may include a network of agencies, a faith community, or the social work sector. Within this schema of concentric and overlapping systems, a system both influences, and is influenced by, its sub-systems. Similarly, it influences, and is influenced by, the supra-system. This framework creates a network of living organisms in which any influence or change of one element will influence the whole. In relation to the theological position of an FBO, this theoretical model predicts that an “organisation’s theology” will be influenced by its sub-systems — its departments and individual employees — and its supra-systems — for example funders, partner organisations, or professional bodies to which they belong.\textsuperscript{49} It will in turn

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Ludwin Von Bertalanffy, \textit{Organismic Psychology and Systems Theory} (Massachusetts: Clark University Press, 1968), 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Von Bertalanffy, \textit{Organismic Psychology}, 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Von Bertalanffy, \textit{Organismic Psychology}, 38.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Mele, Pels, and Polese, “A Brief Review of Systems Theories and their Managerial Applications”, 130.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} This is a significant simplification of the theory, particularly in relation to the supra-system interaction. Although open systems theory looks at the engagement of organisations and the environment within which they
\end{itemize}
influence the theology of these systems. In a healthy system there must be balance in this
dynamic interplay of causation and identity. Bowen Family Systems Theory is an influential
type that was originally developed to help understand the psychological impact of the
family unit on children and was subsequently applied in organisational contexts. It highlights
the importance of self-differentiation in which the individual seeks a balance between both
autonomy and value as an individual, and belonging and contribution to the larger system to
which he or she belongs.\textsuperscript{50} Theoretically the same is true for the FBO; the system must also be
self-differentiated, possessing both autonomous value and belonging to something greater
than itself. Due to these theoretical considerations, questions of power and the direction of
any observed influence became important issues for the research.

Questions of power and autonomy are closely correlated to the discussion of motivation. An
employer is able to exert more influence on an employee than vice versa due to the nature of
their relationship; this doesn’t mean that they will necessarily exercise this power, but the
relationship is not equitable. Similarly, a funding body will be able to exert influence on an
agency that it funds by merit of the fact that it has the ability to withhold funds. Within this
study I was open to hearing about the impact of funders if it came up in the interviews, but
that was not my primary interest. I was more focussed on the interplay between the FBO and
its employees. I understood that the motivations of individuals within the FBO may not
always align with the organisational values and this raised questions for me. To what extent
would the staff members share and adhere to the theology of the agency? Was it essential that
they buy into the organisational philosophy in order to contribute meaningfully to the work
that the organisation does? The issue of motivation is complex, particularly in a sector where
faith may drive practice individually as well as organisationally. In many regards one might
expect the motivations of some of those involved to be similar to that of a volunteer, given
that they, like volunteers, may be motivated by an ideology or ethic, rather than solely by
financial considerations. A paper by organisational sociologists Ram Cnaan and Robin
Goldberg-Glen in the \textit{Journal of Applied Behavioral Science} collated a number of previous
studies and summarised motivations of volunteers. Among these motivations were the
following responses which one could easily imagine being held by members of Christian

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\textsuperscript{50} Katie Rootes, Peter Jankowski and Steven Sandage, “Bowen Family Systems Theory and Spirituality:
Exploring the Relationship Between Triangulation and Religious Questing,” \textit{Contemporary Family Therapy} 32
organisations engaged in social aid work: “It is God’s expectation that people will help each other”; “I adhere to the agency’s specific goals”; “Volunteering for others makes me feel better about myself”; “Volunteering is an opportunity to change social injustices”; “Volunteering is an opportunity to do something worthwhile.” However, the organisations that I investigated have national scope and their staff are primarily paid employees. Consequently, it was unlikely that their motivation would be purely intrinsic. Related to this concept, Cognitive Evaluation Theory is a psychological theory that grew in prominence in the 1960s and 1970s and sought to analyse the complex relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Its proponents determined that extrinsic and intrinsic rewards were cumulative, assuming that if both could be present then job satisfaction would be complete. However, Cognitive Evaluation Theorists found the relationship between these motivators to be far more complex, with a degree of both positive and negative causality between them. Despite the intricacy involved in determining motivation, it is sufficient to note that not all motivations are what they first appear, nor does a stated theological conviction necessarily translate to attitudes or practices.

Analysing the motivations of all staff members of the FBOs in question was beyond the scope of this research. However, it was important to understand the espoused theological convictions of both the organisation and a sample of individuals, as in a very real sense the convictions of the individuals are the convictions of the organisation. Consequently, the question of how theology shapes practice had to be targeted not only at a strategic level within the organisation, but also at an individual grassroots level, where the agency’s resources are applied in practice to meet the needs of families, parents, and marriages. Moreover, the correlation between espoused theological positions at different levels within the organisation reveals the degree to which the managers and strategic leaders within the FBOs are able to harmonise and normalise the theological position of the agency, regardless of whether or not that theology is developed collaboratively or dictated top down. Operationally, this synergy may be particularly important. Business management researchers Christina Mele, Jacqueline Pels, and Francesco Polese state:

> The governance of the viable organization [has to] address and direct the system towards a final goal by transforming static structural relationships into dynamic interactions with other viable systems. The ability to organize relationships delineates the efficiency of governmental action, which is a central characteristic

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of viable systems, contributing to the equilibrium of the system from one side and to the satisfaction of supra-systems’ expectations from the other.\footnote{Mele, Pels and Polese, “A Brief Review of Systems Theories and Their Managerial Applications,” 131.}

Accordingly, a cohesive vision and mission which is shared within the FBO is likely to be a mark of a healthy agency and will more commonly produce stable and satisfied employees and satisfied funders.

Another particularly important and topical aspect of the second research question, which relates to the question of organisational identity specifically in the domain of agencies that engage with families, is how theology shapes practice when confronted by lifestyle choices contrary to the theological convictions of the FBO (or potentially individuals within the FBO). In an article published in the \textit{Journal of Social Ethics} in 1977, theologian Joseph Hough, Jr. responds to the claim that “social action might be an inappropriate function for the churches.”\footnote{Dean M. Kelly, \textit{Why Conservative Churches are Growing} (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), cited in Joseph C. Hough, Jr., “Christian Social Ethics as Advocacy,” \textit{Journal of Religious Ethics} 5, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 117.} He states that “the attempt to make faith a-political — like all other attempts to keep religion and politics separate — is an ill-concealed return to sanctifying the status quo as a survival necessity.”\footnote{Joseph C. Hough, Jr., “Christian Social Ethics as Advocacy,” \textit{Journal of Religious Ethics} 5, no. 1 (Spring 1977): 117.} This brief quote exemplifies a classic theological debate surrounding the universality or specificity of Christian ethics. Should a Christian social ethic, even if a normative consensus on an issue can be achieved, be advocated for in wider society, or is it specifically applicable to the Christian community? In the context of an FBO providing support to families, should any perceived immoral or sinful lifestyle choices of aid recipients be confronted, ignored, encouraged, discouraged, or aid withheld?\footnote{Perceived immoral or sinful lifestyle choices might include unmarried couples living together, gambling, overconsumption of alcohol etc.} How the agency responds depends not only on their theological position, but also on their philosophical paradigm about how faith ought to translate to practice. These questions on the perceived and real influence of theological positions within FBOs are the locus of the study and were foundational in establishing the question of \textit{how faith shapes practice in FBOs supporting families in New Zealand}. 

\begin{itemize}
  \item Mele, Pels and Polese, “A Brief Review of Systems Theories and Their Managerial Applications,” 131.
  \item Perceived immoral or sinful lifestyle choices might include unmarried couples living together, gambling, overconsumption of alcohol etc.
\end{itemize}
Methods

Research Paradigm

Defining a qualitative research methodology is a more complex affair than simply outlining the chosen method and detailing why it has been selected. Philosophical tensions must be navigated in order to provide a balanced explanation of the chosen methodology and how it guides research methods. Qualitative research is difficult to define due to its complex history, paradigm conflicts with other research methods, and its interdisciplinary nature. It seeks to explore the social world and the way that people or communities operate within it. Consequently, qualitative research is an open-ended undertaking, with any inquiry providing a snapshot of living, evolving social systems; the very act of conducting research may influence the system. This dynamic process is one of the primary characteristics that makes qualitative research difficult to define. Sociologist Norman Denzin and research methodologist Yvonna Lincoln note that “the open-ended nature of the qualitative research project leads to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrella-like paradigm over the entire project.” Despite this tension, John McLeod, an academic who specialises in qualitative research methods in counselling and psychotherapy, offers a definition which is helpful as it details the importance of human experience, the rigorous nature of good qualitative research, and the practical utility of its findings. He states:

Qualitative research is a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world. It produces formal statements or conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding the world, and therefore comprises knowledge that is practically useful for those who work with issues around learning and adjustment to the pressures and demands of the social world.

Qualitative research may consist of a range of methods including narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, and more. In turn, each of these methods is approached through the lens of a social science theoretical paradigm. John Creswell, an educational psychologist and research methodologist, provides a list of interpretive frameworks and includes “positivism, postpositivism; interpretivism, constructivism, hermeneutics; feminism(s); racialized discourses; critical theory and Marxist models; cultural studies models; queer theory; and postcolonialism.” These theoretical

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59 Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, xiii.
60 John McLeod, Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy (London: Sage, 2001), 3.
perspectives serve to provide a framework within which the ethics, ontology, epistemology, and methodology of both the research and the researcher are encompassed. Although each paradigm approaches questions of reality and knowledge in different ways, of particular note for this project is the tension between positivism and constructivism.

Positivism is the “hard science” approach to qualitative research. It perceives reality as an objective, identifiable phenomenon which can be studied, measured, and apprehended. Yvonna Lincoln, Susan Lynham, and Egon Guba draw on a number of social science theorists when they conclude that the purpose of such research is to predict, and therefore control, nature.\footnote{Yvonna S. Lincoln, Susan A. Lynham and Egon G. Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited,” in \textit{The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research}, 4th ed., ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011), 102.} However, in his outline of key interpretive frameworks, Creswell chooses to omit positivism. Protesting against its dogmatic adherence to strict cause and effect, Creswell instead promotes postpositivism in which he advocates that “cause and effect is a probability that may or may not occur.”\footnote{Creswell, \textit{Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design}, 23-24.} At the opposite end of this paradigmatic spectrum lies constructivism (sometimes referred to as social constructivism or interpretivism).\footnote{Creswell, \textit{Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design}, 24.} Holding a relativistic ontology,\footnote{Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited,” 98.} this framework seeks to understand individuals’ subjective interpretations of experiences. Creswell notes that the goal of this research “is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation.”\footnote{Creswell, \textit{Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design}, 24.} Rather than pursuing an objective truth, constructivism is more interested in individuals’ subjective perceptions. These individual perceptions are of particular note when questions of motivation are being asked. In the case of this study, why the FBOs do what they do is a primary focus. However, organisations are unable to act in their own right; the individuals within them act on the organisation’s behalf. Equally, the organisation itself is unable to express a motivation which drives these actions. Espoused theological positions, or any other basis for why the FBO does what it does, may be asserted formally such as within a vision statement, but they are enacted by individuals. Consequently, individuals’ perception of why they do what they do is critical to this study.

Another area of significant variation which is particularly noteworthy for this research project is the role of ethics, values, and the voice and posture of the researcher. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba explain that in a positivist framework values are excluded and their influence denied,
ethics are extrinsic to the research, and the role of the researcher is as a “disinterested scientist” who informs policy makers. Conversely, constructivism views values as formative, ethics as intrinsic to the research process, and the role of the researcher as a “facilitator of multivoice reconstruction.” Within this research project my role was both to facilitate this “multivoice reconstruction” and to make observations as an outside observer. The experiences, perceptions, and observations of individuals within each organisation were central to the research as a whole. However, without undermining the importance and validity of an individuals’ perception of why they do something, an external observer also has the ability to make an objective observation of the veracity of their perception. For example, I spoke to a manager of an FBO who had been both fascinated and perplexed to discover that a number of people working for him insisted that in working for the FBO they were “working for the church.” This motivation was real for these individuals, but questions could certainly be raised around the role and nature of the church and the way in which the FBO was a part of it. In the process of making observations of the FBOs that are the focus of this study, a composite representation had to be developed by comparing, contrasting, and harmonising these various dialogues and observations. Due to this adherence to elements of both the observable and the perceived, this research doesn’t fit cleanly into either a constructivist or positivist ontology.

Despite the significant variation in research paradigms, Denzin and Lincoln note that there is a growing consensus among qualitative researchers across disciplines as to what constitutes good research. They observe that these researchers “are constantly challenging the distinction between the ‘real’ and that which is constructed, understanding that all events and understandings are mediated and made real through interactional and material practices, through discourse, conversation, writing, narrative, scientific article, realist, postrealist, and performance tales from the field.” Similarly, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba state that “the various paradigms are beginning to ‘interbreed’ such that two theorists previously thought to be in irreconcilable conflict may now appear, under a different theoretical rubric, to be informing one another’s arguments.” This is exemplified by constructivist realism, which psychologist Gerald Cupchik explains “acknowledges that social phenomena exist in

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69 Denzin and Lincoln, The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, xii.
70 Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited,” 97.
communities quite independently of professional researchers. These real phenomena [are] observed and named by members of the natural community, and understood by experienced or wiser people of good judgement.”\textsuperscript{71} Despite the somewhat tongue-in-cheek nature of this summary, this morphed interpretive framework best represents my ontology as a researcher, and this view therefore influences my research.

The process of both analysing published material and interviewing individuals to ascertain their experience and perception of social phenomena reveals a paradigm which incorporates both objective and subjective realities. Values and theological positions are not material, but they are very much real, and individuals’ perceptions of them are central to this study. Similarly, if and how this theology shapes practice in FBOs is of critical importance, but so is the extent to which individuals (and the organisation collectively) perceive that theology shapes practice; both physical, observable actions and the perceived values that lie behind them are considered equally real and essential to the research.

**Research Approach - Case Studies**

In order to make observations of “faith-based organisations supporting families,” these agencies had to form the focus of the enquiry. However, specifically which agencies I selected to investigate and how I was to conduct that investigation were decisions which would be foundational for the study. Could I generate useful findings if I carried out an in-depth analysis of only one FBO? Alternatively, would the conclusions be meaningful if I canvassed the entire population of FBOs in the sector but only at a superficial level? Both the size and the variety of the population helped to answer these questions.

The total population of FBOs that directly support families in New Zealand and have national scope consists of only eight agencies: The Methodist Alliance, Family Works, The Salvation Army, Anglican Care Network, Open Home Foundation, Parenting Place, New Zealand Defence Force Chaplaincy Service, and Catholic Social Services. These organisations have varying degrees of autonomy at a regional level, some of them are very autonomous, but they are all part of a national network, have Christian faith-based foundations, and provide grassroots level care and support to families. Some argument could be made for the inclusion of “wholesale” providers, such as Focus on the Family, who provide resources for the use of other local organisations, but these providers have little to no hands-on engagement with

\textsuperscript{71} Gerald Cupchik, “Constructivist Realism: An Ontology That Encompasses Positivist and Constructivist Approaches to the Social Sciences,” *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* vol 2, no 1, article 7 (February 2001). Italics in original.
families. For this reason, despite their national scope, they have been omitted from the population.

Given that the intended goal of this project is to answer the question of how theology shapes practice in FBOs supporting families in New Zealand, the objective was to identify various patterns in the relationships between operant and espoused theology within these agencies and identify any areas of transferability within the findings. In order to achieve this, it was clear that I would have to select some of the FBOs as case studies. Notably, Creswell cautions, “As a general rule, qualitative researchers are reluctant to generalise from one case to another because the contexts of cases differ.” Similarly, The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology subordinates case studies in preference to large-sample, statistical research, relegating it to a position as a preliminary tool which cannot provide reliable information about the broader class of phenomena being investigated. John Gerring, a political scientist at the Boston University, argues that a case study “is best defined as an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units.” However, in response to the numerous definitions of what comprise “case studies,” he notes that attempts to clarify the definition of “case study” have tended to simply muddy the water. Economist and social science methodologist Bent Flyvbjerg proposes a simplified definition, adopting the Merriam-Webster dictionary rendering of a case study being “an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment.” He insists that the most essential component of engaging in case study research is the demarcation of the unit’s boundaries. Flyvbjerg states that “the drawing of boundaries for the individual unit of study decides what gets to count as case and what becomes context to the case.” Gerring concurs, noting that practitioners of case study research “have difficulty articulating what it is that they are doing, methodologically speaking.... [T]he case study method is correctly understood as a particular way of defining cases, not a way of analysing cases or a way of modelling causal relations.” Therefore, “case study research” is used to describe my selection of organisations to examine. Methods of data collection included

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75 Gerring, “What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?”, 342.
78 Flyvbjerg, “Case Study,” 301.
79 Gerring, “What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?”, 341.
textual analysis and semi-structured interviews, and later in this chapter and in following chapters I describe how the data was analysed.

Due to the complexity of case studies and the differences between one case and another, caution must be applied in predicting causation across cases. However, it is precisely due to this complexity within organisations that a case study approach was fitting for this research project. Social scientist Robert Yin states that “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena [because] the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.”

While case studies may not be able to provide predictive theories, they can be utilised to help understand covariation within social contexts. Flyvbjerg explains, “Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete case knowledge is therefore more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals.” He goes on to clarify:

One can often generalise on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalisation as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas “the force of example” and transferability are underestimated.

The extent to which I intended the findings to be transferable as examples across cases became an important consideration in developing the research strategy. Within the research question there are three levels of increasing specificity. Correspondingly, there are progressively specialised populations which could apply the examples of the cases undertaken with increasing degrees of relevance and applicability. “How theology shapes practice” is a broad topic which holds relevance and applicability for any individual or group with a Christian faith position. Grounding the investigation of practical theology within the context of FBOs narrows the field of enquiry and thus increases both the specificity of the enquiry and the potential for transferability of findings within the population. Each FBO possesses certain characteristics which are unique to themselves and which may not be applicable to other cases. Examples of this might be that they have an organisational history and hierarchy, they are a collection of individuals, a system, which comprises employees and possibly

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81 Gerring, “What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?”, 342.
82 Flyvbjerg, “Case Study,” 304.
83 Flyvbjerg, “Case Study,” 305.
84 Strictly speaking this could be more generally applied to those who hold any faith position, not only Christian. However, I have intentionally limited the field of enquiry to the Christian faith.
volunteers, and collectively they have, or used to have, a faith position. Focussing the study still further, to those FBOs that support families in New Zealand, once again limits the scope of the enquiry and increases the specificity and transferability within the more limited population.

However, even within the specialised group of FBOs supporting families in New Zealand, there was still significant variation in practices, beliefs, organisational structure, and operational practice. Consequently, the question of how many agencies to investigate, and to what depth they ought to be investigated, became a pressing concern. Gerring highlights that the “more case studies one has, the less intensively each one is studied, and the more confident one is in their representativeness (of some broader population), the more likely one is to describe them as a sample rather than a series of case studies.” 85 The language and distinction between a “sample” versus “case study” is not particularly clear and a description of process is more helpful than reliance on a name. However, there is a trade off between how comprehensively the complexity and context of a case is able to be grasped and the sample size selected from a given population. More detail necessitates fewer cases and less transferability and vice versa. Given that my objective was to commentate on covariation between theology and practice, or a lack thereof, within FBOs supporting families in New Zealand, an instrumental case study approach, in which the researcher carries out an in-depth analysis of a single case to illustrate an issue, 86 would be insufficient. However, a cursory analysis of theology in praxis across a large number of organisations would belie the complexity inherent within the topic. It would have been possible to focus simply on document analysis, identifying, coding, and quantifying references to positions of faith or motivation. However, as Cameron et al. state, “The forms of theology articulated by practices have a critical role in informing and forming both formal, and, ultimately, normative theologies.” 87 Moreover, the constructivist ontology outlined above requires an analysis of individual perceptions of experiences. To uncover these subjective perspectives needs more than a superficial investigation and necessitates an interview or other narrative process. Consequently, the FBOs that were to form the basis of the investigation would have to be explored comprehensively, but not exhaustively. I sought to determine a mid-ground which balanced the trade off between investment of time and resource, and the value of the data that would be returned. My objective was to produce results that would have a strong degree of

85 Gerring, “What is a Case Study and What is it Good for?”, 345.
86 Creswell, Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design, 99.
87 Cameron, et al., Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology, 56.
transferability within FBOs that support families in New Zealand and be of some use within the wider context of faith-based organisations generally.

Selection of FBOs

The required level of depth to the investigation, the necessity for a collective case study, the size of the population of FBOs supporting families in New Zealand, the size of the organisations themselves, and the degree of regional autonomy, all contributed to guide the sample size and research approach. Although Creswell identifies collective case studies (or multiple case study) as an alternative to intrinsic (single case) or instrumental case studies, educational researcher Robert Stake explains that instrumental cases are simply those that specifically focus on an issue or phenomenon as it is presented within a case. Consequently, the research strategy for this project can be described as an instrumental, multi-site, collective case study. In order to accommodate a level of both breadth and depth in the project, I decided to select two agencies to investigate intensively and an additional three which would be investigated in less detail. Despite my desire for a degree of transferability in the findings, it was unlikely that they would be generalisable in concrete terms unless there was significant consensus between the various organisations. Rather, it was more likely that a number of patterns or challenges would emerge as consistent experiences within FBOs as they wrestled with the intersection of faith and practice. I suspected that similar challenges, rather than similar responses to those challenges, would be the likely nature of any transferable findings. Given that the objective of the research was to investigate, compare, contrast, and analyse what happens, rather than to attempt to create a theory or model to explain the phenomenon, as in the case of grounded theory, a desire for diversity with a view to maximising the opportunity for transferability of findings was not allowed to dominate the selection process. Consequently, diversity of the FBOs selected was examined, but was not the only consideration. This is consistent with the advice of Creswell, who advocates for “purposeful maximal sampling,” in which diversity of perspectives are sought, but who also insists that the researcher should consider accessibility of cases and if a case is “ordinary” or “unusual.”

In my initial investigation of FBOs in New Zealand that support families, I considered their services, size and scope, denominational affiliation or orientation, organisational structure, location, and membership on the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services’

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90 Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 83.
91 Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, 100.
(NZCCSS) Child and Family Policy Group. A brief description of these agencies is presented at Table 3.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anglican Care Network</td>
<td>Anglican Care Network is the national network of social service providers which operates under the auspices of the Anglican Church of New Zealand. However, these regional providers have almost entire autonomy, with the ability to opt in or opt out of the Network. One regional manager I spoke to indicated that both her regional agency and the local Anglican Church intentionally distance themselves from each other. There is a degree of variation in the services provided by the different regional agencies, with some being more focussed on family support than others. The Anglican and Catholic Community Social Service (“Across” in Palmerston North) is a member of the Family Policy Group on the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS). This is a regional entity with both Catholic and Anglican affiliations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic Social Services</td>
<td>The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand has a number of social service and social justice organisations. They are of a diverse nature, with some specialising in the support of families. These organisations are regionally autonomous but come under the umbrella of the local Bishop, who is in turn a member of the New Zealand National Catholic Bishops Conference. Despite regional autonomy, the vertical hierarchy within the governance structure reveals a strong centralised presence. The Anglican and Catholic Community Social Service (“Across” in Palmerston North) is a member of the Family Policy Group on the NZCCSS. This is a regional entity with both Catholic and Anglican affiliations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Methodist Alliance</td>
<td>The Methodist Alliance consists of a wide range of social service and social justice organisations around New Zealand, divided into four regional territories. These agencies provide a variety of support services, including support to families. Christchurch Methodist Mission is a member of the Family Policy Group on the NZCCSS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZDF Chaplaincy Service</td>
<td>In addition to providing pastoral and spiritual care for defence force personnel both during peace time and in operational environments, the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Chaplaincy Service provides support for families of NZDF personnel. Although chaplains are posted to specific camps or deployments, the chaplaincy service is a tri-service agency (army, air force, and navy) which attends to the needs of all NZDF personnel and their families. Chaplains come from a range of denominational backgrounds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Home Foundation</td>
<td>The Open Home Foundation is a national organisation that provides crisis support to families. This support includes social work services, parental respite care, foster care, and parent mentoring services. Services are provided at a number of service centre locations, but the organisation remains a single national entity. The Open Home Foundation has evangelical roots.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting Place</td>
<td>Although not as large as some of the other agencies, Parenting Place focuses almost exclusively on supporting families. Consequently it is the largest provider of support to families and has the most significant public profile for this service. Within New Zealand, Parenting Place is a single national entity with regional agents throughout the country. Ian and Mary Grant, who founded Parenting Place, came from an evangelical denominational context, but the organisation has no strong denominational affiliation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Support</td>
<td>Presbyterian Support consists of seven regional organisations, each of which provide a representative for the Family Works Trust Board. Family Works is a closely affiliated, but independent, social service arm of these regional organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Support</td>
<td>is a member of the Family Policy Group on the NZCCSS and their representative is the convenor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Salvation Army</td>
<td>is the largest social service provider of the FBOs canvassed, but their support to families is only one element of what they do. Their Community Ministry has a territorial secretary who oversees New Zealand, Fiji, and Tonga, and there are four Divisions within New Zealand. These Divisions are locally administered but the territorial secretary has a degree of oversight. The Salvation Army is a member of the Family Policy Group on the NZCCSS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Salvation Army is the largest agency in terms of its size and scope, the range of support services provided to families, and public profile. Consequently, it was selected as one of the two in-depth case studies. Parenting Place is New Zealand’s largest parenting organisation and provides specialist services which focus explicitly on the family. This is in contrast to some of the other FBOs, which provide some services that may provide care for families in a secondary sense, such as providing budgeting advice. Additionally, Parenting Place has a centralised national governance structure and is not formally associated with a church. Consequently, the in-depth investigation of Parenting Place would provide data on an FBO which occupies a different position within the faith-based sector in New Zealand. Consequently, it was selected as a major case study. The process of selecting the three minor case studies was more involved.

Although Parenting Place has evangelical roots, my initial investigation did not lead me to consider it to be an evangelical organisation. Rather, I felt that it occupied a non-denominational Christian position. Conversely, The Salvation Army was clearly positioned within a protestant denomination, albeit not a traditionally “mainstream” denomination; it is an outlier within the protestant schema. Consequently, I felt that I needed to select an agency with mainstream protestant roots. At least one of the FBOs with Methodist, Anglican, or Presbyterian foundations was considered for inclusion. The question of centralisation became significant in selecting between these three agencies. The Anglican Care Network is strongly regionally autonomous, making any investigation of the agency as a whole challenging, as it is functionally a collection of independent organisations with nominal national cohesion. This would also pose a challenge in defining the boundaries of the case, which is a significant and demanding consideration in case study research at the best of times. For these reasons the Anglican Care Network was omitted from the study. Although Presbyterian Support and The Methodist Alliance each have some degree of regional autonomy, they have a more

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92 Flybjerg, “Case Study,” 302.
established and formalised central governance structure. Both this and the fact that I already had some involvement with Family Works\(^93\) in Hamilton, made an investigation of Presbyterian Support a pragmatic option and secured their selection as a participant. Moreover, the Presbyterian Support representative on the NZCCSS Family Policy Group is the convenor, and I felt that she may have been able to provide additional insight into the wider landscape of FBOs in New Zealand.

Given the significance and uniqueness of Roman Catholicism within the Christian denominational structure, inclusion of Catholic Social Services was an easy decision. This left either the Open Home Foundation or the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Chaplaincy Service as the final minor case study. The NZDF chaplaincy service is unique in both culture and denominational make up. The military has its own sub-culture which is not as influenced by geographical location, context, or culture as other agencies may be. This is as a result of the movement of personnel between camps and the intentional indoctrination and cultural “norming” which occurs within the armed forces. Additionally, the chaplains themselves come from a range of denominational backgrounds and have varying levels of ongoing involvement with their “home church.” Consequently, the NZDF Chaplaincy Service would be interesting as a standalone case study, but would be of limited value in terms of wider transferability.

The Open Home Foundation (OHF) has a similar non-denominational outlook to Parenting Place. However, in the initial investigation of FBOs, OHF appeared to have a faith position which was more overtly stated and was therefore likely to be more influential in operational practice. Additionally, the support which OHF provides is slightly different from the other agencies. Support tends to be targeted more toward families in crisis and those who may have been referred to them through other organisations. Additionally, I had had discussions with OHF’s Operations Manager early in the process of canvassing FBOs supporting families in New Zealand. In those discussions he indicated that he was interested in having OHF included in the study. Due to their enthusiasm, the unique care they provide to families in New Zealand, and their apparent emphasis on their faith position, Open Home Foundation was selected as the third minor case study and the fifth and final case study over all. To sum up, the final list of participant organisations consisted of Parenting Place and The Salvation Army as the two major case studies, and Catholic Social Services, Family Works (as the

\(^{93}\) Family Works is the family focussed social service arm of Presbyterian Support Network. See table 3.1.
primary social service arm of Presbyterian Support), and the Open Home Foundation as the three minor case studies.

From the outset it was apparent that it would not be possible to canvas all sites of the participant organisations. Having identified those FBOs which were to be included, I also had to consider which of their organisational sites would be investigated. Parenting Place did not initially enter into this consideration by merit of the fact that it is centrally governed and administered. Similarly, despite its operation being carried out through regional sites, the Open Home Foundation’s centralised governance structure meant that site selection would be less likely to influence findings. However, for the remainder of the participants, regional culture and context could potentially have influenced the way that espoused and operant theology correlated. In order to mitigate this risk, I aimed to investigate sites that were within the Waikato and Auckland regions. The reason that I chose this geographic location is that I live in Hamilton, I have established relationships with a number of individuals within some of the agencies in this area, and the National Office of Parenting Place is in Auckland. Moreover, by including Auckland and Waikato, both the Northern and Midland Divisional Headquarters of the Salvation Army would be encompassed, giving a broader sample for this major case study while still remaining within similar geographical boundaries. By focussing the study geographically I was also able to identify the specific regional agency within the Catholic Social Service network that would be included in the study. This was Catholic Family Support Services.

These considerations for FBO selection helped to determine the total numbers of cases, how their boundaries were to be defined, and what agencies were to be included. The pragmatic approach sought to limit external influences where possible and manage total work load, while still attaining a degree of diversity of perspectives in relation to denominational foundations, organisational structure, participation on the NZCCSS Family Policy Group, and types of support provided. The FBO selection process established the framework within which the data collection and analysis was to take place.

**Data Collection**

To some extent data collection began when I first committed to this research project. I spent time speaking to people within the industry and getting to know the FBOs that made up the population. In writing about case study research, Robert Stake suggests, “A considerable portion of all data is impressionistic, picked up informally as the researcher first becomes
acquainted with the case. Many of these early impressions will later be refined or replaced, but the pool of data includes the earliest of observations. Consequently, the information outlined in the FBO selection process may be considered data. It had begun to shape my understanding and perceptions of the cases before the formal data collection process had even been determined. However, the formal data collection process would involve interviews and document analysis.

Yin explains that case study research typically collects data using multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, and artefacts. Some of these sources would be essential for this research, while others were omitted from the data collection process. The process of deciding what data collection methods to include was conducted in consultation with advisors and based on a perceived “return on investment.” Within an FBO there are a number of elements which may reveal aspects of how theology shapes practice. The personal perspectives of the individuals who manage, work, and volunteer in the organisation provide insight into their perception of the organisational identity, practice, and history, and the role and influence of theology within it. They can also provide examples of how both organisational positions and their own theological convictions affect their work within the organisation. Published material, policy documents, and websites can be sources which reveal elements of organisational identity, practice, and history. The evidence of theological positions and where they are placed within the material may be telling. In addition to communicating the details of a theological conviction, the location and prominence of faith-based messages may also reveal the degree to which these positions are significant in providing a motivation for organisational practice or a foundation for the FBO’s identity. Absence of any communicated faith position may also be telling. Although observations and artefacts may provide sources of data which would add richness to the investigation, the energy input required from a researcher to collect meaningful observations would be intensive and require immersion within the case. Collecting and detailing artefacts, such as descriptions of decorations in offices, were also considered to be of lesser value in revealing either espoused or operant theology than other sources of data. Consequently, although I would ask for examples of specific events from the interviewees, observations of activities would only be included in this indirect sense. Similarly, artefacts would be omitted from formal data collection and analysis.

94 Stake, The Art of Case Study Research, 49.
96 My two supervisors from the department of Theology at the University of Otago and a social psychology researcher from Waikato University.
Using this mixed method approach, it was necessary to ascribe different data collection and analysis methods to published material and the interviews respectively. In the case of the two major case studies, their national office and two regional sites — in the case of the Salvation Army — and a selection of regional agents — in the case of Parenting Place — were investigated. This involved around ten interviews and a document analysis per case. One site and a representative of the national office were investigated for each of the three minor case studies. These investigations included four interviews and a document analysis for each FBO. Having determined both the research method and the desired participants, I was able to apply for, and obtain, ethical approval from the University of Otago. A copy of the information sheet for participants, which includes both the organisational and personal participant consent forms, is attached as Appendix A.

Document Analysis

Document analysis of each case study was conducted prior to interviews. This provided a greater level of knowledge and familiarity with each FBO during the interview process, enabling the interviewee’s responses to be contextualised and engaged with more effectively. Additionally, it allowed any questions that were raised within the document analysis to be posed in person during interviews. The document analysis involved an investigation of any publicly available information including publications, websites, and financial reports. It looked specifically for any references to overt or implied faith statements, comments which identified organisational values or motivations, and any practices or reported activities which revealed faith positions or values. As well as recording stated content, the location of the content was also noted. This included the “depth” of the material on a website from the homepage, the size of the text, and page location when on a published document. Any graphics that revealed values were also identified.

For the two major case studies in particular, this was an extensive process. Parenting Place has a significant web presence as well as a bi-monthly magazine and numerous newsletters and fliers. As websites are living things which can be amended at any point, the investigation of online material was conducted in a single block. The Salvation Army posed similar challenges with regard to analysing its online material. It is a very large organisation with

multiple operational activities. In order to limit the scope of the enquiry I focused on the Community Ministry sites, which emphasised care provided to families. A similar process was carried out for each of the minor case studies, focussing specifically on the sites in question. The qualitative coding software NVivo was utilised to assist in the coding process. The process of data collection from documents, and the initial identification of themes, formed the basis for the first entries in each case study database. Alan Bryman, an organisational and social research methodologist, and sociologist Bob Burgess, describe the generation of concepts as a process of qualitative data analysis in which the researcher is “immersing oneself in the data and then searching out patterns, identifying possibly surprising phenomena, and being sensitive to inconsistencies, such as divergent views offered by different groups of individuals.” According to them, the initial identification of themes and their coding was carried out concurrently with the data collection process. This occurred initially as the document analysis was being undertaken, but also evolved throughout the interview process.

The website analysis explored the identity and values which the FBO was presenting, specifically as it related to theological positions. Information systems researchers Susan Winter, Carol Saunders, and Paul Hart state, “Websites should be considered ‘electronic storefronts’ or public work areas providing frames of symbolic representations that create impressions of their sponsoring firm.” Although the degree to which an agency intends to use their website to communicate an impression and information about who they are and what they do may vary, the fact remains that it says something about them. If a website is relatively new, has fresh content uploaded regularly, and is mobile friendly, it suggests that the agency intends to use their website as a primary method of communication and branding. If it was outdated and stale, this was taken into consideration when attempting to determine the espoused theology of an FBO. It is possible that what is written on an organisation’s website does not correlate well with their current position and identity.

In the process of analysing the content of the websites, the website text was exported into NVivo and word frequency queries were run. Header and footer ribbons which appeared on every page were only included once. The search parameters calculated the top twenty occurring words of four letters or more and included synonyms. Although I completed this for every case study, it was only useful in order to help me understand the kind of language that

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FBOs used. It was not particularly revealing in terms of divulging theological positions.\textsuperscript{100} Even with regular reference to faith motivations within a website, the phrases used were not sufficient to appear in the top results of these word frequency tests. Instead, I found the vision and values statements, the “about us” pages, and the job advertisements to be the most rich and consistent sources of faith language on the FBOs’ websites.

**Interviews**

In order to investigate questions of faith, motivation, practice, and causation between these elements, it was important to hear from those working within the cases. This required some kind of narrative process. Narrative research is one approach that could have been employed in the process of collecting data on the experiences and perceptions of individuals within the FBOs. “Narrative research” usually refers to the method being used in a study, although it can also refer to the phenomenon being investigated, such as the narrative of oppression.\textsuperscript{101} However, the format of narrative studies tends to be that of a monologue in which the participant tells their story. While this has the potential to provide a detailed insight into the participant’s perception, with limited opportunity for the influence of the researcher to bias the data, the inability to guide or focus the discussion on areas of interest made it an inefficient approach for this project.\textsuperscript{102}

Structured interviews provide a predetermined script which is able to be replicated with multiple participants. However, although the research question may be able to be addressed directly with this method, the potential influence of the researcher is significant. An alternative, which both guides the conversation and allows the participant to reveal nuances of priority, interest, and importance, is that of semi-structured interviewing. In this approach questions are partially pre-planned but are less controlled. By applying an open questioning technique beginning with broad questions, the semi-structured interview approach allows the participant freedom in directing the conversation within a general framework. The interviewer is able to pursue tangents of interest when they appear, but the general structure ensures that

\textsuperscript{100} There are more rigorous methods with which the text data could have been processed. For example, I considered using the method outlined by Tetyana Pudrovska and Myra Marx Ferree, in which they created a dictionary of terms and phrases relating to different domains, quantified the number of sentences that related to those phrases, and then calculated their rate of occurrence per 1000 sentences. However, the time required to process the data in this fashion was restrictive given that it was not the sole focus of the project. Tetyana Pudrovska and Myra Marx Ferree, “Global Activism in ‘Virtual Space’: The European Women’s Lobby in the Network of Transnational Women’s NGOs on the Web,” *Social Politics* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 126.

the primary focus for the interview remains central. These “tangents of interest” are potentially important for research which is fundamentally explorative. Thomas Diefenbach, a professor in management at Charles Darwin University, explains that qualitative researchers have some questions in mind when they begin their investigation, but “what to ask exactly often becomes clear(er) only after a while of investigating. Often new questions emerge during and because of the investigation. In other words: You only know the (right) questions when you already know what you are looking for.”

Given the adopted instrumental nature of the case study approach, whereby the specific issue of espoused and operant theology formed the primary focus for the study, a semi-structured interview approach provided the best method for collecting data which revealed the richness and nuances of a narrative process, while limiting irrelevant information. In order to achieve this goal for interviews, I structured a number of questions which were broad, open ended, and allowed the interviewee the ability to guide the discussion and assign importance where they felt it was warranted. However, in order to ensure that specific topics were addressed with the specificity required, a series of increasingly focused follow up questions were formulated for each main question. They were only used if the interviewee had not already covered the relevant points in their initial response. In approaching the interviews in this way I was able to gain an impression of what the interviewee considered to be most critical to the issues being discussed, and also to respectfully prompt them to reflect on their observations, beliefs, and practices.

The interview process is more than simply asking the right questions in the right way. Sociologists Rosalind Edwards and Janet Holland are two of the many voices who advocate the importance of creating an environment where interviewees feel safe enough to talk openly about their experiences and understandings. However, they also warn of the “conquest or communion” tension in qualitative interviewing; researchers attempt to exert power on interviewees by creating an environment where interviewees will feel emotions of rapport, but researchers also attempt to limit power and emotion in interviews in deference to the ethics of the process. Cameron et al. share a similar ethos in the qualitative interviewing approach of theological action research, stating that “the commitment to a complex, multi-voiced understanding of theology requires [that] researchers and practitioners commit to a

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In order to minimise the potential tension between power, comfort, and coercion, but still allow for an environment in which the interviewee felt relaxed despite the somewhat artificial situation with electronic recording equipment and interview notes, I made contact with each interviewee at least once prior to the interview proper, in person when possible, but at least by telephone. I also worked with the interviewee, and their superior when applicable, to agree on a time and location for the interview which would allow them to be as relaxed as possible. Although I had certain subjects I wanted to discuss and a script to guide me, I attempted to make the interviews conversational in nature. The semi-structured nature of the script assisted with the goal of positioning the interviewee in a more dominant role and enabling them to “tell their story in their own way, beginning wherever they like, for as long as they like.” Throughout the interviews I endeavoured to show non-judgemental genuine interest and allowed participants to speak until it was clear that they had concluded their thought. I attempted to use layman’s language where possible and clarified that theology was “Christian beliefs, values and convictions” prior to beginning the interview.

Although these principles are common across any qualitative research involving interviews, it is particularly important in the context of an investigation of personal, deeply held beliefs and how these are outworked in practice. There is a risk that research participants could feel interrogated, trapped, or even condemned by both the process and their honest responses. Cameron et al. caution that central to conversational research “is a vision of a certain humility before the voicing of the other — a humility that allows the possibility of sitting with certain difficulties and misunderstandings, or differences, because of a conviction that there is, none the less, a shared seeking after the truth of faith.”

As well as attempting to posture myself from a position of humility through the interview process, this position was also made explicit. In the introduction to the interview, and also written on the interview script as a prompt to myself, I stated:

What I want you to understand and be comfortable with right from the start is that I am not trying to look at how theology should shape practice; I’m interested in how it does shape practice. I’m not trying to define or enforce an ideal. I just want to know how it works. Pretty simple, aye? So really, I just want to hear about your experiences and hear your opinions and your thoughts. Is that OK?

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A copy of the interview script is attached as Appendix B. Both the formulation of the script and the conduct of the interviews followed four key principles:

1. Know what I want to achieve with each question (not the specific answer, but the specific type of answer).
2. Start with generic (open) questions and allow the interviewee to define the boundaries and the terms of reference. Become increasingly specific with follow up questions, if required, to achieve the purpose of the line of enquiry.
3. Follow the structure of generic to specific both within the interview as a whole and within each question.
4. Avoid emotive language in questions which could guide or influence responses.

Early in the project I was unsure what themes would develop within the data collection and analysis process. Following each interview, or at times following a day of interviews, I spent time listening to the audio recording of each interview, transcribing it, and loading it into NVivo with minute markings throughout. Almost every response from the participant was coded using nodes which were developed throughout the processing of the interviews. This approach was applied for the three minor case studies. However, by the time I got to the two major case studies, the key themes had already emerged and I was able to streamline the analysis process. Rather than transcribing in full, I made key notes throughout the interviews, along with minute markers, and later listened to each interview two more times, transcribing key comments and concepts. This allowed me to extract the pertinent data in a more efficient manner. It also had the added benefit of allowing me to consider the context of the conversation more effectively due to the decreased interruptions to the transcribing process. In this way I “immersed myself in the data” as Bryman and Burgess suggest, but I also applied a framework to my ruminations. This was by means of a series of questions posed for each organisation investigated:

- Are there key words or phrases from a range of sources that illuminate any issues?
- Can I define the espoused theology?
- Can I identify operant theology?
- Do I need to collect more data?
- Are there gaps and/or correlations between the espoused and operant theologies?
- Is there evidence of the direction of transmission (does espoused theology inform operant theology and/or vice versa)?
- How well does the data answer the research questions?
This approach allowed me to remain flexible as the research process evolved and themes began to emerge, and as it became apparent that certain subjects needed to be focussed on in more detail. Stake reminds the researcher, “In a qualitative research project, issues emerge, grow, and die.... We are trying to remain open to the nuances of increasing complexity.”\textsuperscript{108} This process also helped to facilitate the synthesising of the document analysis and interview data, and in positioning the agency within Sider and Unrah’s FBO typological framework.

At the completion of data collection for each case, a within-case analysis was conducted and a detailed description of the case and the themes within the case was formulated. The final interpretive phase involved “assertion or an interpretation of the meaning of the case.”\textsuperscript{109} In the process I attempted to identify a range of alternative interpretations for observed phenomena. This is consistent with the advice of Yin, who suggests that in order to determine some degree of significance in the findings, it is important to “identify and address rival explanations for your findings. Addressing such rivals becomes a criterion for interpreting your findings.”\textsuperscript{110} Once all of the individual cases had been analysed and reported on, a cross-case analysis was undertaken in which the individual case findings were compared and contrasted and more generalisable conclusions were postulated.

Despite the linear sequence of events outlined in this section on research methods, this is not to suggest that the process of data collection and analysis was strictly sequential within a qualitative research framework. Data analysis was occurring throughout the investigation, concurrent with data collection. Moreover, the ongoing analysis influenced the later stages of data collection, as detailed above. In this project the document analysis took place between May 2017 and November 2018, and the interviews were conducted between September 2017 and February 2019.

\textsuperscript{108} Stake, \textit{The Art of Case Study Research}, 21.
\textsuperscript{110} Yin, \textit{Case Study Research}, 36.
Chapter 4. A Faith-Permeated Agency: Open Home Foundation

The data in this and the following two chapters are ordered in a sequence which progresses from a faith-permeated organisation through to an FBO which is largely dislocated from its faith-based roots. The final case study presented in Chapter 7, provides an example which demonstrates that, although the influence of faith on an FBO can wane over time, it is possible to re-establish faith-based convictions. The first minor case study presented here is the Open Home foundation, one of the minor case studies. It is categorised as a faith-permeated agency in accordance with Sider and Unruh’s typology, which is detailed in Appendix C.

Open Home Foundation (OHF)\textsuperscript{1} is a national organisation that provides child and family support services and works within the provisions of the Child, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989.\textsuperscript{2} They operate as a recognised sub-contractor of foster care services to the government agency “Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki” (MVCOT, sometimes referred to as “Oranga Tamariki”) and the Ministry of Health. The support they provide includes a range of social work services, support to children with disabilities and their families, parental respite care, parent mentoring services, and a home for teen parents in Rotorua. The Open Home Foundation has service centres located at 14 locations around New Zealand, but it remains a single national entity with three regional operations managers and with each service centre overseen by a local practice manager. They have approximately 480 foster families and 170 staff. They have provided over 90,000 nights of care for 714 children between July 2017 and June 2018.\textsuperscript{3} With an annual income in 2017 of a little over $16

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[1] The Open Home Foundation is referred to as “the Open Home Foundation” and “Open Home Foundation” interchangeably in both written and verbal contexts. I have mirrored this within the chapter, utilising “the” where it made reading more fluent.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
million, the majority of this income comes from “government and public” funding (MVCOT and Ministry of Health), with less than 5% coming from donations or returns on investments.  

The Open Home Foundation has Christian roots. Founded by Ewen and Gillian Laurenson in 1977, it grew rapidly from a local grassroots network of Christian foster families to become a national organisation in 1986. Ewen and Gillian both received the Queen’s Service Medal for their services to foster care in 1995. They no longer have any formal governance role within the organisation. Ewen retired as National Director in the year 2000. In 2016 he gave a presentation in which he outlined the history and original purpose of OHF, which for him has not changed.

The Open Home Foundation has a vision that every Child in the World will belong to a family and community where they are safe and loved, go to school, get good health care, have enough to eat, and know that they are loved by God through Jesus. This is every child’s birthright that is so often denied to them.

Over the course of the investigation into OHF and the analysis of the website, supporting documentation, and interviews with staff in the Hamilton service centre, it became apparent that the foundational vision remains relatively unchanged. The Open Home Foundation continues to facilitate the provision of foster care through a national network of Christian volunteer foster parents. Additionally, the overt faith motivation of the agency and the challenges that this presents within their role as a contractor to a government agency was made clear to me personally as my wife and I went through the process of becoming foster parents through OHF. In the same period that I carried out this research project, we fostered a number of children and ultimately had one join our family permanently in a “home for life” placement.

**Online Presence**

On first impressions, the OHF homepage is basic and messy. This is true both structurally, with multiple links to seemingly similar topics, and visually, with a large, busy photo dominating the page. Further complicating navigation through the website was the fact that the text was light grey in colour, with a white background, making it very difficult to read.

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The clear, simple headings of “About Us,” “Services,” Work for Us,” and “Contact Us,” each led to a sub-page with multiple additional internal pages and links. Although most of the links within the website were internal, some of these were broken or contained only a heading with no additional information; the “Prayer Support” page was an example of this.\(^8\) In the process of analysing the website, I had to rely on the site map in order to ensure that I had visited every page. Even after having used the site map, when I carried out an internal website search I received a result for a page that hadn’t been on the site map. This page appeared to relate to an advertisement for Foster Parents which had been aired on Radio Rhema, a nation-wide Christian radio station.\(^9\) The website also seemed to lack any regular updates, with the exception of the current vacancies being advertised.\(^10\) As an example, prominently displayed in the main image of the homepage was a picture of a teddy bear with a title and link inviting the site visitor to “Tour OHF with Ted.” Clicking on this link navigated to a page which introduced “Ted’s Tour Coming Soon.”\(^11\) In the time between when I first began carrying out the investigation of OHF, until the point that I wrote up the findings around 10 months later, this page did not change; Ted was still “coming soon.” This lack of refinement and maintenance in the website suggests that it may not be a primary method of communication with their target audience. However, the existence of the page which referenced a radio advertisement indicates that OHF may have used advertising elsewhere to raise awareness, but then directed interested parties to the website for further information. Given the nature of their work, with client families and children usually being referred by MVCOT, OHF’s target audience are the supporters and volunteers whom they rely on to carry out their primary business.

Although the website design was confusing, the content was clear. Statements which revealed a faith conviction and motivation were prominently displayed. Every page on the site contained the OHF logo in the heading banner and a footer which declared “A Christian Community Response” in bold text. The OHF logo comprises an ajar, backlit door with a cross forming the internal framing of the door. Following a short survey of the site, it became immediately apparent that the cross within the design is an intentional reference to Christian faith. The background design of the logo is composed of Māori-style koru graphics. Below

the main heading in the logo is a sub-heading in Māori which states “Te Whare Kaupapa Āwhina.” This could be translated as a belief, principle, or foundation of a helping house. It appeared to be an approximation of the organisation’s English name. This was later confirmed in the constitutional document. Within the website the phrase was used interchangeably as reference to the agency, specifically in discussions relating to bi-cultural policies and approaches.12

In a word frequency survey of all of the website text, the four most prolific phrases, including synonyms, were “home,” “family,” “care,” and “support.”13 However, when I expanded the search parameters, the words “Christian” and “ministry” became conspicuous. Eight of the 17 occurrences of “ministry” related to a government department – the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamakiri – but the remaining nine occurrences were employed in the website messaging which was targeted at prospective supporters. The webpage titled “Become a Foster Parent, House Parent or Prayer Partner” concluded with this statement: “Read more and make a decision to contact us to see how you can be involved in this exciting ministry.”15 A similar comment was made in the discussion on supporting “Ted’s Sponsorship Fund.” This is a regular monthly donation fund which OHF uses to provide additional opportunities for children within their care and for which regular donors receive a “Ted” teddy bear as a symbol of their support. The webpage states, “We hope you will be proud to have our Ted somewhere in your home so family and friends can ask about what he represents and how they might also become involved with this Christian ministry.”16 The OHF’s use of the word “ministry,” when inviting both financial supporters and volunteers to partner with them, reinforces the foundational model of the organisation being a facilitator of foster care through a network of specifically Christian foster families. Within Christian communities, “ministry” refers to activities which are an expression of Christian faith. The use of the phrase within the recruitment material suggests that OHF considers that they are motivated by faith, and they invite those who are similarly motivated to partner with them.

13 The automated report generated by NVivo did not recognise “whānau” as a synonym of “family.” These occurrences were manually calculated to provide this result.
14 See Appendix D for results.
Open Home Foundation’s desire to have support from the Christian faith community was also overtly stated within the website. The word “Christian” was used 14 times and appeared both within their “About” statements, as they explained who they were and what motivated them, and within the recruitment material. Potential volunteers were asked, “Do you want to be part of our effective Christian response to the needs of families and children in your community?” Elsewhere they state, “If you meet our criteria and have a call to this work, God can use you as part of supporting families and children.” A page dedicated to detailing how OHF supports foster families states that “OHF shares this responsibility with you providing prayer support [and] a dedicated Foster Parent Social worker to work with you.”

At the bottom of this same page, the sub-heading “Making your decision,” is followed by another statement which again espouses the faith conviction that underpins and motivates the practice of OHF: “The Open Home Foundation is a community of Christians dedicated to glorifying God through serving young people and families in need. It is a privilege to be part of this work.”

An internal site search for the word “Christian” also revealed another iteration of a page providing information on partnering with OHF, although I was not able to find how to navigate to this page without relying on the search results. This page provides the clearest statement of OHF’s reliance on volunteers who hold a Christian faith: “The Open Home Foundation needs Christian people who are willing to open their homes and hearts to children, young people and their families.” Within their online communication, OHF is overt in communicating their desire to exclusively utilise Christian volunteers as foster carers. The messaging contained in their job advertisements similarly demonstrated a strong preference for Christian staff.

Each advertisement on the website contained the following statement: “OHF is committed to mobilising the mainstream Christian community to serve Tamariki and Whānau in

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17 Open Home Foundation, “Become a Foster Parent, House Parent, or Prayer Partner”.  
20 Open Home Foundation, “How OHF will Support you as a Foster Family”.  
22 Children.  
23 Family.
Aotearoa New Zealand.”24 This clarifies that the vehicle through which OHF intend to achieve their mission is the “mainstream Christian community.” Application forms were also available to download from this page.25 Under the main heading on the application form, in bold text, the mission statement is displayed: “Providing quality child-centred family-focused Christian Support Services.”26 In the table provided for three referees to be nominated, a column titled “relationship” invited the applicant to explain how they are related to the referee. For the third referee, rather than having a blank cell which could be filled in, the “relationship” field is pre-filled with “faith referee (e.g. Pastor, Minister, Priest, Elder, Friend etc).”27 Applicants are also instructed that the form should be read in conjunction with the OHF Vision, Mission and ‘We Will’ Statement,28 which was provided as a separate document for download from the same webpage.29

The vision and mission on the recruitment document mirrored that from the website “About Us” page. The vision statement is, “Every child and young person growing up in a secure, loving family and receiving a depth of care which will bless them throughout their life.”30 The “We Will” statements, which are found online exclusively within the document provided for job applicants, comprise a list of principled organisational objectives (see Figure 4.1). These include a commitment to “Mobilise the Christian Community to respond”; “Recruit, train, release and support Christian staff, foster parents, mentors, prayer partners, sponsors and volunteers so that work is done”; and, “Partner with Christian Churches and Organisations with similar vision to provide a caring Christian community.”31 While the Christian content within the mission and vision statements could be read as being token by a prospective job applicant, the same is not true of these “We Will” statements. These aspirational goals demonstrate a firm strategic commitment to the Christian faith, Christian response to social needs, and partnership with Christian communities, as being core to operational activity of OHF.

30 Open Home Foundation, “About Us”.
Additional information about the faith convictions of OHF that were found on their online presence include a comment on the “About Us” page that the OHF “staff and volunteers are from a variety of Christian Church denominations.” It goes on to reassure the reader that they also “respect the diversity of belief and ethnicity” found within New Zealand. A sub-page within the “About Us” section is titled “How we Work.” This page details a commitment to respecting all people and cultures, humble and honest dialogue and collaboration, and an assurance of adherence to current best industry practice. Additionally, the fact that OHF is “Christ Centred” is presented, with an explanation that “Jesus is the source of life and we follow Him in all we believe and in the way we work.” Under the sub-heading “Christian Mission” is a description stating that OHF is “engaged in confronting injustice and oppression.

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33 Open Home Foundation, “About Us”.
34 Open Home Foundation, “About Us”.
36 Open Home Foundation, “How we Work”.
in NZ families in order to promote healing, empowerment and reconciliation.”37 The “About Us” page also contains a brief mention of OHF’s “values and beliefs [which] guide the way its staff and volunteers work supporting families, caring for children and promoting family wellbeing/whānau mauri ora.”38 The “values and beliefs” mentioned here appear to be a reference to general principles and approaches. However, hanging on the wall of the OHF offices in Hamilton is a framed list of “Open Home Foundation Values and Beliefs.” These will be discussed in more detail below.

Unlike the poorly maintained website, OHF’s presence on Facebook was freshly updated.39 There were at least weekly uploads, and often multiple posts in a week, including up-to-date lists of upcoming events. The content appeared to be targeted at recruiting new foster parents, providing encouragement to existing foster parents, and drawing awareness to causes and articles (for example “World Down Syndrome Day”). This is a consistent trend across all of the online material, which is directed at care givers rather than the recipients of that care. This focus on recruiting is to be expected given the nature of their work being almost exclusively generated through Oranga Tamariki referrals. Client engagement is more face to face with a specific social worker, rather than providing a service more broadly to a segment of society. Frequent posts on OHF’s Facebook feed consisted of encouraging and inspirational quotes (See one example in Figure 4.2). Each of these quotes contained the same footer found on the website, “A Christian Community Response.”

37 Open Home Foundation, “How we Work”.
38 Open Home Foundation, “About Us”.
Figure 4.2 Open Home Foundation Facebook quote⁴⁰

The “About” content on Facebook mirrors the mission, vision, and founding story found on the website. However, compared to the numerous overt references to Christian faith which were found on the website, OHF’s Facebook feed is much more reserved in presenting a clear faith position. In the six months of posts that I reviewed, not including the “Christian Community Response” footer, I found two advertisements for foster parent information evenings which included that they were “looking for caring Christian People.” One of the regular encouragement posts was Proverbs 22:6: “Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.” The only other overt presentation of faith was in a comment thread in response to a comment that I had made in a personal capacity as a foster parent rather than having anything to do with this research project. Open Home Foundation posted an encouragement to foster parents stating, “You might be temporary in their lives. They might be temporary in yours. But there is nothing temporary about the love or the lesson.”⁴¹ In response to the fact that our apparently temporary foster son had by then lived with us for over two years and had formally become a “home-for-life” placement, I commented, “Or they might be permanent.” The response from the Open Home Foundation was, “Very true Peter – sometimes you think it is only temporary and God has other plans!!”⁴²

⁴² Open Home Foundation, “Facebook post.”
It may be telling that although the target audience of both the website and the social media profile appeared to be the same, the fact that Facebook, which is the more closely managed and regularly updated public face of OHF, contains noticeably fewer references to faith. There is little integration between the OHF website two sites. There was one link on each webpage to “like on Facebook” and the “Contact Us” button in Facebook opens the contact page on the website. Apart from these links, there are no other connections between the website and the social media presence.

Open Home Foundation is overt in espousing and promoting a Christian faith position within their online profile, most notably on their website. They specifically recruit Christian support and volunteers and they strongly promote awareness of the importance of a shared Christian motivation for prospective employees. In this regard they may walk a fine line with New Zealand anti-discrimination employment law.43 Near the end of the job application form, under the heading “The Special Character of our Agency,” the applicant is asked to “respond to the Vision, Mission and ‘We Will Statement’ of the Open Home Foundation.”44 They are also asked how this vision and mission fits with their personal belief and aspirations. The final question in this section reads, “The Open Home Foundation is a Christian organisation. What does the word ‘Christian’ mean to you?”45 These recruitment processes strongly promote a Christian ethic. They inform potential applicants that OHF is a Christian organisation, clearly reveal that their mission, vision, and values reflect this primary identity, and require the applicant to both demonstrate a connection to a faith community by providing a “faith referee” and reflect on their own faith. The result is similar to that of their approach to recruitment of supporters and volunteers. The process, although not precluding those who do not share the Christian faith espoused within their online communication, strongly encourages job applicants, supporters, and prospective volunteers, to be those that have an affiliation with the Christian faith. This encouragement became more overt within the governing constitutional document.

**Document Analysis**

In addition to the job application and “Vision, Mission, and We Will Statement” document already described above, I analysed the OHF constitution, which was available through the charities register, and the OHF Foster Parent Manual, which I had been provided in the course

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of becoming a foster parent. The “We Will” statements were repeated in the foster parent’s manual. The values and beliefs document, which was introduced above as being displayed at the Hamilton OHF service centre, was also included within the Foster Parent Manual.

Prior to a foster parent agreement being signed between OHF and a volunteer family, the prospective foster parents must complete a variety of compliance criterion, including attending a number of hours of training on topics related to becoming a foster parent. These training sessions are provided on-site at an OHF service centre, and topics include discipline, child development, how to provide “safe care,” the effects of child abuse, and the legislation governing foster care. The training material which accompanies the in-person delivery is compiled within the Foster Parent Manual. The introduction to this manual contains a letter from the CEO of OHF New Zealand welcoming new foster parents to the organisation. The letter provides a very brief overview of the origins of OHF, cautions that foster care is a “challenging ministry,” and contends that the most important aspects of successfully proving foster care are teamwork and prayer; “this work is dependent on the guidance and favour of our God.”

Reference to the origin story of the OHF as a relevant history which provides context for the activities of the organisation today was a consistent theme throughout the online material discussed above. This observation is reinforced within the CEO’s introductory letter. He states that the organisation has a “clear vision to motivate a Christian Community response to the welfare needs of children, teenagers and their families.” The clarity of this vision appears to be rooted in the origin story of the organisation and its founders.

Also within the introductory section of the Foster Parent Manual is a list containing the sources of authority from which the OHF derives its policies and procedures. The first four items on this list are: “God’s Word; Constitution of Open Home Foundation (OHF) of NZ; 2002-2007 OHF We Will Statement; Christian Beliefs Statement 2003-2017.” The “Christian Beliefs Statement” is the aforementioned values and beliefs document. This list is the final entry in the Foster Parent Manual introductory section. It contains a list of core Christian beliefs along with a brief explanation for each. These include “Jesus is Lord,” “Scripture is truth,” “Sin separates us from God,” “God loves us unconditionally,” and “God created us in His likeness” (see Figure 4.3).

Values and Beliefs

Prayer changes things
We will be people who pray and seek God in all that we do.

All children are a gift from God
We will ensure the safety and nurture of the children in our care. The wellbeing of a child should ideally be met from within its own family/whānau.

Families are God’s design
We work from the principle that children are best cared for by their own family/whānau whose wellbeing is also the responsibility of the community. The family’s/whānau culture is a source of great strength, guidance, and stability and the way we work with families/whānau is indicative of this belief.

God fights injustice
We strive to break down barriers of injustice and oppression at all levels of community in order to promote healing and empowerment.

We are followers of Jesus & empowered by the Holy Spirit
We seek the Holy Spirit to guide and empower our life and our work. This empowerment is evidenced by the presence of the fruit of the Spirit in our life. “Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, mercy and self control.”

Jesus is Lord
We acknowledge that Jesus is the fundamental source of life and knowledge. We follow His teachings as we serve in humility, mercy and truth.

Jesus reunites people with God
We work to facilitate reconciliation, healing, and wholeness, which come through forgiveness, restoration, and empowerment.

Scripture is truth
We use scripture to guide us in truth and to equip us to serve others with excellence.

Sin separates us from God
All people encounter problems in their lives. Solutions are found when we seek wholeness.

God loves us unconditionally
God’s unconditional love is expressed in the way we relate to others. This helps people feel safe and affirmed in their intrinsic worth and dignity.

God is relational
We work to build healthy community at all levels through humble and loving dialogue and caring collaboration.

God is a covenant maker
We work with people in partnering relationships built on respect, shared values, goals, and mutual trust developed through transparent processes.

God’s design has order and variety
We actively support people outworking their plans and achieving their own goals of wellbeing in their lives. We respect the processes and vision that guide people’s journey towards their goals.

God created us in His likeness
We respect all people and uphold their dignity, their uniqueness and the sanctity of their lives. We actively demonstrate our belief that people have responsibility for their own lives and desire to reach their full potential. We work to mobilise their strengths, gifts, knowledge and revelation.

Figure 4.3 Open Home Foundation Values and Beliefs

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The belief that “Families are God’s design” was of particular interest to me. This heading could be read as promoting the nuclear family structure as being divinely appointed and superior to other structures. However, the explanation on the values and beliefs list appears to instead emphasise the importance of community responsibility for children and families and asserts that children are best cared for by their own family. In order to clarify how the staff understood this principle, I determined to ask questions about it within the interview process.

Within the Foster Parent Manual there are also sessions dedicated to addressing the specific nature of providing foster care under the auspices of the OHF. “Fostering within the Open Home Foundation” is the first formal training module which any new foster parent participates in with OHF. It provides the organisational lens through which the remainder of the training is viewed. This session presents the vision of the OHF, discusses their heritage, and introduces the governance structure and mission. An emphasis on the importance of faith as a guiding and motivating influence within the process of providing foster care is prolific within this module. It opens with an explanation of the vision of the agency:

The Open Home Foundation is called to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, with all our mind.... We are called by God to nurture and encourage families so that children can grow up in a loving and secure family environment.... This calls us to love children and their families in the name of Jesus.50

The vision discussion continues to explain the importance of remaining confident in the call of God to this ministry and ensuring that those who work with them “put on God’s armour.” Although the overwhelming emphasis of the vision focuses on a faith foundation which motivates a response of service, love, and justice, it also acknowledges the tension of this ethos within a professional context: “While our work is to be professional in approach we must maintain our distinctiveness as a Christian organisation, knowing at times that this will bring us into opposition with the values of the world.”51 Although evangelism is not presented as a core function of the agency within the vision discussion, there is a stated expectation that those who observe the work of OHF will be encouraged to pursue Jesus. “Through our service, our love, we are to witness in the community to the saving and healing love of Christ and be a challenge to others to come and follow him.”52 The following page in this module outlines the history of OHF in more detail, concluding with the comment that “the same objectives derived from the Vision statement created 27 years ago continue to guide the

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organisation today.”

The introduction of the structure of the national board opens with a declaration of fealty to Jesus and an overt claim to being a Christian organisation:

The Open Home Foundation acknowledges one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Jesus Christ the love, mercy and grace of God are made known to us and all people. The Open Home Foundation is a Christian Organisation under the Headship of Jesus Christ. The organisation represents Jesus and stands for His Honour and Glory.

The remainder of the Foster Parent Manual regularly provides references to biblical texts or reminders of the underlying faith motivation of the agency as it goes on to discuss more practical skills and requirements for providing foster care. In explaining the relationship between social workers and foster parents, the training participant is reminded that “the team is upheld in prayer.” The section which addresses expectations and goal setting as a foster parent opens with the words of Jesus from Luke 9:48, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.” In addition to outlining the legal, practical, and professional standards required to become a foster parent, the manual is both consistent and overt in expressing and promoting a motivating Christian basis for their activity.

The foundational tenants emphasised within the Foster Parent Manual are similarly reflected within the governing constitution of the Open Home Foundation. This document, which provides binding guidance for the governance of the board and the charitable purposes of the trust, has an entire section dedicated to providing a “Statement Concerning Spiritual Matters.” Including a proclamation of faith in the Triune Christian God and recognising the Bible as the inspired word of God, this section overtly states that which was strongly alluded to within the online material regarding the faith requirements for staff and volunteers alike. “OHF is a Christian organisation and therefore all Board Directors, Staff, Foster Parents, Mentors and other volunteers will be Christians.” The following sub-section defines the term “Christian” for the purposes of the constitution, outlining a mainline Christian view including belief and acceptance of mainstream Christian doctrine as represented in “The

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57 In New Zealand, every registered charity has a governing trust deed, trust rules, or constitutional document which is publicly available through the charities register.
59 The Open Home Foundation, “The Constitution of the Open Home Foundation of New Zealand,” Sec. 4.3.
Apostles Creed,” which is written in full within the constitution. This section also includes a statement that “Board Directors, Staff, Foster Parents, Mentors, and other volunteers will be committed to the outworking of the original OHF Vision.”

With regard to the role and importance of Christian faith within the OHF, the messaging contained in the constitutional document, Foster Parent Manual, and on their website, is consistent, presenting an agency that is explicitly motivated by a Christian faith conviction; a conviction which is strongly founded in their origin story and formally instantiated within their governance structures and practices. The absence of those kind of statements on Facebook raises questions about how the espoused theology is being translated into practice.

Interviews: Faith-Permeated with Professional Standards Overlaid

Because this is a minor case study I had intended to interview five employees within OHF. However, after re-scheduling with the regional manager a number of times, it become apparent that the administrative challenges that this interview posed were prohibitive. I interviewed three social workers, with experience with OHF ranging from less than two years to over 20 years, and the practice manager from the Hamilton service centre. This provided a good insight into the specific experiences of staff at a regional level, but the impressions expressed may not be universally held by staff within the wider organisation. However, the staff felt some degree of connection between the various sites. One of the social workers commented, “We know everyone from the other service centres. We know what’s going on with this wider network of people.”

Given how overt the influence of faith had appeared on the website and in the documents analysed, the degree to which this transferred to the perceptions and practices of the staff was a significant point of interest. The interviewees asserted that the faith motivation of the agency was a practical, daily, lived experience. One of the social workers stated that, having worked with other faith-based social welfare agencies, the degree to which OHF was faith-based was “right-out there.... We stand alone in terms of the degree to which faith permeates us as an organisation.... Having Jesus first in all that you do is very strong here.” Practical examples of what that looks like were provided. The same interviewee commented that “the culture in the office, and the practice is, that every morning we meet and we pray for our

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60 The Open Home Foundation, “The Constitution of the Open Home Foundation of New Zealand,” Sec. 4.4.
61 In the months following my investigation and write up of this case study, I had the opportunity to talk in person with the staff member responsible for OHF’s social media. From that time until the final submission of this thesis, I noted a number of Facebook posts from OHF with explicitly worded faith content.
tamariki. And we pray for our families and any needs that our staff have. Every morning.” Another social worker similarly commented, “Working for Open Home inspires my faith every day, and it’s really cool. We are overtly Christian, we praise, worship, and pray, talking about God is in our everyday lives.” The newer social worker provided an example of a time when he had been going to meet with a particularly challenging client who had a number of behavioural issues. He talked about how he felt anxious leading up to the visit. His supervisor had stopped him and asked why he was looking stressed. Once he had explained the situation, she gave him advice, relating it back to the Bible and to the way that Jesus handled difficult people. This was a common occurrence for this interviewee. Speaking of the way that the supervisor mentored him, he stated, “She’ll say ‘before you go, do you want to pray together? Do you need God?’ or, ‘Don’t forget to pray for [your client], don’t forget to pray for yourself. Bring Jesus into it, because if he’s not there, then you’re on your own.’”

The responses of the staff members I spoke with revealed that the faith convictions communicated within the website and documents were similarly reflected in the practices of the organisation. In order to explore the degree to which these faith-inspired activities and responses were a prescribed, top down phenomenon versus an organic expression of personal beliefs, I asked about how faith practices related to the culture of OHF. One interviewee indicated,

It comes down from the national office [but] no one is too distant. They may work in a national office and they may be very high up in an organisation, but you still feel that sort of cultural relationship.... Everyone has their own culture but I think the overarching culture [at OHF] is a real willingness to support each other and it’s centred around God.

The Open Home Foundation is intentionally led with a strong and overt faith motivation, but my interviewees reported that this strategic direction and leadership is equally felt as a grassroots culture amongst the staff.

The emphasis placed on the history and foundational values of the organisation was another characteristic which was similarly apparent within both the document analysis and through the interviews. Each of the interviewees commented that they viewed the work that OHF carries out today to be an extension of their origin story. One staff member commented that the “We-Will statements” encapsulate the foundational values of OHF and stated that “at its heart, this is the same agency.” The practice manager noted that the reason that the founders began OHF was because there were homes and people “willing to take children on but to bring in the faith side of things and to make that a part of it.” She went on to share that the
same ethic motivates what they do today. “I would envision the same for any child that comes into play with one of our caregivers, that they’re also brought up knowing that there is a God and that they do provide and the power of prayer, and those kinds of things. I think that is what they saw and what they wanted.” Moreover, each of the interviewees was able to state, in concept, the foundational vision of the agency. This is essentially the same core purpose for which the foundation espouses it exists today. The direct correlation between the foundational vision and the vision today, which was expressed by the interviewees, suggests that an influencing factor for this cohesion may be the organisational awareness of its origin story and a feeling amongst the staff of purposeful connection to that story.

Within the values and beliefs document discussed above, the statement relating to families being God’s design had raised some questions about OHF’s normative perceptions of family. I asked the interviewees what a family was. I was struck by the challenge that this simple question posed for each one of them, as they reframed their responses a number of times before settling on a definition. One staff member concluded that a family was a collection of people with or without kinship ties, who unconditionally love each other. This interviewee acknowledged that this definition departed from his understanding of the biblical perspective of family, which he viewed as having more boundaries. He finally determined that there was a difference between biological family and family governed by “unconditional love and grace.”

Another staff member agreed. “It is where we have love, it’s where we have comfort, its where we find our sense of belonging.” This interviewee volunteered that this was “actually a really un-Christian” view. When asked about how this related to a “biblical perception of family,” she did not answer the question directly, instead asserting that the “world is so different now.” When I asked her what she heard when I spoke of a “biblical perception of family,” she mentioned that as believers we were all part of God’s family, but admitted that she did not know how to define family from a biblical perspective. Practically, this interviewee determined that in the course of the work at OHF, a “family” was where the child was. The manager provided a definition of family that was any group of people who identified as a family and who were “giving their best and doing their best and putting kids first.” For her, a duty of care from an adult or adults toward a child constituted a family. However, when I paraphrased this response back to her, she contested that couples without children can also be a family. She was unsure what a biblical perception of family might be.

Within the context of a Christian social service agency providing care and support for families, I had not expected such a lack of consideration on the nature of family and the
biblical perception of family. It was not that these responses lacked clarity – as discussed in the Chapter 2, a lack of clarity is a defining characteristic of a biblical perception of family – but rather the lack of prior thought into the matter. If OHF primarily support families, the question of what constitutes a family is important. Similarly, if faith motivates actions within OHF and the Bible is considered a source of truth and authority, then what the Bible has to say on the nature of family is equally important. Although the answer of what constitutes a family is far more complex than it might immediately seem, evidence that the question had been given little or no previous thought revealed a lack of a theological foundation for the many things they do that demonstrate their faith convictions.

Despite the poorly formulated theology around family, families are still highly regarded in concept within the OHF vision and values. Having a theologically motivated, high view of the role and value of families carries with it a significant degree of complexity within the context of providing foster care. Children are not placed into state care unless there are major challenges within their home life. The dysfunctional environments from which these children are removed are often family units. Within the process of providing foster care, a successful outcome is when a family is sufficiently reformed so as to be able to provide a safe and nurturing home for the child to be returned. However, the reality is that even a reformed and improved home environment may be significantly less functional than that which the child experiences while in foster care. I questioned the interviewees about this conundrum. One social worker noted that “sometimes if we haven’t quite got there, to that point [that we wanted to], I think we need to trust in God. Trust that the outcome that happened is what was meant to happen, you know what I mean?” I asked if she meant that she needed to rely on the knowledge that God is still in control. She responded, “Yeah, and sometimes it’s really hard. Sometimes it’s really hard to go ‘oh my goodness, that shouldn’t have happened this way.’ But we have to trust God.” There was a degree of pain and frustration in the responses of the interviewees to the question of returning children to their homes. This reliance on God was a theme which I heard mirrored by the other interviewees in different ways. However, it was not only in reference to coping with emotionally challenging scenarios, but also with regard to remaining motivated and committed to the job.

The encouragement of the recruiting messages within the document and website to consider joining this “ministry” revealed a belief which viewed the work of OHF as an expression of Christian faith. The expectation that volunteers would feel “called” to this “ministry” reflects
the impression that the staff members have of their own involvement. A social worker told me,

God calls us specifically, like myself, for a time and a place such as this. So He’s called me to be a social worker, to look after children, for this time. Now, I would have never chosen this job, ever. Had never, never would have, but I’m being obedient now. I believe that’s what God wants me to do.

He went on to inform me of the importance of this belief. He felt there were three major issues at OHF: a very high work load expectation; the fact that you have to be a Christian, which limits the potential labour force making recruiting much more difficult; and the minimal pay they get for the amount of work they do. “I do this because I fully believe that’s what God’s called me to do for this time.” The other interviewees repeated the feeling that they had been called by God to the work at OHF. One stated, “God loves them just as much as he loves me. There’s no discrepancy. I am here to be the hands and feet for Him.” This interviewee also insisted that she found the job rewarding. “I love the fact that you can take something broken and hopefully do your best to put it back together again and give them some sort of future.” In a high stress, emotionally taxing role, the motivation provided by a conviction that one is carrying out the work which God has assigned is likely to be significant.

An additional organisational challenge which each of the interviewees mentioned was that of recruiting new foster parents. As a Christian organisation established to encourage and facilitate a Christian community response to a social need, I heard frustration in the way that they expressed the relationship between OHF and church congregations. One of the social workers, when answering a question on what sort of things they prayed about, volunteered that one of the primary prayer needs was “more foster parents, that’s always a biggie.” She commented that word of mouth was a significant method of generating new recruits. Another of the staff members stated, “Churches are very hard to go through these days.... [They] just don’t have the time, or are too big, and don’t do notice boards.” In light of the closed doors that he described from local churches, I asked this interviewee how people heard about OHF and where their new recruits came from:

Word of mouth, for Open Home Foundation, has been big. That’s been quite a driver for recruitment. But I also think that there are just literally people from the churches, because they’re Christians, stepping up and going, “I know there’s a need out there, I’m going to find out where it is.”

I noted that I had observed the lack of a formal connection to a church and asked the interviewee to describe the relationship between OHF and the church. His response was a single word: “Broken.” Although the other interviewees did not present this relationship in
such critical terms, they each expressed the challenge of recruiting foster parents, particularly through churches. The practice manager admitted that they “have a lack in that area at the moment,” but insisted that it was something they were working on. “A lot of churches don’t want us there on Sunday morning,” she lamented.

Although OHF is reliant on the faith community for volunteers, they do not rely on charity for operational funding. The fact that they are not reliant on donors to fund their activity means that they are unlikely to be subject to the same resource dependency pressures that other FBOs may experience. However, the reason that they are not reliant on donors is that they have a very close commercial arrangement with one significant funder of their services, which happens to be a government department. The foundational values motivating OHF and Oranga Tamariki are essentially different, and yet they are dependent upon each other to fulfil their respective mandates. An interviewee noted that OHF’s relationship with Oranga Tamariki “is a very strong relationship and one that’s valued 100% on both ends.” Despite this healthy, mutually beneficial relationship, the provision of professional services with an unashamedly Christian motivation and identity produces an environment of potential conflict.

One of the senior social workers stated,

“ar are who are. Our foster parents are Christians, we are Christians, and that’s who we are. I’ve always said, and this is my own thing, but the best evidence of our faith is how we carry ourselves. It doesn’t need to be that we’re sort of evangelising all over the place, but are we kind, are we patient, do we have grace? ... We’ve got to get that balance really right between not portraying our own values and beliefs onto our clients. We’ve got to be really careful with that.

Another interviewee mirrored these comments. “I think I’m really self-aware about my own values and that these are my own. I don’t want to put those onto other people. I don’t think it’s appropriate to. I’m not there to share my faith.” However, when questioned on whether the staff at OHF perceive foster parents as purveyors of Christian faith to the children in their care, an interviewee responded: “Absolutely. That’s what this organisation was built on, children being able to live in Christian homes. We can’t force it on children though.” The practice manager repeated the same sentiment:

“We have to be very careful with that, if children don’t want to attend church, if they don’t want to be involved in prayer, we have to really respect that, because in turn we’re respecting the families that they come from and their beliefs as well, you know? But absolutely, that’s exactly what foster parents are, they’re demonstrating their faith. There are actually interviews with children who have been in OHF’s foster care who are now adults, and they’ve come back and they’ve said, “We didn’t know God beforehand, and now we have a relationship with God.” When you hear things like that, it’s just the best thing in the world.
The tension between professional standards and code of ethics and an overt faith motivation makes the practice of the OHF social workers complex. The responses of the staff demonstrate both a commitment to maintaining professional standards and boundaries, and promoting Christian values especially to those children in their care. I paraphrased this tension to one of the staff members, who confirmed that it was a good approximation of how she felt:

If a Christian response of love to our neighbour requires us to meet the needs of the vulnerable in our society, then we are called to provide that response without ulterior motive. However, if we believe in the truth of the Good News of the Gospel, then how can we say that our response is one of love and not share that message? If they reject that knowledge, then fine, but it doesn’t end our obligation and duty of care toward them.

It appears that it is the provision of care “without ulterior motive” which enables OHF to maintain a healthy operating relationship with Oranga Tamariki while still asserting their Christian identity. The practice manager confirmed that they are very transparent with both Oranga Tamariki and clients that come to them. “I’m very up front with our clients. We do pray, it’s part of who we are and if they’re comfortable to pray with us, then we will pray with them. If not, then we’ll pray at the office, with families. It’s just something we do. We are respectful though.” In this way, OHF successfully navigates some of the potential challenges of being a faith-permeated agency while maintaining high professional standards.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The relative absence of faith material on Facebook when compared with the website and documents does not seem to relate to the various mediums targeting different readers. The more intentionally crafted documents contain the faith components, whereas that which is more impromptu and organic omits them. Why? Is the faith institutionalised but not owned by staff? Given the responses within the interviews, I would hesitate to assert this as a likely reason. In order to clarify this observation I contacted the regional manager and was put in contact with the staff member responsible for managing the content on Facebook. She confirmed that the Facebook content was targeted primarily at existing foster families and her primary consideration when adding content was what would be helpful in encouraging and providing support to them. Although it was possible that prospective foster parents and volunteers may also view content on the Facebook page, they were engaged more directly through targeted Facebook advertisements. The keywords chosen for this advertising were related to Christian faith rather than family. The OHF staff member had found that this helped to eliminate enquiries from applicants who were unsuitable due to their lack of shared faith values. She also indicated that she had not been aware of the lack of overt faith content, which
had not been intentional. She stated that it made her think that she should consider including some more overt statements of faith at times.

These explanations for the difference in the way that faith was expressed between the Facebook page and the website suggests that adherence to a Christian faith is an assumed value by the OHF staff and therefore implied rather than overtly stated within the less formal communication style of Facebook. This is a reasonable position given that the communication was targeted at the “in house” audience of existing and prospective foster parents. It may also be reflective of the fact that most faith adherents do not feel compelled to speak of their faith within every conversation. Rather than it being an intentional decision to omit faith inspired comments, the more natural communication style found on Facebook posts may reflect a normal conversation for a person of faith, which may not always be distinguishable from the conversation of any other person. Within the formal communications of the agency, however, OHF staff members are more intentional in asserting values that they consider to be core to their organisational identity.

A significant characteristic of OHF is the degree to which it has remained true to the original vision, values, and mission of the organisation. Although organisational evolution is not necessarily a bad thing, remaining committed to the founding mission and values is an objective which many FBOs attempt to do and many fail. OHF provides an example of an FBO which has been successful in staunchly asserting and protecting its original mission. The compelling attributes of OHF which may have contributed to this are the fact that the majority of staff members know, and have reflected upon, the origin story of the organisation; the explicitly worded vision, values, and purpose, which are instantiated within the governance document; strong and intentional leadership which promotes principles that are owned and incorporated into the culture of the organisation at a grassroots level; and avoiding the pressures of resource dependence by having a secure income stream. All of these attributes are distinct within the example of OHF and may have contributed to their unique ability to withstand the divergent influence of mission drift.

A major challenge for OHF is recruiting new foster families. With their reliance on the Christian faith community, developing and maintaining good relationships with churches is important. However, this has been identified as an ongoing challenge. The website content appears to target supporters and prospective volunteers, however it is poorly laid out and maintained. Facebook is more accessible and better maintained, but its lack of overt faith
content may fail to attract the type of volunteers which they are constitutionally bound to recruit. Instead, OHF appear to primarily rely on word of mouth to meet these needs. With a good relationship with Oranga Tamariki and more demand than can be readily met for providing foster care, both from a strategic organisational perspective and as a response to the Christian social justice ethic which OHF espouses, recruitment and retention of suitable foster parents was the clearest choke point within OHF’s operational model during the period of this analysis. While church relationships may be difficult to foster, the OHF’s commitment to their original model of partnering with the Christian community necessitates that they continue to pursue these challenging connections. However, restructuring and better maintaining the website may be a far simpler and more immediate mechanism to better connect with potential supporters and volunteers.
Chapter 5. Faith-Centered FBOs: Catholic Family Support Services and The Salvation Army

Of the five FBOs which were the case studies for this project, two were classified as faith-centered organisations in accordance with Sider and Unruh’s typology. As FBOs with close affiliations to the church, these organisations share many similar characteristics and challenges, despite their divergent denominational backgrounds. Both of these agencies are included within this chapter, starting with Catholic Family Support Services as a minor case study, followed by The Salvation Army, which is a major case study.

Catholic Family Support Services

Catholic Family Support Services (CFSS) is a small organisation with only a handful of employees in Hamilton and an even smaller site (“Moana”) in Tauranga. Despite the fact that it is a localised service, the Catholic Church of New Zealand provides community support in each diocese. Consequently, CFSS offers an example of the broader care that Catholic support services provide in New Zealand. On the main welcome banner of their website homepage, they state that they are the “Social Services Arm of the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton,” \(^1\) and elsewhere they distil this concept and refer to themselves as a “caring arm of the Church.” \(^2\) They have a proclaimed philosophical objective of “keeping hope alive,” which permeates many of their documents and is included as part of their logo. \(^3\) CFSS is a stand-alone charitable organisation in their own right, with a stated purpose to provide “a wrap-around service to improve the well-being of individuals and families in need.” \(^4\) Their charitable purpose also formally identifies them as a Catholic agency, stating: “While it is a Catholic agency, the services are available to people of all beliefs and backgrounds.” \(^5\)

During the recruiting process CFSS were extremely forthcoming in their willingness to participate in this research. They were the first agency to consent to being involved and their manager’s initial communications with me left the impression that he was extremely trusting.

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\(^3\) Catholic Family Support Services, “Home.”
\(^5\) Catholic Family Support Services, “Charity Summary”.
It may be noteworthy that this is consistent with the experience that I had with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton when conducting research for a previous project in 2013. For that research I was allowed to carry out research within their Cathedral, including being given permission to address the congregation during mass, without any real question of my credibility or intentions. This openness and willingness to be critiqued may reflect an inherent confidence or self-assurance within CFSS as a faith-based organisation and within the Catholic Church more generally.

Catholic Family Support Services was established by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton following the formation of the diocese in 1980. The Bishop confirmed that it wasn’t created in order to address any specific social need, but rather due to a belief that there is an essential requirement for the church to meet needs in society generally. Catholic Family Support Services was established as a vehicle to achieve that objective. However, the specific services which were provided have evolved to respond to community needs. One example of this was the cessation of the provision of marriage counselling in 2003. Marriage counselling had previously been a core function of the agency. This transpired due to the increasing availability of Family Court counsellors and these services were replaced by the provision of supervised access for non-custodial parents and the “Seasons for Growth” programme for children suffering significant loss.\(^6\)

In addition to supervised contact and “Seasons for Growth,” CFSS provide financial mentoring and family support social work services. Although they claim to be the “caring arm of the Church,” this refers specifically to their partnership with the Hamilton Diocese of the Catholic Church of New Zealand. In terms of their daily operations, board, and practical governance, there is little practical connection to the church, although the Bishop is regularly involved in providing spiritual and strategic guidance.\(^7\) Funding for CFSS comes from two primary sources. Approximately 60% of their annual income comes from government contracts through the Ministry of Social Development. The remaining 40% comes from “donations, fundraising, and other similar receipts.”\(^8\)

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\(^7\) Most of the interviewees mentioned this, including the manager of CFSS and the Bishop.

There are a small number of overt religious practices within the day-to-day operation of the agency. They begin all of their staff and board meetings with prayer and gather together for a chapel time at the start of each week. This chapel time takes place in the chapel facility which is near CFSS and is shared with the other social service providers who are situated in the same site at “Te Ara Hou Village.” One of the other providers at this location is Family Works New Zealand, one of the other case studies in this research project. Apart from this chapel, there are limited religious icons at the CFSS facilities and they intentionally avoid any religious content in their programmes.

Taking into consideration all of the characteristics listed above and applying them to Sider and Unruh’s typology, CFSS may be classified as a faith-centered agency in accordance with this framework.⁹

**Online Presence**

The website was built in 2016 and is mobile friendly. It has blog updates which are posted monthly. The freshness and accessibility of the website suggest that CFSS intend it to be a source of information for clients, potential clients, and other interested parties. Consequently, the information communicated here ought to be given some weight in terms of what it demonstrates about how CFSS see themselves and what they consider to be important.

The initial impression of the website is clean, simple, professional, and inviting. Of particular note is the main image of a hand holding a seedling (see Figure 5.1). This is clearly a photographic representation of the agency’s logo, which is of a hand holding a koru,¹⁰ symbolising new life. This correlates to the agency motto of “Keeping Hope Alive.” The welcome statement on the homepage introduces CFSS as “the Social Services arm of the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton” and also clarifies that their services are available to anyone regardless of personal belief.

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⁹ See Appendix C - Locating the FBO in Sider and Unruh’s framework.
¹⁰ A koru is a stylised fern leaf which is used prolifically in Māori art.
The layout of the information on the website is significant in terms of what it communicates about the agency. All of the essential information is found on the homepage, and the most immediately obvious links are “Our Services” and “Useful Information.” Contained in each of these pages is a list of services and directions on how to access them. Additionally, “Our Services” contains a list of links to other potentially helpful external agencies, and “Useful Information” contains a list of phone numbers and a brief synopsis of various external crisis services. The impression that this leaves is that CFSS is client focused and they would rather see someone get help elsewhere if their needs are better able to be addressed by another organisation. This impression was confirmed during the interview process a number of times. Of particular note was a comment made by the manager of CFSS: “I think, compared to other agencies, people will say ‘we are a strength based agency and we focus on people,’ and maybe they do, but I actually think that here, the thing that really differentiates us - and if you talk to any of the staff here, it’s in their heart, it’s not a head thing - they really do care.”

Also included on the homepage are vision and values. Their vision is stated as “Strong families and whanau,” and is extrapolated under subheadings of “Our Philosophy” and “Our Work.” Under these headings the aspiration to “keep hope alive” is emphasised once more. The stated values are listed under six sub-headings: Whakapapa, “genealogy” (relating to family of origin and identity); Whanaungatanga, “friendship” (strengthening relationships); Aroha, “love” (compassion and empathy toward every person); Manaakitanga, “hospitality and kindness” (providing a safe and respectful environment); Kotahitanga, “unity” (working together, “a community of love, trust, and justice based on the examples and values of Jesus

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11 Catholic Family Support Services, “Home.”
Christ”); Integrity (dependable, reliable, and “committed to providing service to the best of our ability.”).12

With the exception of the title pages for the blog posts, there are only three pictures used in the entire website. This draws more attention to the text content and also emphasises the pictures and what they communicate. In addition to the image of the seedling in the hand, the two other pictures relate to vision (Figure 5.2) and values (Figure 5.3). Both of these images are effective in emphasising the message contained in the associated section. The vision of keeping hope alive and striving for strong families is depicted in the image of a child who is alone and drawing a picture of a family that are all smiling. Values which are strongly derived from a Christian ethic and the teachings of the Catholic Church are more effectively rooted in the religious tradition through the association of the rosary depicted alongside them. Despite the fact that there is only one reference to “the example and values of Jesus Christ,” the addition of this image creates a clear correlation between the other values statements and the Christian faith.

![Figure 5.2 Catholic Family Support Services website image - vision](image1.png)  ![Figure 5.3 Catholic Family Support Services website image - values](image2.png)

The word frequency analysis of the website text did not reveal any unexpected or inconsistent trends. The top ten words or their synonyms included “services,” “family,” “support,” “provide,” “work,” and “Catholic.”15 This reinforces the perception that the website’s content is cohesive and there is clarity of the primary messages which it delivers. While initially analysing the website, I felt that whoever had designed it, populated the content, and chosen the graphics, had a very good grasp of what the messages of CFSS are. I noted that the

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12 Catholic Family Support Services, “Home.”  
13 Catholic Family Support Services, “Home.”  
14 Catholic Family Support Services, “Home.”  
15 See Appendix D for results.
website designer shared a name with the agency manager and I asked him if the designer was a family member. He confirmed that the designer was his son.

With less than 200 followers on Facebook and no presence on Instagram or Twitter, social media does not appear to be a significant means of communication to clients or supporters for CFSS. Despite this fact, the “About” tab on their Facebook page contains a comprehensive overview of CFSS, their mission, and the agency’s history. Stating that they provide “a range of services for families in need,” the declared mission references the influence of their faith:

> We are inspired by the words of Pope Francis who spoke of the need to protect “all creation, the beauty of the created world”....This means “respecting each of God’s creatures and respecting the environment in which we live. It means protecting people, showing loving concern for each and every person, especially children, the elderly, those in need, who are often the last we think about.”

For this statement to be considered a “mission,” the definition of a mission probably needs to be broadened from how it is normally understood; this is the only place that their values or purpose are defined as a “mission,” and this appears to be because they are using the default headings provided by Facebook. Regardless of this fact, the values expressed within the statement reference a Christian mandate which motivates CFSS.

The posts which are uploaded to their Facebook feed relate to activities that CFSS staff have been involved in or links to articles that families may find useful, empowering, or encouraging. For example, one post linked to an external article and encouraged readers to be a “resilient parent” so that by their example their children would in turn learn resilience. At the time that the analysis of CFSS was carried out, Facebook posts were being uploaded multiple times a week. However, near the end of the project I reviewed their Facebook profile once again and posts were being made only monthly.

**Document Analysis**

Beyond the online material, the primary sources of information which are publicly available from CFSS and which were analysed for this study are their 2016 Annual report, the trust deed, a support services and financial mentoring brochure, and another brochure titled “How you can help.” Beyond these publications, the charity rules and audited annual accounts are available through the New Zealand Charities Services Register. The manager of CFSS also

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provided a copy of their 2017-2019 Strategic Plan and another document which details their organisational history, both of which are internal documents. Only the elements of these documents which reveal a theological position or practice will be discussed here.

The 2016 Annual Report is available from the CFSS website and contains much of the financial information found in the audited Performance Report which can be accessed through Charities Services. Additionally, it has a report from both the chairperson and the manager of CFSS. The support of the Bishop is highlighted and the chairperson refers to the staff members as “faith filled people.”\(^{18}\) She also notes that diocesan staff provides some support services and advice surrounding finance. With the exception of the Bishop’s involvement with the staff of CFSS, this is the only mention of this type of practical collaboration between the church and the FBO in any of the data collected from written sources. The manager’s report in this same document opens with a declaration that the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton can take pride in the work of CFSS.\(^{19}\) This demonstrates at least an espoused value of cohesion between the faith community and the FBO.

Also of interest from within the 2016 Annual Report is a statement of the charism of the agency. This same statement is made in the opening of the 2017-2019 Strategic Plan. It states,

> The charism of the agency is that we seek to be the face of Jesus for people who are alone in their place of need. We seek to raise the dignity of each person by helping them realise their own potential, and to bring them to a place where they can make their own decisions again. We take the time to journey with the family and to help them create the supports they need to move on.\(^{20}\)

Seeking to “raise the dignity of each person” is consistent with the goal of keeping hope alive. However, the way that dignity is imparted is in helping them to “realise their own potential.” This goal was similarly reflected in one of the interviews in which the staff member mentioned that they viewed “self-determination” as a value reflected in both Christian faith and social work practice. Theologically human dignity comes from the value of being made in the image of God and the subsequent sacredness of life, not from realising one’s own potential. This raises the question of whether encouraging and enabling the individual to become self-determined as a stated goal is actually “being the face of Jesus” to people in need? Self-differentiation requires belonging as well as autonomy and agency. Moreover, CFSS’s stated values strongly emphasise belonging, team, and community as integral. Given this emphasis on external support structures for the client, it appears that “helping people to

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realise their own potential” may not be the primary objective as a means to provide clients with the ability to make decisions and a feeling of dignity, despite the stated charism. Consequently, emphasising the individual’s own potential may not be an effective way that CFSS aims to “be the face of Jesus” either.

The trust rules are both brief and broad in nature. Rather than detailing the values and objectives of CFSS in any specific terms, they instead establish the Bishop as the proprietor, and goal of the board to “assist and advise the Bishop with the effective governance of the Agency.” This is unique among the FBOs in this study, for which the “objects” listed in the trust deeds or constitutions relate to the tasks and guiding principles for the operation of the agency, rather than for the board itself. This approach gives the Bishop broad authority in regard to the role of the board, members of which he may nominate, appoint, and remove at his pleasure. The strength of this legally established relationship with the Bishop ensures that, although there is only minor reference to values of faith in the Rules, the connection between CFSS and the church is formally guaranteed at a governance level. The one overt reference to faith in the trust rules is found in a clause titled “Canon Law”: “The Board’s duties are to be undertaken and completed in accordance with the appropriate principles of Canon Law.”

Both the establishment of the Bishop as proprietor of CFSS and the commitment to Canon Law establishes the formal relationship with the church. However, this may not necessarily translate to a relational connection to the church. While questioning one of the interviewees, I was exploring questions around motivation and the role of faith in their job and seeking to clarify a comment that they had made. I asked: “So the thought of, ‘I’m doing this because my love for these people reflects on God’s love for these people,’ those sorts of thoughts don’t come? They’re not conscious?” In direct contradiction with the stated charism, they responded definitively that this was not a consideration. This reflects a clear inconsistency between the espoused theology of the organisation’s management and what is experienced by the staff. This was a subject that was explored in some detail during the interview process.

Interviews

The “Caring Arm of the Church”: Conceptual or Real?

As the self-declared “caring arm of the church,” CFSS is presented as a ministry of the church. The impression that this leaves is that the church works with and in the agency, and the agency in turn works on the behalf of the church. However, in practice, although there is a degree of connection to the church which the staff members identified, the unity in purpose and identity between the Catholic Church and CFSS is far more tenuous than this phrase suggests. All interviewees mentioned the involvement of the Bishop as he provided pastoral care and encouragement for the staff at CFSS. It is clear that the manager’s perception that the Bishop “wanted to support our service” is a fair representation of the views of the staff, although formally the relationship is reversed, with the staff instead being afforded the opportunity to support the Bishop’s service. The governance of the agency, with the Bishop providing ultimate oversight to the trust as its proprietor, demonstrates a clear connection with the church. In the unofficial history of CFSS, John Kavanagh states that “in more recent times, CFSS ... is much more involved in Diocesan activities.”

Those in strategic leadership positions within CFSS both perceive and want to encourage collaboration between the agency and the faith community. This was overtly stated by the Bishop:

> The church has always tried to respond to needs in various ways, right back to apostolic days and the first deacons. There was a need for widows and you know, orphans, getting distribution of the food. So it’s always been a concern of the church. As the church has developed in New Zealand, the need for it to be formalised has become apparent. So there’s basically the history of the formation of social service agencies within the Catholic Church in New Zealand. So it was always going to be part of the new diocese in Hamilton.

Although the relationship with the Catholic Church is formally instantiated in the governing document, and the staff members of CFSS feel a relational connection with the Bishop, the interviewees did not perceive the connection with the church as being particularly relevant or collaborative. It appeared that there was a disconnect between the faith-based motivation of the church in establishing the agency and the motivations of the staff, some of whom distinguished between a faith motivation and a values-based motivation. One interviewee stated, “It’s not about religious affiliation for any of us. It’s about those caring, supporting values; the values of treating each other respectfully at our work, our colleagues, and the people that we work with. It’s very much about wanting to help people make positive change. And that’s something that we all have in common.” Another staff member stated,

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24 Kavanagh, “Catholic Social Services, Hamilton Diocese,” 2.
Sometimes we talk about getting rid of the word Catholic because we, we ... I mean it’s controversial. We don’t get much, we don’t get any funding from the church. [The Bishop] is my employer but he doesn’t actually pay my wages. So he has a huge say in what we do, but he is not actually, you know [my employer].

However, despite this they still felt a strong connection with the Bishop, who regularly spent time with them: “Everyone connects with Bishop Steve.” The staff members also had awareness that they were doing work that was motivated by a faith ethic, although there was a lack of consensus on any correlation between those values and the church. This was even true of staff members who didn’t profess a personal Christian faith. However, it was a more nuanced understanding for them, as demonstrated in this statement made by one of the staff members:

Is it faith-based or faith practice? I don’t think ... I wouldn’t say it is. I’m sorry, I don’t know if that’s the right thing to say, but it’s an element, but it’s not the driver. I think it’s supposed to be the driving force behind what we do, but I think it’s our individual interpretations of that that makes it work. It’s the values that we’ve got, that we share. The shared values of the Catholic faith – what we stand for – aligns with social work practice, so that’s how I see it. That’s how it fits in with me.

The Bishop also commented on the challenge of working in a secular professional environment but still maintaining connection with the church:

It’s like walking a tight rope at times.... The reality in New Zealand today is that a lot of the church agencies are contracted by Government to provide services, particular services ... Certainly in the way that we want to engage with people and this is what I’ve been really working with our staff with since I’ve been here; to look at the spiritual dimension of the human person.

Where the “values of the Catholic faith” are necessarily intertwined with the Catholic faith for the Bishop and the Christian staff members alike, there was a separation between faith and values for those who did not share the Christian faith. This raises the question of employment practices and the degree to which faith plays a role in selecting an applicant for a position. The Bishop noted that while he would let the manager or the board do most of the hiring, if the CFSS director resigned, he would personally get involved in the hiring process and would look for someone with a strong faith, although not necessarily Catholic: “I would certainly be looking for a director that’s got a strong faith themselves. We don’t just employ Catholic social workers, but we would want them to resonate and accept the position of the church on things.” This approach to hiring is reflected in the practice of the agency manager:

So we just advertised recently. We don’t put in the ad that we’re looking for anybody [of a particular faith]. When you start questioning, the interview questions, we have questions about what does working for a Catholic organisation

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25 Within interview quotations an ellipses is used to represent that I have omitted some material superfluous to requirements.
mean for you, and try to rule out from there where they fit within this, within there, you know. It’s not that they’re Catholic, that the key thing is. The thing is that they can articulate the values that I think are really important, you know, the Christian values. And caring for people, I mean caring for people is probably the heart. I go back to the heart, but you can’t teach people the heart stuff. You can teach the head stuff. It seems like Christianity, you can know Christianity in the head but it’s got to be here right.

One staff member who does not identify as a Christian confirmed this position:

You don’t have to be a Catholic to be part of this organisation. But you have to have some kind of faith. [The manager] has a level of wisdom. When he wants to introduce another person to be with us, he meets with them and feels if they would be able to be part of the team. Usually we kind of realise that a person feels ok to become part of the team is because that person has some kind of faith — a belief that there is someone up there who is taking care of them. I am saying, you don’t have to be part of the church, but you have to have this deep relationship with someone up there.

The disparate perspectives between the staff and the leaders of CFSS with regard to the cohesion between the church and the FBO are apparently also reflected in the attitudes of many parishioners. I commented to the Bishop that if the church institutionalises a response to meet social needs, there is a risk that the individual feeling of Christian responsibility to love others could be lost. “The individual responsibility is almost removed from the average parishioner, sitting in the seat.” He responded that this was a potential concern. “That’s right. One of the things I’ve been really strong on is that I want our young people to be involved in social justice projects. A lot of our schools are.” For the Bishop, there was a challenge to keep CFSS integrated with the church and also keep a heart for social justice and loving your neighbour encouraged and developing in members of the church, despite the existence of a professional arm of the church which was specifically mandated with this function.

The source of funding was another common topic raised by interviewees when considering the relationship with the church. Although the senior leadership in the church perceives CFSS as an extension and integral part of the church, and the manager of CFSS similarly advocates for this cohesion, the collaboration is weak both in terms of the perception of the staff and in the challenges which the Bishop feels he needs to address in the attitudes of the parishioners, who at times struggle to feel ownership for social justice initiatives. This tension is reflected in the financial situation of the agency, which receives only a small amount of funding from the church via Catholic Care and is instead reliant on government contracts for the majority of its funding. The manager of CFSS explained that the donations “come from the community in one shape or form. The Catholic contribution is through Catholic Care. They give us a smallish amount of money each year.” In addition to noting that he personally struggles to ask
parishioners for financial support, he also stated that due to the fact that they are government contractors, they are “beholden to the Ministry of Social Development.” This forces a degree of duty to the funder, which is likely to undermine the feeling of duty to the faith community which they purportedly operate on behalf of. The Bishop was aware of this potential conflict of interests and chose to use the same phrase as the manager as he expressed his concern, “We don’t want to be beholden to government and just don’t want to, you know, be their servant.” Despite his concerns, the disparity of the conceptual and real cohesion and collaboration of the church and CFSS appears to reflect their spread of funding streams. Although this is noteworthy as an observation, there may not be any causal connection between these factors.

**Praying with Clients**

I was intrigued to find that a staff member who openly stated that she was not a Catholic or Christian, but was instead “spiritual,” would regularly pray with clients.

So I would say, “Would you like me to open up or would you like to open up with a prayer?” ... I don’t say “Dear Lord,” or “God please.” … I say this thing from the heart which is basically “love us today, help us make right decisions, keep us warm just wrap your arms around us, higher power, wrap your arms around this family.” Stuff like that.

Conversely, the other staff members who professed a Christian faith did not pray with their clients.

It appears that there is a power dynamic at play here. The organisation, by merit of the role that it is playing in providing support services to a client, operates from a position of power within the FBO – client relationship. The staff members are aware of this. They also understand the importance of bridging the relational gap in order to establish a rapport with the client and ultimately achieve better outcomes for them. For example, one staff member stated, “The first thing that we do is we listen. What I do is not only listen, but also develop a rapport with them. I think that that is really important that these people at least have some kind of trust in the relationship.” They have a motivation to intentionally disempower the role of the FBO within their interactions with a client in order to be present with them as a caring person rather than as a proxy for the FBO. One of the key distinguishing attributes of the FBO is “faith” (whether that be perceived or real). This is particularly true when there is a reference to faith or church in the FBO’s name, as in the case of Catholic Family Support Services. Consequently, staff members are inclined to distance themselves from religious rituals or references which might reinforce the perception of a faith position, in order to intentionally undermine the power dynamic at play within the relationship. This is particularly true for staff
members who personally share the agency’s faith. In a professional context where they are the agent of the FBO, there are both professional boundaries and power dynamics at play which make praying with a client a potentially disempowering action.

However, in the case of the non-Christian staff member who prays with clients, the same dynamics are not in play. She explains that when she first meets with a client:

I have this initial thing where I will say a little bit about myself and I will say about the organisation, what I’m representing but also I need to let you know that I am more of a spiritual person and this means that I feel more connected to people, plants, animals, blah, blah, blah. And that’s where I feel that the love is, the heart is, and the agency works from a strong heart based faith…. I tell them that it’s a Catholic agency, Catholic Family Support Services, but don’t be put off by the name because you are not a Catholic but you’re still invited to have that love and support from us. We are an agency that has Catholic social workers but we’re all very different and we’ve all got our own beliefs. I’m spiritual, more than religious but that will not be rammed down your throat today.

In this way, she distances herself from the faith element of the FBO and therefore neutralises any power dynamic associated with rituals or references to faith. Consequently, she was the only staff member that I spoke to at CFSS that regularly prayed with her clients, despite the fact – or rather because of the fact – that she has no formal faith position but still acknowledges the importance of addressing the whole person, including their spiritual wellbeing.

I put my interpretation of this situation to another staff member and asked if the “to pray or not to pray” conundrum was motivated by a power imbalance of sorts. She responded that, as a Christian working for a Christian agency, although she prayed for her clients, she rarely prayed with them. “I feel that this isn’t the way that we should be doing it. I don’t want to be known as trying to make this person go to a particular church. Probably that is correct. They don’t know what I do and what I believe, but I pray for all of my clients.”

Both with regard to the relationship between CFSS and the Catholic Church and in the observations relating to the staff’s prayer practices with clients, there is a clear tension between the motivations of faith and values. This tension in the role that faith plays in the provision of social services and client engagement was also a topic of discussion in the other faith-permeated case study. Like CFSS, The Salvation Army has a close, formal relationship with the church which is at times strained and difficult to define in practical terms.
The Salvation Army (TSA) is an international organisation which has been fighting “poverty and social and spiritual distress in New Zealand” since 1883. William and Catherine Booth began the organisation in 1865 in East London where William Booth, a Methodist minister, concerned about the poor and disadvantaged in their community, would preach to those who had been rejected by the traditional churches. Many joined his practical, grassroots movement. These meetings took place in “dance halls, bowling alleys, and outdoors.”

Named “The Salvation Army” in 1878, the military metaphor inspired its role in “fighting the injustices of society and in bringing people to understand God.” It also led to the use of a military rank structure to demark roles within the organisation, along with the requisite uniforms and insignia. In his autobiographical work, William Booth describes his engagement with those “wandering gaunt and hunger-stricken through the streets” and how their plight had motivated him:

> During this time I am thankful that I have been able, by the good hand of God upon me, to do something in mitigation of this class, and to bring not only heavenly hopes and earthly gladness to the hearts of multitudes of these wretched crowds, but also many material blessings, including such commonplace things as food, raiment, home, and work, the parent of so many other temporal benefits. And thus many poor creatures have proved Godliness to be “profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come.” These results have been mainly attained by spiritual means. I have boldly asserted that whatever his peculiar character or circumstances might be, if the prodigal would come home to his Heavenly Father, he would find enough and to spare in the Father’s house to supply all his need both for this world and the next.

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28 The Salvation Army International, “Introduction”. The Salvation Army utilises a range of pseudo military terminology to describe roles and responsibilities within the organisation. A “soldier” is a member of the church, an “officer” is an ordained minister, and a “Corps” is a church.
Today TSA operates in more than 130 countries and is a well-known humanitarian and social service organisation. Proclaiming a continuation of the foundational mission of TSA, their international website declares that “the same spirit of putting the gospel into action as in those early days carries on.”  

Legally TSA operates within New Zealand as The Salvation Army New Zealand Group, which comprises The Booth College of Mission Foundation Fund, The Edmund and Maud Sanderson Jeff Charitable Trust, The Salvation Army New Zealand, and The Salvation Army New Zealand Trust. The Officer’s Superannuation Scheme operates as a separate charitable organisation which is not part of this group. The 2018 Annual Report Summary specifies that TSA has 2,303 full time and part time staff and over 4,500 volunteers. The total revenue of the group reported in 2018 was $161 million. Of this income, $56.5 million (35%) came via the provision of goods and services, $38.7 million (24%) from donations and grants, $43.6 million (27%) from non-exchange transaction, and the remainder of their income came from investments and other exchange transactions. Individual financial returns of the group members are not submitted, so no further breakdown is possible. However, the operational entity under which the Community Ministries of TSA operate also includes all religious activities and services. Consequently, using the group financial returns is likely to provide a reasonable estimation of the proportions of revenue for The Salvation Army New Zealand. These financial returns reveal that less than 50% of their income comes from government sources. Although it is not possible to determine exactly what income is derived from government contracts, if the entirety of the income from the provision of goods and services was funded by the government, this only represents 35% of the total income of TSA. Given that only a lesser portion of their overall funding comes from government or external contracts, they are not beholden to other agencies in the same way that the other FBOs in this study are. Consequently, they may experience a degree of freedom to make decisions about

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33 The Salvation Army, “Annual Return Summary”,
practice and culture autonomously without fear of financial repercussions, freedom which the other FBOs do not enjoy.

The entity structure statement on the New Zealand charities register states: “The Salvation Army New Zealand encompasses all activities of The Salvation Army in New Zealand and is administered under powers of attorney issued by ‘The General of The Salvation Army’ being a corporation sole under the terms of The Salvation Army Act 1980 (United Kingdom).”35 In addition to ensuring that all activities of TSA in New Zealand, both spiritual and social, are carried out by a single entity, this statement ensures a legal organisational connection to The Salvation Army International. This is made more explicit within the charity rules, which are unusual in that they contain only a statutory declaration by the local Territorial Commander,36 followed by the inclusion in full of The Salvation Army Act 1980 (United Kingdom). This document will be explored more comprehensively below.

The ethos of combining practical programmes with spiritual practices is reflected in the statement made by the outgoing General of The Salvation Army International, General Andre Cox: “God has placed us in a community.... We can’t wait for people to come to us, we need to get out and reach them.”37 The international mission statement of TSA is “to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in his name without discrimination.”38 The integration of faith and social practice is made even more explicit within the New Zealand Territorial mission statement: “Caring for people, transforming lives and transforming society through God in Christ by the Holy Spirit’s power.”39

Within New Zealand TSA operates as part of the New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa Territory and has its territorial headquarters based in Wellington. Within New Zealand there are four Divisions: Northern, Midlands, Central, and Southern. The participants for this study came from the Northern and Midlands Divisions. The Northern Division comprises Auckland and Northland, and the Midlands Division encompasses Waikato in the North to an east-west

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36 Military writing conventions require that rank, appointments (posts), and units (component organisational structures) be capitalised. I have complied with this convention.
39 The Salvation Army, “Mission Statement”. 
line through New Plymouth, Napier, and Hastings in the South. The Salvation Army is a faith-centered organisation in accordance with Sider and Unrah’s typology.  

**Online Presence: Keeping the Mission Central**

The website of TSA is extensive. Just as the structure of the agency is legally unified as a single entity despite the broad range of activities in which they engage, the primary website similarly contains all TSA activities, acting as a hub from which to navigate to the various departments, programmes, and resources of the organisation. In order to limit the scope of enquiry and concentrate the investigation, I focused on the main homepage and sites linked from the homepage which related to vision and values or identity, as well as those which related to their Community Ministries. Additionally, I surveyed TSA’s social media presence with particular emphasis on content from the Midlands and Northern Divisions specifically.

The homepage of TSA has a large scrolling banner in the centre of the page which contains pictures and links to various services, articles, and opportunities. These include a celebration of 40 years providing education and unemployment services; a picture of a man and a women, each holding a small child (see Figure 5.4), with a link containing the text “we are here to help” overlaid which directs the visitor to their “Food, Clothing and Furniture” assistance page; a picture of a contemporary church with the word “Jesus” projected on the screen in the background and raised hands in the foreground, with a link titled “Come and worship with us”; a picture of a Salvation Army officer holding a hand written sign stating, “For some kiwis, all they want for Christmas is enough to get by,” with a link to “Support our Christmas Appeal”; an advertisement for drug, alcohol, and gambling recovery services; an advertisement for family stores with a link to “Find your closest Family Store”; and an advertisement and link for the “State of our Communities Report 2018.”

Of the items scrolling on the homepage banner, the 40 year celebration of education and unemployment was the only item which was not accessible from one of the other menus or sub-menus on the homepage. Clicking on this image led to a page titled “40 years of mission.” In addition to providing a chronology of their training initiatives in New Zealand from 1883 through to their first formal partnership with the government in 1978 with their community work schemes and onto the present day, this page also explains how these programmes contribute to the overarching mission of TSA. “Although the service has evolved over the years to meet

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40 See Appendix C.
education trends and employment needs, the motivation of ‘transforming lives’ has been the constant over the decades.\textsuperscript{43} Referencing the origin story of TSA, the initiatives of William Booth in establishing a match factory and a number of other industries are presented as examples of the way that TSA has sought to provide work opportunities for the poor and unskilled so that they might work for fair pay. The clear inference from this page is that the activities of education and employment that TSA offer in New Zealand today are directly connected to the foundational ethos of the organisation and contribute to the fulfilment of the mission of caring for people, transforming lives, and reforming society.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{The Salvation Army website image - mission\textsuperscript{44}}
\end{figure}

Returning to the homepage, below the large scrolling banner there is a brief statement about TSA headed, “We are no ordinary army.”\textsuperscript{45} Consisting of only three sentences, the statement references the history of the agency in New Zealand, outlines the services they provide, and concludes with the statement that they are “committed to [the] mission of caring for people, transforming lives and reforming society.”\textsuperscript{46} Following this statement, an interactive map of New Zealand allows the user to locate TSA locations throughout New Zealand and filter for whatever service they are looking for. These include accommodation, alcohol and drug support, church, education and employment, family stores, and welfare services such as food banks. The remainder of the bottom of the homepage contains internal links to upcoming events, local and international TSA news articles, links to social media posts on Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram, and links to external TSA websites such as TSA international.

\textsuperscript{43} The Salvation Army, “40 Years of Mission”.
\textsuperscript{44} The Salvation Army, “Homepage.”
\textsuperscript{45} The Salvation Army, “Homepage”.
\textsuperscript{46} The Salvation Army, “Homepage”.
The main links which allow navigation from the homepage to other services and programmes that TSA offer are contained within six menus across the top of the homepage. These menus remain across the top of the page when navigating to some of the destinations provided, while others open standalone websites with their own sub-menus, most of which are still sub-domains of TSA and are laid out in a similar style to the main homepage. A few of those links take the reader to new domains which are still operated by TSA, but which have standalone websites. The six menus and other links on the homepage link to a total of 60 webpages, many of which contain additional pages and links. On these 60 pages, 10 relate specifically to “church community.” Of the remaining 50 pages, 10 contain overt or clearly implied statements that convey the faith-based values of TSA.

The explanation of TSA’s mission which is provided on the website highlights the need for both spiritual and social programmes, draws a connection with the foundational mission of the organisation, and demonstrates that they formally identify as a church which engages in social service enterprises, not the other way round:

> The Salvation Army is an international movement and an evangelical branch of the Christian church, which expresses its ministry through a balance of spiritual and social programmes. In its founding it was mobilised by God, and in its continuance is totally dependent on God for the power to fulfil its calling. Everything it does is as an offering to the glory of God and for the worship and adoration of God’s name.⁴⁷

The Christian motivation driving the social initiatives is reinforced still further in the explanation of the three core objectives of the mission statement:

> The mission of The Salvation Army in New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga is:
> Caring for people: Salvationists follow the example of Jesus by identifying with the needy, standing alongside them and caring for people in all situations.
> Transforming lives: Salvationists believe that God can transform people and that the resulting wholeness is experienced through belief in Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. This transformation is evidenced in discipleship and commitment.
> Reforming society: Salvationists seek to express the love and power of God in the community. This calls for the challenging of manifestations of evil, injustice and oppression, and for steps aimed at their elimination.⁴⁸

This raises the question of who a “salvationist” is. Do staff members within a Community Ministries service centre constitute “salvationists”? What about adherents within the church who are not uniform wearing “soldiers”? The current Commissioner of the New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa Territory, Andrew Westrupp, wrote a blog article which was linked on the

⁴⁷ The Salvation Army, “Mission Statement”.
⁴⁸ The Salvation Army, “Mission Statement”. The omission of Samoa from this mission is presumably because the TSA presence in Samoa is a very recent development.
website. Titled “The vision for New Zeal,” it contains a list of things that he considers noteworthy of thankfulness within TSA. One of these items is: “Salvationists (meaning everyone, officers, soldiers, adherents and employees) who are overwhelmingly passionate about the mission that God has entrusted to us.”49 Although it is apparent that Community Ministry staff members are included within this definition of “salvationists,” the interviews revealed a disconnection between this view and the way that these staff members viewed themselves. Adherence to this particular interpretation of “caring for people, transforming lives, and reforming society” was similarly disjointed. This will be explored in more detail below.

The “Our Beliefs” page contains the doctrines of TSA. These are also included in the trust rules and will be outlined during the document analysis below. This page also includes the “Soldier’s Covenant,” which contains the doctrinal articles of faith, as well as a list of covenantal promises which the pledging soldier commits to as part of becoming a full member of TSA. Commitment to the Soldier’s Covenant is what demarks “soldiers” from “adherents” within TSA Corps (church). The covenantal promises include commitment to spiritual disciplines, upholding the sanctity of marriage, remaining loyal to church leadership, and being faithful to the purposes of God.50

An explanation for the church content on the TSA website is provided on the “Church Life” page, which states:

Not everyone realises that The Salvation Army is a “church”. One reason is that we work alongside anyone who needs our help and support, without judgement or requiring people to adhere to a Christian worldview. But at the same time, The Salvation Army is motivated and driven by our Christian faith. We want others to experience the peace and purpose that comes from getting to know Jesus.51

In accordance with the mission statement and messaging elsewhere, this statement continues to make overt the claim that the practical, social service initiatives which TSA provides are both available to anyone without discrimination and unashamedly motivated by the Christian faith and a belief that Jesus is the ultimate provider of peace for all. Similarly, the “Early Childhood Education Centre” page contains a statement declaring their Christian motivations: “Salvation Army Early Childhood Centres are an integral part of a holistic ministry to

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families – empowering people, equipping children for life, and offering a life-changing relationship with Jesus.”

The integrated mission of TSA was also reflected in the information on food banks. The imbedded video, which details the need and the success of this service, opens with the presenter stating, “As The Salvation Army, we were based on soup, soap, and salvation. The same thing applies here.” Later in the video she explains, “People come in and we meet them where their first need is, with food. But we help them in other ways too. They build relationships with our staff.” The “soup, soap, and salvation” phrase was repeated by most interviewees and will be discussed below. This strategy of meeting physical needs followed by spiritual ones and the way that the presenter identifies the work of giving food parcels as being a successful part of that foundational strategy, demonstrates the practical application of the mission and its enduring nature.

The influence of the mission statement was also apparent within the “Education and Employment” (E&E) site. The main heading on the homepage of this external website states, “At The Salvation Army Education and Employment we’re passionate about transforming lives.” Their modified TSA logo also contains the sub-heading “Lives Transformed” (see Figure 5.5). A discussion explains that “E&E shares The Salvation Army’s DNA, and is a major contributor in the efforts to achieve the Territory’s mission.” It also explains that chaplains from TSA are utilised to provide holistic support to students and their families. However, specific mentions of faith are omitted.

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54 The Salvation Army, “Food Banks”.
56 Education and Employment, “Home”.
A publications page provides access to Annual Reports, the Together Newsletter, and War Cry magazine, which will be discussed below. The media release link navigates to an external site called “Scoop,” which appears to provide a platform for media outlets to access various media releases from a range of organisations. The Salvation Army has a single paragraph profile on this site which states, “The Salvation Army is an international movement and an evangelical branch of the Christian Church that expresses its ministry through a range of spiritual and social programmes.”\textsuperscript{58} Despite the fact that every media release produced by TSA in 2018 related to social matters, their profile clearly claims that Christian faith is the impetus for their social action. Similarly, the page dedicated to TSA’s Moral and Social Issues Council declares that it “helps The Salvation Army to think about significant moral, religious and social issues.”\textsuperscript{59} The fact that a single entity creates policy that addresses both social and religious issues is consistent with the mission and the theme reflected in the messaging of the remainder of the website.

Whether or not all volunteers understand the strategic intent of the agency is not certain from the online material. The fact that there are no references to faith within the volunteer application forms indicates that there may not be any serious effort to “filter out” most of those who may not support or adhere to the mission and values of TSA.\textsuperscript{60} However, the information provided on the “Career Opportunities” page suggests that adherence to the wider values of TSA is considered more important for employees. “Career Opportunities” is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} Education and Employment, “Home”.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Scoop, “The Salvation Army,” <http://info.scoop.co.nz/The_Salvation_Army_New_Zealand> (14 Jan 2019).
\end{itemize}
positioned as a sub-page of the “About Us” menu. Consequently, when a visitor navigates to the page, a menu appears on the left which includes the mission statement and beliefs described above. For a potential employee of TSA, finding out about the organisation would be an important first step and the location of this page makes finding out about the core Christian values of the agency very easy.

The introduction on the “Career Opportunities” page states, “Our workplaces are based on our Christian mission of caring for people, transforming lives and reforming society. Applicants should therefore show an ability to identify with the mission and values of The Salvation Army.” The specific job vacancies also provide additional information about TSA and their faith convictions. The list of vacancies includes ministry roles, which specify that they are open only to “applicants that are active soldiers.” An advertisement for a “Community Ministries Team Leader,” a management position within TSA’s social services, states, “We seek to constantly find new and innovative ways to care for people, transform lives and reform society, through the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” Despite this role being within their social services, this position is described as a “ministry position.” The person specification states that the candidate will be a “committed soldier of The Salvation Army ... with relevant ministry experience and experience in some level of Corps leadership.” In contrast, a role for a retail assistant in a family store made no reference to faith or ministry. Instead, the description explained that the “stores operate to fund the mission of the Corps.” Additionally, a footer appears on every job description despite its nature:

The Salvation Army is a worldwide evangelical Christian church and human service provider. It is committed to caring for people, transforming lives and reforming society – all through the love of God shown in Jesus. The successful applicant should therefore show an ability to identify with the mission and values of The Salvation Army.

Although not precluding those who do not share the Christian faith of the organisation, the job descriptions allow TSA to ensure that their employees, particularly those in strategic positions, support and promote their mission.

64 The Salvation Army, “Community Ministries Team Leader.”
The Salvation Army also has a presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram social media platforms. They have almost ten times as many followers on Facebook as on either of the other platforms. Although the content is not identical across the sites, the national organisation utilises all three platforms to communicate social service messages, appeals and articles. Religious content is also included in these same feeds. A 2019 New Year message from General Brian Peddle was summarised and linked on their Facebook feed.\(^{66}\) This message stressed the importance of making the mission the priority:

> I believe we need to be ready for what God wants to do with us and through us.... This is a call to prayer, a call to holiness and a call to be “battle-ready” now. There is an urgency to this call that cannot be ignored. Men, women and children need Jesus.... This is a call to serve, a call to worship and a call to confidence in the gospel. The two-fold objectives of “preaching the gospel of Jesus” and “meeting human needs without discrimination” are central to our international mission statement.... We must ensure these are our missional priority – our way of life. We must be ambassadors for Christ.\(^{67}\)

Religious motivation for TSA’s practical mission is also presented on Twitter and Instagram. On 13 January 2019, TSA retweeted a post from General Brian Peddle which quoted John 15:5 followed by his own paraphrase of the verse as it relates to TSA: “God is with us, no need to go it alone”\(^{68}\) (see Figure 5.6).

![General Brian Peddle's tweet](https://www.instagram.com/p/BqvK6k_hqeG/)

**Figure 5.6 The Salvation Army General's tweet\(^{69}\)**

By nature of the platform, Instagram lends itself to short inspirational quotes and graphical messaging. Social needs are communicated through pictures of people holding signs with messages on them, like “Food to feed my children.”\(^{70}\) Accompanying these pictures are stories of the individuals featured, along with an appeal for donations. Spiritual encouragement is provided through the inclusion of inspirational quotes and Bible verses,


\(^{69}\) Twitter, The Salvation Army.

such as 1 Cor 13:13: “So now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”\textsuperscript{71} This verse is accompanied with the hash tag #quoteoftheday.

At the time of this research, a number of the local Corps and service centres have Facebook profiles. Hamilton City and Glen Eden also have Instagram pages, but these are administered specifically by the Corps and feature church content almost exclusively. The Facebook pages of Hamilton City\textsuperscript{72} and Auckland City\textsuperscript{73} contain local information and posts, and the inclusion of both social service and religious content, which is evident within TSA’s national profile, is replicated. With around 700 and 400 followers respectively, social media does not appear to be a significant method of communication at a local level. Each of their profiles identify them as religious organisations, although the Auckland City profile also specifies that they are also a charity organisation, where Hamilton City omits this. The Auckland City profile also includes a slight variation of the full mission statement, while Hamilton City makes no reference of the mission and instead notes that TSA was established in 1883. Despite these small variations, the content of the feeds demonstrates the same mix of religious and social service content which was observed throughout the various profiles.

The online presence of TSA presents a message which is both consistent and mission-centric. The same two objectives – meeting human needs without discrimination and preaching the gospel – permeate almost every facet of their communication. The way in which TSA presents themselves online leaves little ambiguity as to what their objectives are and what motivates them as an organisation. This image from the “Church Resources” section on the website graphically represents this clarity of mission and purpose (see Figure 5.7):

\textsuperscript{71} Instagram, “salvationarmynzfts,” <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bq8mu5Wh6ss/> (14 Jan 2019).
\textsuperscript{72} Facebook, “Hamilton City Salvation Army,” <https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonCitySalvationArmy/> (14 Jan 2019).
\textsuperscript{73} Facebook, “Auckland City Salvation Army,” <https://www.facebook.com/AucklandCitySalvationArmy/> (14 Jan 2019).
Document Analysis

As a consequence of the strong and consistent messaging found within the online content, I felt that reporting the same findings in various documents and publications would be redundant. Consequently, I choose to limit the number of publications which I reported on to those with strategic importance and those in which I noted any inconsistency from the prevailing narrative to date. There is a risk that this leaves the impression that TSA’s documents deviate from the prevailing narrative found in the online content. While the strategic documents are largely consistent in the values and mission which they espouse, the reader should bear in mind that the two documents included in the analysis due to their inconsistent messaging are relatively insignificant publications. The documents included in this analysis are the trust deed, the 2018 Annual Report, Together Newsletter, and a bequest brochure.

The Salvation Army trust rules are found on the charities register, where the charitable purposes of the trust are stated. Within New Zealand, The Charitable Trusts Act 1957 requires every charitable trust to provide a “trust deed” or “rules” to the Registrar of Incorporated Societies. This is the constitutional document of the trust that sets out how the board is to

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75 The foundational legal documents of trusts which are registered with charities services are interchangeably referred to as “deeds,” “rules,” or “constitutions.”
operate and how the trust property is to be administered. The trust rules of TSA differ from the foundational documents of many other charities. Rather than containing the usual purposes and rules for the agency, the TSA trust rules consist of a statutory declaration from the Territorial Commander at the time that the trust was established in 2008, followed by the inclusion of the Salvation Army Act 1980 (United Kingdom) in full. The statutory declaration consists of guidance for winding up and nonprofit policies. The Act includes a “Foreword by the General” which explains the origins of their constitution “originating in Christian Mission days, developed through a series of deed polls culminating in the Salvation Army Act 1931.” The conclusion of the foreword creates context for the use of this revised constitutional document:

“A constitution, however, is no more than a legal framework within which a movement like ours can grow and develop. The heart of the Army beats within the lives of its soldiers and officers as they carry the imperishable message of the gospel to the needy world around them.”

The provisions of the Act set out roles and responsibilities relating to the offices of the General and Commissioners, particularly as they pertain to stewardship of resources. The schedules of the Act cover a number of procedural topics such as resignation, vacation of office, and the powers of the High Council. Most notably however, the first schedule of the Act contains the “Religious Doctrines of the Army.” Generally mirroring the major Christian creeds, the eleven point schedule includes statements on the divine inspiration of scripture, the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ, original sin, the sufficiency of Christ’s salvific work, justification by grace through faith, repentance, resurrection and judgement. The significance of the inclusion of these doctrines, as with the inclusion of the Act itself within the rules document, is that it creates a foundation for the agency which is inextricably connected to both its historical roots and the beliefs and values which first motivated TSA’s establishment.

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79 The Salvation Army, “Rules.”
The Annual Report 2018 is available through the website publications page. It opens with a bicultural statement and an outline of the mission, followed by a note from the Territorial Commander, who emphasises the goal of being and expressing the “radical love of God that transforms lives, mind, body, and soul and changes the world.” Divisional reports are also included within this document. However, where the opening of the document emphasises the mission and purpose of TSA, the reports of the New Zealand divisional commanders are less compelling in this regard. Rather than focusing on the mission and their role within it, these reports focus largely on the Divisions’ achievements over the year. These accomplishments relate primarily to social service and Community Ministry activities. The Central and Southern divisional reports mention the local Corps, but this is secondary to the social service achievements. The Northern Division report is noteworthy in that there is no reference to the Corps or any religious activities. Conversely, the Midlands Division report emphasises their strategic focus on unifying the Corps and Community Ministries over the year. The implications of this are expanded further within the discussion on mission below. The emphasis on Community Ministries within these reports left an impression that results from the provision of social services are more quantifiable and tangible, and are therefore easier to report on. It may be that those with more involvement with strategic planning and direction within the Territory are more likely to emphasise less tangible, values-driven results, as reflected by the Territorial Commander’s report. This observation left me wondering if the divisional reports mirrored these individual commanders’ focus within their roles, or if they were simply a product of the requirement to provide a report? Additionally, the variation between the reports in the degree to which they included religious achievements suggests that the cohesion of the spiritual and practical missional objectives within a Division may be strongly influenced by the commander of that region.

The “Publications” page on the website includes the Spring 2018 edition of the “Together” newsletter. The introduction of this newsletter states that it is intended to provide an “insight into the work we do in the community.” It consists of recent stories of clients who have received assistance from TSA and experienced significant improvements in their lives as a result. The Spring 2018 edition also includes an historical story of the “donut girls” of World War 1. Given the purpose of the publication, it is not surprising that there is no mention of

faith or the religious motivations of TSA. However, the public relations officer also has a short column in this newsletter. In this column, the author noted that the theme of this issue of “Together” is “generations,” and accordingly references the contributions of TSA’s founder, William Booth. Rather than emphasising Booth’s focus on meeting spiritual needs and human needs without discrimination, the public relations officer instead only shares how the founder revolutionised concepts of equality and fair trade. Given the consistency of all other comments from those in strategic positions within TSA in other publications and online, all of which contain at least some reference to the mission of TSA or to their historical motivations of meeting both spiritual and physical needs, this omission is striking.

An additional document that does not communicate the social and spiritual aspects of TSA’s mission is a bequest brochure. This is downloadable from the website and is titled, “If you have the Will we have the way.” Within the 24 page document, there is no reference to faith except for within one of the anecdotal stories of a recipient of TSA’s care in which a career criminal became a Christian as part of their journey of rehabilitation. Instead, this document focuses strongly on evidence-based results and anecdotal success stories.

Despite these minor examples where TSA’s documents do not proactively emphasise their dual mission, the overwhelming message of TSA is consistent and clear. Just as the online profile revealed a mission-centric agency focussed on meeting human needs without discrimination and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the documents reinforce this same observation. However, I was unsure how these idealised strategies would translate in practice. Would the staff in the service centres share the same convictions and motivations? During the recruitment process I had been made aware that not all staff members are Christians. This was reflected in the job advertisements discussed above. How then would these staff, who did not share the faith of the agency, fulfil the third of the four key components of the Community Ministries Model of Care: “Spirit – people are offered prayer, pastoral care and opportunities to participate in faith communities” (see Figure 5.8)?

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Interviews: “We Agree on What, But Not Always on Why”

In order to address these questions of how faith influences practice within TSA, I interviewed ten participants in total. Four interviewees were from the Northern Division, five were from the Midlands Division, and I interviewed the Territorial Director for Community Ministries. In addition to the Territorial Director, the interviewees were the respective Divisional Directors of Community Ministries, two Team Leaders who oversee service centres, a Corps Officer, and four social workers or counsellors. One of the counsellors was a volunteer and the rest of the interviewees were paid staff members.

A Church or a Social Service Entity?

The degree to which TSA is a church or a social service entity, and how these two facets of their mission mesh, proved to be a significant topic of the interviews. In contrast to the unity and cohesion presented in the online and printed messaging, every interviewee noted a complexity and tension between these roles. One Christian staff member noted,

The short hand [of our mission] is caring for people, transforming lives, reforming society. That’s those three things. And I think those are the things that we all agree on. The, “In God, through Christ, by the Holy Spirit’s power,” that’s the
Christian side of it, which I would agree that’s how and why I do this. But our non-Christian staff obviously wouldn’t come from that perspective. But they still meet us at caring for people, transforming lives and reforming society.

A manager shared a story of a staff member who was “very evangelistic.” This created a tension for her as she settled into her role within Community Ministries.

She’s had to resolve within herself where the limits of that are, in terms of her work. That, yes, what you do on Sunday, who you are as a Christian outside of work time is your own thing, but who you are as a Christian within work time is constrained by the fact that not everybody’s gonna agree and that’s OK.

However, the tension is not just in the degree to which it is appropriate to introduce faith conversations into a professional social service context. The lack of involvement from Corps members (members of the Salvation Army congregations) in the TSA’s Community Ministries also appears to be a challenge. A Team Leader described this:

Look, the whole of the Salvation Army, well a lot of the Salvation Army … see Community Ministries as separate from the Corps; there’s no bridge appearing. People aren’t going. This is an autonomous place from the Corps. Ideally, they want people to come in here off the street, us to look after them, nurture them, and send them off to the Corps or be involved in something over there. It doesn’t happen because I think originally the Corps or the church was the Community Ministries. You go to the church and the church people help you, and I’ve said to them as well, ideally that’s what you need. You either need your Corps people, church people running this place, or you need to be running it from the church.

Both Divisional Directors spoke of the importance of integration between the religious activities of TSA and their social services. One stated:

So we’re not a church or a social service, we’re a church and a social service. So how do we come together? [The Territorial leader] said, ‘We get thousands of people walk through our doors every week, throughout our family stores, our food banks and what have you. They just don’t necessarily come through our churches, so how can our churches then connect with the social service?’

However, it was primarily those in management positions who discussed the tension between the two major arms of TSA’s mission in these terms. Consequently, it was at this level that I found a strategic initiative had been undertaken to address the issue.

The Midlands Division is in the process of intentionally attempting to promote an increased degree of unity and cohesion between the Corps and social services. They identified geographical dislocation of the service centres from the Corps as a significant influence of fragmentation and have been taking steps to co-locate these facilities where possible. The dispersion of population and the corresponding service centre locations also makes this more feasible within the Midlands Division. In the Northern Division, particularly in Auckland, the population is much denser and as a result the service centres are larger and more specialised.
Consequently they are more often located in standalone facilities. However, in the Midlands Division, resources are spread more thinly across a large geographical area and to more dispersed communities. As a result the service centres are more likely to be able to be co-located with the Corps.

This initiative is being driven by the Divisional Commanders of Midlands,\(^{88}\) and the Divisional Director of Community Ministries is working to support these changes. She stated,

> Our social services, our Community Ministries are very much located in churches, in the Corps. A large part of the focus for my role is supporting integration. How are they bringing together what they do in the church side, with what’s done in the community, because for a long time, through the history of the Army, administratively those things were managed separately and we’re working to bring them back together.

This strategy was made explicit within the Midland Division report in the 2018 Annual Report. The opening statement declared, “The Division has been working hard this year to strengthen the relationship between our churches and social services.”\(^{89}\) It goes on to state that it is in the growing relationship between our churches and the people who come to our social services where we have seen the most ground-breaking transformations of people’s lives. Although we meet need without discrimination and without compulsion to hear the gospel message, we have seen numerous examples of people’s lives being changed when they have been welcomed into a community of faith after first coming to us for basic physical needs to be met.\(^{90}\)

The result of these efforts to develop a sharing of both the physical work space and TSA’s mission and vision is that the staff members within the service centres are slowly beginning to feel an increasing level of connection and unity with the church. The Team Leader at the Rotorua service centre shared about a morning drop-in time that she runs mid-week when anyone is welcome to come and have a drink and a biscuit and just talk, building relationships. The Corps members were invited to attend and she now has a lady from the church who comes in and helps and the Corps Officer (CO, the pastor/minister) comes along regularly. This Team Leader also talked about intentionally running courses in the church facilities:

> Every now and again we’ll have “Well Women” courses at the Corps because I’m wanting them to come in, feel more comfortable about the surroundings because it’s not going to be foreign to them if they want to go at a later date. So they go with the group and a purpose. They go there every week. They see the building. They see where it is. That’s my way of trying to, if people want to go they’re going to feel more comfortable, they’ll see the CO’s here, so there’ll be someone

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\(^{88}\) The interviewee clarified that this was not their original idea, but they informed me that the Divisional Commanders, a husband and wife team, were “pushing it strongly” and it had become “a whole team thing.”


they know, a face that they see, not the facilitator of the programme, but they will see them.

Just as the Team Leader had encouraged a strategic level of engagement in making the two components of TSA’s mission more unified, I also interviewed a social worker from this same service centre. She did not profess a Christian faith. However, in accordance with both this divisional strategy of increased integration and the Community Ministries Model of Care requirement to offer prayer and pastoral support, she spoke of referring clients to the CO for pastoral care and prayer. She also encouraged clients to attend church, although she admitted that this was primarily motivated by a desire that they find a place of belonging rather any sense of religious motivation.

While the changes within the Midlands Division reflect the international and Territorial strategy of emphasising integration and unity within TSA, the initiatives were driven by the Divisional Commanders and those managers and officers under their command who took up the cause. Many interviewees commented that the extent to which faith influenced practice was dependent on the individuals within the centres and particularly the site managers. This view, along with the significance of co-location of the Corps and service centres, were reflected in the responses of a Team Leader in the Northern Division. She stated:

I’ve worked on two different sites that are very different. Again, it comes back to the leadership on the site. I’ve come from [one site], where social services and the Corps are separate, and I’ve now gone to a site where the Corps and social services are together. I’ve got two different views. I still come back to who’s leading and if that allows whatever beliefs to come through from the Salvation Army.... I prefer the mix because that means that the Salvation Army’s view is there, that the faith is there. If I go back to [the separated site] that was purely about the work with a bit of the faith in the background, we know that it’s here, but no one talks heavily about the faith when we’re at meetings and things like that.

Where the strategic challenge of an integrated approach to the mission of the TSA was articulated by those in management positions, the frontline staff understood it in concept but they seemed to be less concerned or influenced by the observed dissonance. One phrase that most of the interviewees referenced was “soup, soap, and salvation.” This phrase contains within it the foundational ethos of TSA and reveals the importance of both social service and religious activities. A Team Leader explained:

One of the sayings from way back is “Soup, Soup, Salvation.” So the Salvation Army believed you had to earn the right to talk to people about the gospel. If they are naked, hungry, then how can you talk them about Christ and walk off? You need to meet their needs first. Hence, the Salvation Army is seen as an organisation that does a lot of good, but a lot of people don’t necessarily know it
has a faith background. People still don’t know that the Salvation Army is a church, a lot of the community, they’ve got no idea.

However, despite the strategic importance of this phrase for articulating the missional values of TSA, for the frontline staff, the issue was couched in more pragmatic terms as it related to the role of faith within the provision of their service. A volunteer counsellor noted that “because I’m not an employee, I don’t have all that structure around me, I kind of run myself. So, I haven’t integrated myself into the formal structure of Salvation Army.” She admitted that the motivation behind TSA’s non-judgemental value of people was “because that’s how Jesus was,” but did not personally identify with this view. She said she loves working with TSA because “it enabled me to express parts of myself that can’t be expressed in other areas of my life. So just being able to give to other people unconditionally is just part of my makeup. And that’s very difficult to do in mainstream society.” Another interviewee noted that where her previous career had been nursing, she realised that it was really the “spiritual nursing” that she enjoyed and it was that which she brought into her role as a counsellor. Other comments were more overtly aligned with the mission of TSA, but many still lacked the same strategic approach that the managers articulated. One such interviewee declared, “For me, I live my life to prove that God exists. I love Jesus Christ. What drives my why is him, and he’s about the people.”

While I was sitting in a waiting area at a service centre prior to carrying out an interview, a client who was waiting for a food parcel asked what I was doing. After a brief conversation he stated “Without Christianity there wouldn’t be a Salvation Army.” Although his perception is unlikely to be held universally by TSA clients, the clarity and simplicity of this correlation in his mind was striking to me and contrasted with many of the responses from staff, which were often laced with nuance and tension.

**Ministry by Proxy**

Due to the very positive public perception of TSA as a social service agency, I was intrigued to find out about the degree to which the Corps members – “soldiers” – felt and claimed ownership of the Community Ministries. I asked a number of the interviewees how they felt Corps members viewed them as social service providers and vice versa; was there a sense that they were part of the same team? Without exception, all those that I asked responded that their perception was that the church members viewed them and their work as part of the church. This position is consistent with the formal statements of mission and belief both online and in their other written material. It is also consistent with a statement made by
Sharyn Saggs, a Salvation Army CO who was interviewed by EastLife magazine for their April 2017 issue. In this interview Saggs states, “The Howick Community is very supportive of The Salvation Army as a charity but remain unaware that we are a church too. But the reality is that our strength in caring for people, through initiatives such as our food bank, come first and foremost as a result of our faith.”\textsuperscript{91} In this response, “our” certainly encompasses both the church and those offering social services. The Corps Officer that I interviewed also indicated that she felt like all salvationists would consider the social service initiatives of TSA as part of their identity. However, one of the Divisional Directors spoke of a feeling of “ministry by proxy” for those within the Corps. “Someone will say ‘I’m part of The Salvation Army,’ and someone will say ‘Oh wonderful. You are so good!’ But [what they mean] is not really what that person does.” She went on to explain, “I think that there is a sense that, yes, we’re proud of who we are as The Salvation Army, but there’s also a consciousness that we don’t really know a lot of that, and we’re not directly involved.” The Corps Officer I interviewed supported this observation: “My concern is that we have unwittingly disempowered our congregations from having that ministry and from being challenged by what that means for me to be sleeves rolled up in that ministry.” However, she clarified that this is a result of the structural challenges of TSA rather than as a result of any teaching or theological conviction:

The Salvation Army, in its teaching and challenge, has always been pretty full-on when it comes to the challenge of one’s own responsibility to share Jesus with your neighbour and with others. You’d be pretty hard pressed to be a part of a Salvation Army congregation over the years and feel like you can get out of that.

When I asked these same interviewees if they felt that the Community Ministries were part of the Corps, they were less certain. A manager noted that “many of our staff haven’t felt part of The Salvation Army. They work for The Salvation Army during the week, but they’ll say things like, ‘Oh well, I’m not a salvationist.’” One interviewee felt that this had something to do with the confusing hierarchy and pseudo-military structure:

Most people don’t [feel affiliated with the church]. Because I know them I do. I feel that I have had a long relationship with them, but these guys here have been working here for a few years. They still look at the structure, how it’s set up, they still don’t get how The Salvation Army works.

While some individuals personally identified as part of the church, even they felt that there was a distance between the Corps members and officers and the work that took place within the service centres.

The Role of the Origin Story

Many interviewees noted a connection to the origin story of TSA with regard to what they do on a day-to-day basis and almost all knew the foundational history in some detail. A Team Leader stated that “the ideals haven’t changed, because you hear of a lot of people still quoting William and Catherine Booth.” One interviewee had only been working for TSA for three months and was not a member of their church, yet she knew the origin story and summarised William Booth’s motivation for founding TSA:

I just feel like he really was desperate to have the reality of Jesus, have the reality of the gospel outworked in his community so that people would be loved, would be served, and know that it was from this basis of Jesus and bringing His love to them in a very practical way. You can’t really argue with that.

The origin story, and the principles and mission which are encapsulated within it, play a significant role in the culture and motivation of TSA. The Corps Officer I interviewed stated, “I think understanding how we were birthed is really important, and I mean our story, because that original story is so inspirational that it tends to be that real heart of the cause and the mission that inspires people still today.” The relevance of TSA’s origin story was particularly evident for the Divisional Directors and the Corps Officer. One Director outlined the historical story of William and Catherine Booth and their social initiatives. He concluded by stating,

The greatest impact is salvation, the relationship with God through Jesus Christ.... That’s the context of the form of what we work in today.... Salvation is a complete word. I believe it means spiritual salvation of course, but also salvation from hunger, salvation from addiction, salvation from isolation and loneliness. All of these things can be offered within the Kingdom.

However, the motivation of the origin story was not universal. The Territorial Manager for Community Ministries did not mention the history of the agency. However, he was strongly drawn by the values and the theology which are rooted in the foundation of the agency. Asked if he felt like the mission is self-propagating as it attracts people who are strongly socially minded with a faith conviction, he replied,

Absolutely! I spend a lot of time doing recruitment for different roles and often what we hear from people, even non-Christians, they go “Oh! I’m passionate about this, I’m passionate about that and I see that the Salvation Army is a vehicle for me to be able to do that.” We go “Yep! Awesome.” We’ll recruit [that enthusiasm], because it’s fulfilling our mission. But at the same time we’re releasing people to do [what they are passionate about].

Other staff members demonstrated less engagement with both the origin story and its inherent theology, but still espoused a strong affiliation to the values of the agency. A counsellor stated, “What do I know about The Salvation Army? Only since working there have I learnt
about William Booth.... What do I know about them? Not a lot really in the grand scheme of things.” However, she appreciated working in an environment where the truly needy could access services in safety, and without judgement. Another staff member couldn’t remember the founder but thought that the origin was “similar to Barnardo’s” where he could see that there were gaps in being able to provide for those least fortunate. I think that’s what prompted him to begin.” It is noteworthy that, with the exception of the Territorial Manager, the interviewees who expressed less of a connection with the foundational story of TSA did not profess a personal Christian faith. This suggests that the shared faith motivations, rather than the shared origin story, may have been the primary motivator for those who identified a close practical correlation between the foundations of TSA and their day-to-day work. It is also noteworthy that all interviewees, without exception, either explicitly or implicitly espoused the values of caring for people, transforming lives, and reforming society; they broadly agreed on what their practical social service services should look like, but not why they ought to do it.

A Local Example of Integration

The example provided by one of the Corps Officers of the Hamilton City Corps provided an insight into the influence of the origin story, the role and significance of TSA’s mission, the function of leadership, and the integration of the Corps and Community Ministries. As part of the Midlands Division, she and her husband, who share the leadership role, are strongly focussed on promoting unity. During the interview she pushed back on the idea of building bridges or creating integration between the Corps and Community Ministries, stating that “we see ourselves as one. As much as The Salvation Army still uses terms like ‘Community Ministries’ and ‘Corps,’ we’ve really tried to move away from them.... That language is not terribly helpful. We are all for obliterating the gaps!” This ethos was also reflected in the physical modifications that they are in the process of making at their offices in central Hamilton. Currently there are two sets of doors, side-by-side, which lead into their buildings from the street frontage. One set of doors leads to the Community Ministries, the other leads to the church facilities. The plans, which are in the process of being approved, will see one set of these doors closed off and a single reception area with free refreshments which all staff, salvationists, and clients will utilise. Having personally visited this facility a number of times myself, I commented that when I had come to conduct the interview I had gone to the “church

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92 This a reference to the “Bernardo’s” social service agency which has a strong presence in New Zealand and which was founded by Thomas Bernardo in Britain in the 19th century to care for orphaned children.
side,” only to find that the interviewee’s office was on the “Community Ministries” side. She commented that that said it all: “It’s just not okay!”

The Hamilton City Corps Officer said that the catalyst for this determined focus on unity began with the origin and mission of TSA:

> Understanding how we were birthed is really important.... During my lifetime we’ve been on a journey of coming back around to our roots. We’re on an intentional pathway back to that integrated mission. The integrated mission is what it looked like in the beginning. I think the story is really important because it calls us back to what we’re actually about.

When I asked who was driving this call back to integration, the officer referenced the importance and strength of international connections, the Territorial leadership, and the fact that TSA is a single legal entity within New Zealand. She also commented on the importance of strong leadership: “Where you find an individual or leader who is really passionate about that foundational mission, it comes with a call to have that mission be integrated.... You have to be incessant in terms of your leadership voice, saying this is who we are, this is what we’re about, unapologetic.”

The organisational structure of the Hamilton City site also supports the initiative to have a single integrated mission. The interviewee and her husband have a leadership purview which places all staff and activities carried out on the site under their management. Historically there had been the Corps Officers and a separate Community Ministries Officer. According to the interviewee, the appointment of an officer couple in sole charge across the entire organisation has been “a game-changer.” However, it is also an immense workload to manage this variety of tasks and responsibilities. When I asked about it, the answer provided some explanation as to how the compartmentalisation of Corps from social services had occurred:

> That brings us full circle, because there was a reason why we separated. The reason was the need was so heavy and so intense and so immense that they recognised that, man, we need to specialise in this. So officers actually chose whether they were going to train to be Corps Officers or do social work. There were Social Service Officers. You chose your stream and you went into that stream. And then that’s where you would serve. And it was for good reason. But then you have this danger of – you drift apart.

**Integration and Culture within The Salvation Army**

Although this example of a strategic and intentionally integrated mission is instructive in many ways, it may not be representative of other Corps within New Zealand. The officer I interviewed insisted that there were other Corps which had taken similar steps. Despite my
observations outlined above relating to a perceived lack of cohesion between the Corps and Community Ministries in the Northern Division, the examples that the officer provided of other Corps that were similarly focused on integration were from the Northern Division. This suggests that the variation may be a result of the influence that individual leaders can have within their specific domain of influence.

In addition to potentially providing principles for effective integration within the TSA context, the interview with the Corps Officer revealed some of the practical influencing factors which have encouraged separation. However, according to the research of Australian Jason Davies-Kildea, these are not the only factors. In his 2017 Doctoral research, “The Salvation Army and the Social Gospel,” he concludes,

> In addition to the numerous requirements and restriction placed upon services by government contracting, the professionalisation of social work has seen the large-scale withdrawal of both religious professionals and laypeople from the frontlines of service delivery. The changing face of their social ministries has left churches wondering about what is left of their spiritual mission and what role they are now meant to play in society.\(^93\)

Although there are significant correlations between the factors I have identified in the New Zealand context and those which Davies-Kildea outlines from Australia, the experience is not identical. The Territorial Manager I interviewed noted a structural difference between the Australian TSA and that in New Zealand with relation to the legal entity.

> I just spent some time in Australia and they’ve separated a whole bunch, where they’re actually trying to bring things back in.... [In New Zealand], by being the same legal entity, actually I think it does help us to make sure that we are integrating between the two, and the challenges and tension that causes, but there’s still that one drive. We often talk about “We are THE Salvation Army, we’re not a social programme, we’re not a church. We are THE Salvation Army.” And there’s a place for a whole lot of diversity within that.

Regardless of the integration and unity which is promoted by TSA operating as a single legal entity, professionalisation has been experienced within New Zealand just as Davies-Kildea outlined. A social worker must be professionally qualified to operate as a social worker. Counsellors must be similarly trained and qualified. When I put the question of how this has created barriers for integration of social services and the church, the Corps Officer I interviewed clarified that the challenge is broader than I had expressed. “I think we have two issues. I think we have our professionalisation, but we also have our secularisation of our social service work, depending on who we hire to do the work that we’re contracted to do or

that we’ve decided to do.” She expressed that it is “incumbent on the leaders of the day to redress some of these factors,” although she also acknowledged that it is a technically difficult challenge because you are dealing with personnel changes. She advocated for “chasing after higher integrity to our mission.” Effectively this was a call to protect the mission and culture through recruitment practices. One of the Divisional Directors made a related comment:

We haven’t invested a huge amount in training our salvationists to do the things that are needed in our social services, so yes there is a gap. But the filling of the gap, for me is not just about training up salvationists to be social workers and counsellors – although that is something we need to do – but it’s about how do we bring these two arms of who we are together, so that we can bring the best of each and complement for a much more holistic kind of approach.

In essence, the question for these managers is whether employees can fulfil a role in the mission of the agency without entirely subscribing to the theological motivations and personal faith which are critical within it. The management staff each spoke of the ability of an employee to contribute to the overall mission by playing their role within it without necessarily buying into it in its entirety. One also commented that in interviews they would ask applicants what they saw as the benefits of the church working alongside the social services and that their responses were illuminating. “I had one person who said, ‘Well I don’t imagine it would do any harm.’ I thought, ‘Well, I don’t know that that’s really what we’re looking for!”

It is both unrealistic and probably illegal under New Zealand employment law to expect all staff to share the Christian faith of the agency. However, support of the mission remains essential for the health and success of the TSA. As part of their initiative to promote integration, the Hamilton City Corps uses the acronym “C.R.E.E.D” (see Figure 5.9) to encourage their staff to remain mission-centric:

Every person you meet is a contact. We need to build a relationship with them. As part of that we need to educate them what we’re about, what we stand for, and that includes what we believe because that’s part of who we are. And then we believe that if we’ve done all of that really well, a good number of people are going to want to make a decision for Christ. And then they would look at becoming a disciple of Jesus and on it goes.

The Corps Officer clarified that staff are not required to evangelise and disciple, but they are expected to do the first three items to the highest standard, however “when it comes to education, you’re expected to know what you know, and know what you don’t know.” This provides a team approach in which those who are not Christians can still support the mission without compromising their own convictions or being insincere.
A Strong and Cohesive Mission, but Tension Remains

The Salvation Army possesses an overt mission statement, vision and values which are instantiated within their foundational documents and which are consistently communicated both in writing and verbally, and a rich origin story which continues to motivate and provide context to their work. They are successful providers of social services and have earned a very positive public perception since their inception, which they continue to benefit from both financially and as goodwill. The variety of income sources results in financial stability which limits the potential of resource dependence influencing organisational change over time. However, as a result of both their success and the explicit nature of their mission, the challenge of remaining integrated as a single entity which both meets human needs without discrimination and preaches the gospel of Jesus creates tension and is a challenge from which they are unlikely to ever escape. It may be that this tension is necessary for the TSA to remain healthy; it may protect it from becoming unbalanced as a Christian agency which focuses on social ministry. One interviewee referenced a quote from a previous General of TSA and said, “The integration of the mission of The Salvation Army is like a piece of paper where the social mission is one side and the spiritual mission is the other side. If you try to separate them it would just rip and destroy the paper.”

The role of leadership in balancing the two arms of TSA’s mission is extremely influential. Those who are currently focussed on asserting the missional unity of the organisation report positive outcomes which may encourage other leaders within the TSA as they address the same challenges. The report of the Midlands Divisional Commander states:

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94 This small card was provided by the Corps Officer from the Hamilton Central Corps.
The [Midlands] Division has been working hard this year to strengthen the relationship between our churches and social services.... It is in the growing relationship between our churches and the people who come to our social services where we have seen the most ground-breaking transformations of people’s lives. Although we met need without discrimination and without compulsion to hear the gospel message, we have seen numerous examples of people’s lives being changed when they have been welcomed into a community of faith after first coming to us for basic physical needs to be met.\footnote{The Salvation Army, Annual Report 2017-2018, 7.}
Family Works is the third minor case study presented in this research. They are an organisation which provides children and family services nationally within New Zealand. Presbyterian Support New Zealand (PSNZ) is the parent agency of Family Works and they have seven regional organisations which provide operational reach throughout New Zealand. Each regional organisation governs, manages, and operates Family Works services within their region. The PSNZ Annual Report 2017-18 declares that they are “Locally responsive, Nationally supported.”

The history of Family Works has strong faith foundations. They trace their origins to 1884 and “Auckland’s first City Missioner,” a Scotsman named Duncan McPherson who opened orphanages and children’s homes in the Auckland region. He was known for “his forthright personality, exceptional energy and determination to help those in need – based on his fiercely-held humanitarian beliefs and his Christian faith.” Residential care homes and hospitals for the elderly were first established in the 1940s and “Auckland Presbyterian Orphanages and Social Service Organisations” was incorporated as a charitable trust in 1954. In the 1970s family centres were set up to provide community-based support for children and their families. Over time the community centres replaced the residential care for children. The child and family services were named “James Family” in 1999 until a rebrand in 2006, when the name Family Works was adopted. In 2011, “PresCare” was established. PresCare is a partnership between Presbyterian Support and the Presbyterian Church which is intended “to

1 Rather than following the format of introducing the chapter with the classification of the FBO in Sider and Unrah’s schema, for this and the following chapter I have chosen to highlight the dynamic state which the FBO is in. A heading of “Faith Background” would belie the complexity of their situation.
respond to the needs of children, young people and their families.” There are now 40 Family Works service centres around New Zealand offering services which include social work, counselling, parenting education, family violence prevention and safety, mediation and dispute resolution, mentoring and youth support services, foster care, foodbanks and financial capability services. Twelve of those centres are in the Northern region, which ranges from Whakatane in the south to Northland. Family Works Northern was the focus of my investigation.

Due to the organisational autonomy of the regions, the budget and size of Family Works nationally is difficult to determine. In addition to the challenge that regional governance poses to a national analysis of Family Works, each regional entity of Presbyterian Support also adminstrates other agencies, the most significant being Enliven Positive Aging Services. The PSNZ Annual Report 2017-18 includes all regions and both Family Works and Enliven when it presents the overview organisational data. They reported that nationally they had over 4,100 staff, 2,350 volunteers, and had an annual budget of $219 million. A little over two thirds of this income came from Government funding, $34 million from “philanthropic and self funding investment and income,” and $34 million from fee-for-service income. However, a large proportion of both the income and personnel relate to Enliven. Family Works accounts for approximately 400 staff, 390 volunteers, and the 2016-17 Annual Report indicated that 16% of the total expenditure of PSNZ related to Family Works. Presbyterian Support Northern had annual revenue of $45.6 million in 2017, but in addition to Family Works, this income encapsulates Enliven, Lifeline (personal and telephone counselling services), and Shine (a domestic abuse service provider). Income from donations and grants make up only $2.2 million, 4.8% of the total revenue, which is noteworthy when considering the influence of resource dependence and what actors have influence over the agency. The majority of Presbyterian Support Northern’s revenue comes from providing goods and services.

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5 Presbyterian Support Northern, “Our History.”
In the investigation of Family Works Northern I conducted interviews with staff from the Waikato service centre and a board member of the Presbyterian Support Northern board. Early in my recruitment of Family Works to this research in early 2017, I spoke to a manager who informed me of two things which would be significant for my analysis of the agency. He stated that Family Works was in the middle of an organisational change and were redefining some of their values. He also wondered if they should be included in the study at all as they did not consider themselves to be a faith-based organisation any more. Given the range of positions available within Sider and Unruh’s typology of religious social service agencies, and in light of the strong faith foundations upon which it was first established and the ongoing connection with the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, I felt that they had a unique perspective to bring to the research. Given this reassurance, Family Works agreed to participate.

Despite being classified as faith-permeated against the criteria which considers the founding of the agency in Sider and Unruh’s typology, and faith-affiliated in their connection with the Presbyterian Church and selection of board members, the summary of results classified Family Works as a faith-background agency.  

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**Online Presence: A Conspicuous Absence of Faith Content**

Each of the seven regional Family Works organisations has its own website. Given the organisational structure of the Presbyterian Support services, it seemed important that investigation of online material was not limited to the Family Works Northern website. The websites of Family Works New Zealand (FWNZ) and Presbyterian Support Northern were of some significance to the investigation. Content on the FWNZ site is less detailed and is more strategic in nature than the regional iterations. The homepage contains a very broad statement about what Family Works is and the way that they help families, children, parents, and communities. It also contains a map of New Zealand with each of the regions annotated with links to their respective websites. A large banner which dominates the homepage consists of three scrolling pictures, two of children and one of a group of people, presumably a family, holding hands. The images are overlaid with the titles: “Strengthening families to thrive”; “Strong families build strong communities”; and “It’s all about the kids!”  

A linked button titled “read more” appears under each heading and takes the reader to the “What We Do” page. Like the homepage, it contains the same linked map of New Zealand along with some

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14 See Appendix C.
15 Family Works New Zealand, “Homepage.”
more detail of the types of services that Family Works provides.\textsuperscript{16} Links to “Jobs” and “Contact Us” similarly direct the visitor to the specific regional websites. “Media & Publications” invites media looking for comments on issues relating to family wellbeing to contact the FWNZ manager,\textsuperscript{17} and it contains links to a list of reports, research topics, and submissions which FWNZ has been involved in producing. It also includes three years of annual reports, financial statements, and a document titled “Family Works New Zealand - At a Glance.”\textsuperscript{18} This document will be discussed in more detail below.

The “Vision, Mission & Values” page on the FWNZ site provides an insight into the espoused driving motivations and objectives of the agency nationally. The vision statement is that “Aotearoa is the best place in the world to raise our children, our tamariki and young people, our rangatahi\textsuperscript{19}.”\textsuperscript{20} The mission – “We want all children/tamariki to flourish so we work to support them and their families and whānau, and to champion their cause in our communities.” Driving the vision and mission are a set of values which state that they:

- recognise the strengths inherent in everybody
- are accessible and non-discriminating
- are confident and competent to work with people
- operate within a Code of Ethics as defined by their profession
- work with children, young people, families and whānau and individual adults in respectful relationships
- recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi\textsuperscript{21} as the founding document of our nation and for our relationship with Māori, who are ‘tangata whenua’ – the first peoples of the nation
- recognise New Zealand as a bi-cultural nation and a multicultural society.\textsuperscript{22}

Despite the strategic resources and information contained in the FWNZ website, its primary purpose appears to be to direct visitors to the website of their local regional provider.

\textsuperscript{19} Rangatahi is the Māori word for youth.
\textsuperscript{21} The Treaty of Waitangi is a treaty signed between the British Crown and a number of Māori chiefs in 1840. It serves as a foundational document for New Zealand and provides principles for care and engagement with Māori.
\textsuperscript{22} Family Works New Zealand, “Vision, Mission & Values.”
The format of the website of Presbyterian Support Northern, which provides governance for Family Works Northern, is very similar to that of FWNZ. The scrolling images on the homepage have links to pages which describe the activities of the various agencies under their management (Shine, Enliven, Lifeline, and Family Works). The page dedicated to Family Works states their goals: “Children should feel safe, loved and cared for. Families can be reconciled, restored and empowered. Communities can be places of compassion and support. New Zealand can become the best place to raise children.” “About Presbyterian Support Northern” states that they “partner with Presbyterian parishes, schools and other groups to find ways to enhance the lives of individuals and whole communities, regardless of age, race, or beliefs.” The “Vision, Mission & Values” were of particular interest due to the fact that I had downloaded a copy of the Presbyterian Support Northern “Being Wow: Strategic Plan July 2013 to June 2018” document when I first considered Family Works for inclusion in the study in late 2016. This provided baseline data with which I could compare the current visions, mission and values. By the time I came to carry out my analysis of the agency in 2018, the older strategic document was no longer available online and the stated values had changed, reflecting the organisational change which I was warned of during the recruitment process. Although most of the language for the values had changed, the concepts were similar except for one clear omission. The older iteration referenced an ethos which was built upon their founder’s “Christian mission to love others and respond to human need” and it stated that one of their five values was “Christianity in Action – With compassion, understanding, respect and integrity, we strive to support people in a way that is demonstrated in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.” Although there was a page dedicated to the history of the agency on the Presbyterian Support Northern website, at the time of my analysis of the website the “Vision, Mission and Values” page had no mention of Christianity, Jesus, faith, or their Christian founder. This change demonstrates the intentional, considered shift within the organisation which I was informed of by the manager during the recruitment process.

The Family Works Northern website is formatted in the same structure as the FWNZ and Presbyterian Support Northern sites. However, the content is strongly focussed on connecting

potential clients with the programmes and resources that they offer, as well as providing
guidance for supporters of Family Works. The header banner contains the Family Works logo
with the phrase “Building strong families: Tu Pakari ai te whanau.” The homepage has two
headings titled “I want to find out about,” and “I want to.” Under “I want to find out about” is
a list of services available. “I want to” is followed by a list of ways in which supporters can
contribute, including making bequests or donations of money or goods, volunteering,
sponsoring specific initiatives, and working for Family Works.28

The homepage also contains a heading titled “Who we help,” under which there are photos
with links to “Families,” “Children,” “Parents,” and “Communities.”29 Each of these pages
has a brief on their philosophical approach to providing care to each of these groups, followed
by a list of services which they offer. The “Families” page states, “We help families flourish:
We believe every family can be a great family.”30 The “Children & Young People” page
declares, “Helping children and young people thrive: We’re here to support children and
young people to overcome challenges at home or school.”31 The “Parents” page is titled
“Positive Parenting: We want to help you to be the best parent you can be,”32 and the
“Communities” page advocates, “Building strong communities: Positive, healthy
communities encourage families to flourish.”33 The strength based, family focussed ethos of
Family Works is a cohesive message both within the Family Works Northern online material
and throughout the FWNZ and Presbyterian Support Northern messaging. The vision, mission
and values espoused by Family Works Northern are identical to those of FWNZ listed above,
with the addition of a list of outcomes: “Strong healthy families. Children / tamariki make
good choices. Parents / mātua build on their strengths. Safe Children. Strong healthy
communities.”34 The inclusion of an “outcomes” page provides a snapshot of the care and
services provided by Family Works Northern over the last year, suggesting an emphasis on
evidence-based practice.35

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29 Family Works Northern, “Homepage.”
Family Works Northern also maintains an active social media presence with regular, identical posts on both Twitter and Facebook. The content on these platforms consists of encouraging and educational material and advertising for upcoming events and causes. The about statement in Facebook declares that their mission is “Helping Kiwi families stay safe, strong, and connected.”\footnote{Family Works Northern, “Facebook: About,” <https://www.facebook.com/pg/familyworksnorthern/about/?ref=page_internal> (01 Nov 2018).} Although this wording is slightly different to that found within the websites, in essence it is still the same. Throughout the online presence of Family Works Northern, including that found within FWNZ and Presbyterian Support Northern, the messaging was clear and consistent. There was no mention of faith except in passing within the history of the organisation as outlined on the Presbyterian Support Northern website. There was one very weak allusion to a connection between Presbyterian Support and the Presbyterian Church in a statement that Presbyterian Support “partners with Presbyterian parishes, schools and other groups to enhance the lives of individuals and whole communities.”\footnote{Presbyterian Support Northern, “About Presbyterian Support Northern.”} However, whereas any mention of faith or church was very weak within the presentation of Presbyterian Support Northern, it was entirely absent in all online material relating to Family Works Northern and FWNZ.

**Document Analysis**

While carrying out interviews with Family Works, a manager provided me with a number of policy documents. Many of these were not relevant to the investigation of how theology shaped practice within the agency. However, the documents “Visions, Mission, Ethos & Values,” and “Values in Action,” were pertinent and provided an insight into the internal policies of the agency. These policy documents are produced by Presbyterian Support Northern, the provider of Family Works services. In addition to the internal policy documents, I reviewed the constitutional documents of both FWNZ and Presbyterian Support Northern, I looked at the aforementioned “Family Works NZ - At a Glance” document, and I reviewed a study manual produced in collaboration with the Presbyterian Church titled “Justice & Action.”

The “Vision, Mission, Ethos & Values” policy document consists of identical content to the July 2013 to June 2018 strategic plan which was introduced above. Among other objectives, the mission states a commitment to “actively supporting the community initiatives of
Presbyterian Parishes, Presbyterian Schools, Te Aka Puaho, the Pacific Synod, and others.” As mentioned above, the website has since rephrased this to read that they “partner with Presbyterian parishes, schools and other groups to find ways to enhance the lives of individuals and whole communities, regardless of age, race, or beliefs.” Where the policy statement makes it clear that there is an obligation to support the initiatives of Presbyterian churches, the later rendition removes the word “actively” – and with it the sense of obligation to provide support – and broadens the potential external agencies which they may support to include any school and any other group which is engaged in meeting practical needs. This movement in the wording of this policy also demonstrates that to managers and board members of Presbyterian Support Northern, the key component in the original statement was not the partnership with the Presbyterian Church, but rather meeting community needs in partnership with other agencies that were doing the same; it is about results, not an existing relationship.

Within the “Values in Action” policy document, specific examples are provided on how the values of Presbyterian Support Northern may be brought to life. “It describes behaviours and actions that demonstrate our values to our staff, our clients and our communities.” Included in this document is the same explanation of “Christianity in Action” which was outlined above in the now-outdated strategic plan: “With compassion, understanding, respect and integrity, we strive to support people in a way that is demonstrated in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.” Following this explanation a list of specific ways in which this might be carried out is provided, including “being patient, tolerant, forgiving, hopeful,” “caring for each other,” and a number of values-based guidelines that encourage care for the vulnerable. These principles are still evident within the reframed values of “integrity & trust” and “compassion” on the updated Presbyterian Support website, but the omission of any reference to Jesus or Christianity is glaring. These policy documents were last reviewed in 2013 and 2014 respectively, and they were provided to me in late 2017 in the midst of their self-proclaimed organisational change. The revised values on the Presbyterian Support Northern website suggest that it is likely that the values statements within these policy documents were in the process of becoming outdated at the time they were provided to me.

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39 Presbyterian Support Northern, “About Presbyterian Support Northern.”
42 Presbyterian Support Northern, “PSN 1.4 Values in Action.”
43 Presbyterian Support Northern, “About Presbyterian Support Northern.”
The trust documents for Presbyterian Support Northern and FWNZ, which are registered with Charities Services, provide an insight into the governance documents which outline the purposes and rules for the organisation and the board alike. The trust deed of FWNZ, dated October 2015, is the more recent of the two documents. Its stated objectives and purposes are to provide “support for and advancing the welfare of vulnerable families and children, the relief of poverty, the advancement of education, or any other matter beneficial to the community in New Zealand.” Following this statement is a list of specific objectives, including, “Promoting the values that are demonstrated in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.” This statement is significant as it is the only reference to Jesus or Christianity that I discovered in any of Family Works’ material rather than the material of Presbyterian Support Northern. This fact suggests that the “values,” rather than the fact they are demonstrated in the “life and teaching of Jesus Christ,” are the primary focus for those charged with leading the organisation.

Within the constitution of Presbyterian Support Northern, an ongoing connection with the Presbyterian Church is both guaranteed and protected. One of the objectives of the trust is, “Co-operation with ministers and parishes of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand in furthering the objectives of the Trust.” Most significant for this connection, however, are the rules regarding the constitution of the board. At least eight of the eleven board members are required to be members of the Presbyterian Church. Once nominated by the board, they are appointed “by the appropriate Church Court,” with one representative coming from each of the six Presbyteries or District Council from within the region, plus one more from the Māori Synod. This policy ensures a significant and ongoing governance relationship between the Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian Support.

The document titled “Family Works New Zealand – At a Glance,” provides an overview of the services, vision, and values of Family Works and provides a number of anecdotes of clients who have experienced successful outcomes. There is no publication date on this
document so it is difficult to determine if it was produced prior to the recent organisational change or not. I downloaded the document in October 2017. Focussing on “safe, strong and connected” children, families and communities, there is a strong emphasis on evidence-based practice in their approach. The page detailing “why we do it” states that “Family Works aspires to build communities where all children, families and whānau can thrive and reach their full potential.” The explanation of “who we are” mentions their history and connection with Presbyterian Support New Zealand “which has supported children and families for more than 100 years.” Nowhere in this document is any reference to faith either overtly or implicitly.

In the opening of this case study “PresCare” was mentioned. Although it is a partnership between Presbyterian Support and The Presbyterian Church, the description of PresCare in the Presbyterian Support Annual Review 2015 makes it clear that this collaboration is primarily aimed at equipping and training the church for social engagement. An online search revealed that the only online presence of PresCare was on the website of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, where it was located as a sub page under “Minister’s Resources.” As at the end of 2018, it had not been updated since November 2016, when a study booklet produced by PresCare titled “Justice & Action” was posted. Prior to that, the last item posted was a Lenten resource from 2014. The synopsis of the “Justice & Action” booklet proclaims that it is intended to “help equip congregations to take action on family violence and child poverty.” True to its word, the theme of the resource is social transformation and the role of the church and Christians in bringing it about. It states, “Our response to those affected by child poverty and family violence is an invitation to share Christ’s love for a hurting world.” Referencing the Great Commission, it reminds readers:

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56 Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, “PresCare,” (01 Nov 2018).
“The earliest Church carried far and wide the good news that profound change is possible through an encounter with God, whether for individuals or entire communities.”

A later section in the book clarifies that the transformation that is being espoused is a personal transformation which must take place in the heart and mind of a believer and which precedes the call to engage in acts of social justice.

This reveals a tension which is apparent throughout the study guide. It appears to advocate for the church to engage in acts of social justice and reform as an expression of God’s love while carefully avoiding advocating any inclusion of sharing the good news of God’s love with the recipients of this care.

Another feature of the “Justice & Action” study manual is the description of the role of Presbyterian Support and how it relates to the Presbyterian Church. “Presbyterian Support New Zealand is one of a number of denominational agencies which carry out their work independently of the parent Church.” It goes on to explain that PresCare is the partnership which connects the church and PSNZ. “PresCare was established in 2011 as a partnership between the Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian Support. It looks for ways to respond to the needs and nurture the wellbeing of children and families in Aotearoa through shared faith and commitment.”

Near the end of the book there is a list of suggested ways that a local church may engage with their community. One of the suggestions is to support Family Works services within the local area. The Presbyterian parish near my home in Hamilton advertises Family Works with a sign on their road frontage (see Figure 6.1). The comment that the collaboration of Presbyterian Support with the church is “based on shared faith and commitment” raises the question of whether Family Works similarly considers their social justice activities to be “an invitation to share Christ’s love for a hurting world.” Additionally, the PresCare partnership seemed to focus on training, equipping and influencing the faith community, with no evidence that the direction of this influence was reciprocated. It appears that the partnership encouraged churches and church members to put practical expression on their faith by engaging with community needs, but Presbyterian Support was not similarly encouraged to maintain faith in their practice.

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58 Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, “PresCare.”
61 PresCare, Justice & Action: Social Transformation in our Communities.”
62 This sign had been a more generic Family Works advertisement for at least a year prior to taking this photo, but it was changed to reflect the white ribbon initiative which Family Works supports.
Despite the fact that the consistent message within their documents and online content reinforced the site manager’s introductory warning that Family Works no longer considers themselves to be an FBO, the introduction to the most recent PSNZ Annual Report 2017-2018 states, “We are a faith-based organisation with strong values that guide how we care, enable and support individuals and whānau.” This statement is in contrast to both what I had been told by the site manager and what I observed during the analysis of written material. The PSNZ Annual Report 2016-17 explains that the “dual national and local governance” within Presbyterian Support provides, among other things, a shared vision. Could it be that although vision and values align, the essential understanding of their identity differs between organisations? The interview data would be revealing in providing some explanation for this conundrum.

**Interviews: Strong Values, Weak Faith**

Within the investigation of Family Works, interviews were carried out with four staff members, including the general manager (GM) of Family Works Northern. I also interviewed a board member of the Presbyterian Support Northern board. Although some staff members stated strong critiques, particularly regarding the role of faith within the organisation, it is important to note that all of the interviewees commented on the professionalism and success of Family Works in providing care and services for clients and in supporting their staff.

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When I spoke with the GM, she confirmed the perception of the site manager that I had spoken to during the recruitment process: “It is a values based organisation that would describe itself as having Christian values and having been a faith-based agency.” She emphasised the importance and the function of the organisation’s values as something which were regularly referenced to provide guidance on how they engage with clients and manage staff. “They aren’t token.” The board member I interviewed similarly insisted that the values genuinely shaped their practice. She gave the example of a client for whom Family Works had received funding for a 30 minute counselling appointment, but who needed 2 hours, and so they provided it without any additional charge. This reinforced the observations made within the written material which strongly emphasised values. Reference to the fact that it “had been” a faith-based agency also reflected the separation of these values from their Christian roots. However, the GM indicated that for some individual staff, they remain motivated by a strong Christian faith “underpinning everything they do.” She stated that these staff members were attracted to Family Works “because it’s a faith-based organisation.”

Moreover, the GM’s comments surrounding the stated value of “Christianity in Action” suggested that at the time of the interview she was unaware that it would soon be removed as an overtly stated value. “There was lots of debate at senior level around keeping [Christianity in action] in and what that means. But it’s what the organisation is based on, so not taking it out was important.” Another interviewee similarly stated that “Christianity in Action” was “considered the base of the work.”

Despite the reference to “Christianity in Action” as a current organisational value, notwithstanding the fact that it was officially removed around the time that the interviews were conducted, the staff members that I interviewed supported the perspective that the agency had drifted from its faith foundation. One commented that “the faith here is historical. I think that it was set up as a social practice to meet social needs through the church, but I think over the years while it sits in the background, how much it influences our day-to-day work, I’m not too sure.” He went on to state, “We are not a faith-based organisation. If we were a practicing faith-based organisation I would expect that maybe we would have prayers in the morning, we would have time for that more faith-based fellowship type of stuff.” Instead he spoke of the strong values based approach, which he distinguished from a faith-based perspective due to the fact that respect for humanity and having compassion and empathy can be found in many religious approaches. He stated, “Those are the values that permeate the organisation and that come through on the documentation. Things like that, as
opposed to faith and recognising the spiritual realm and being more aware of that in people’s lives.” Another interviewee commented that this drift away from an overt faith foundation had been occurring over a number of years and was not isolated to the most recent organisational changes.

There was a decision made to take out the phrase “leading a life of Jesus Christ” as part of the mission statement. A couple of us didn’t agree with that because that was put in there by the people who founded it and that was their reason and that was where it came from. I felt that that should have been the core of what we were doing and the core of the values, but because it [was removed] it has been watered down.

The GM confirmed that in terms of the practice at a grassroots level and the interactions with clients, faith and religious language had no place in that context. However, she still felt that it had a role behind the scenes as a driving motivator. The GM confirmed that there is an uneasy tension between being “faith-based, but not wanting to have a faith face.” A staff member commented that she felt that the shift away from having an explicit faith as a motivator was due to the diversity of staff and their opinions within all of the Presbyterian Support agencies.

The Presbyterian model of leadership encouraged everyone to have a voice: “There’s a lot of diversity in beliefs and cultures within the staff at the frontline and even all the way up. So you get all of that input and they take the consensus of what people say, and they say ‘Okay, this is where it’s probably heading.’” This same interviewee also mentioned that it could also be a result of pursuing funding and trying to be more attractive to the funders. However, she reconsidered this comment and indicated that this would not have been necessary as the quality of the services that they provide have always been of an extremely high standard. By way of comparison she spoke of The Salvation Army, who she perceived as offering high quality services and remaining overt in their faith convictions. One other interviewee also commented about The Salvation Army’s overt faith-based position without being prompted.

The board member of Presbyterian Support Northern provided a different perspective on this issue. She indicated that Presbyterian Support was a “Christian organisation that helps anyone that needs it” and asserted that the foundational vision and values that drove the mission had not changed over time from the perspective of the board. However, she was critical of the degree to which the faith component had been removed from Family Works:

I think Family Works has become a business in its own right. It’s employing hundreds of people. They have self-preservation as a motive. That actually has its own ethos and feeds back into the culture of the organisation. To a certain extent, I think we’ve lost our real Christian mission and that we are meeting a few government contracts. The rest of it is just a business, and since we’re a church, I’d like to see less business and more mission.
The perspective that the Presbyterian Support Northern board had not departed from its foundational faith-based roots was supported by another interviewee, but it is in contrast to evidence observed with the evolution of the values discussed above. Moreover, if the board has remained motivated by faith convictions and Family Works no longer is, this raises questions around the role and effectiveness of the board in providing governance and direction to the organisation.

In clarifying the role that faith might play within the daily operations of Family Works, the GM said that if a client wanted or needed spiritual direction or a religious approach, they would refer them to an external agency. “It would not be acceptable for our staff to be praying with clients.... They are employed under the guidelines of their professional body’s codes of conduct and our own code of conduct. End of story.” Despite the gradual departure from the faith-based foundations of Presbyterian Support, the staff interviewees noted that faith still played a role in the personal motivation of many employees within Family Works. One interviewee noted that the most significant influence of faith was in “people who bring their personal faith to work with them. For me it’s what I do in this room when someone is sitting opposite me. It’s been times when I have prayed for people that I know do have a faith and I’ll offer ‘can I pray for you?’.” I commented that the GM had told me that praying with clients would never be acceptable even when considering a client focussed approach which engaged the whole person, including the spiritual component. This interviewee argued that ethically, staff should offer to pray with clients at times:

> If I have a new client who talks about their faith in the context of our counselling and is going through a really hard time for whatever reason, it would be unprofessional of me to not offer to pray for them. I’d argue that because it’s about them and what’s appropriate for them. In another case, it may not be.

Another staff member similarly confirmed, “If I am aware of working with a family and I know what their faith is, I will encompass that and work with that, and even pray with people if that’s what they would like.”

**Motivations**

Although the messaging related to values was consistent within the online material, the older documents created some confusion surrounding the identity and driving motivations of Family Works. This tension revealed in the written material was also apparent in the interviews. I asked the GM why they do what they do. She said the organisation’s goal is “a better life for everybody.” She admitted that she struggled with measuring this goal; a client’s personal perception that they had benefited was less meaningful to her than an evidence-based
objective standard which could be measured. She asserted that they utilised a “strength based” approach, in which every client is assumed to have strengths which can be encouraged and built upon. The GM shared what motivated her as she worked for Family Works: “I like working for a values based organisation. I’ve got very little religion in my bones, but for me, being Christian is, you look after people. It’s how you treat people and what you do with that. Spiritual rather than religious, I would describe myself.”

Within the analysis of the written material, I noted that there was a claim of a “shared vision” across the PSNZ agencies. I asked the interviewees about the cohesion of vision and values across the organisations. One staff member provided a response which raised questions around the validity of this claim in light of the recent change of values:

They see the generic values still being Christian, even though they omit reference to Christ. Compassion and showing respect and encouraging families, that’s their Christian values, but we’re not going to talk about Christ.... The words of the values have changed, but in doing that, we lose sight of the values, because new people coming into it, people who have just started last month or the month before, they read these values, they haven’t been here with the process of change where those words have changed, or, if someone comes in who doesn’t have a Christian faith, these values don’t have a Christian connection for them, they’re just generic values.... So, yes we work from compassion, but we’re not referring to what I would understand Christian compassion to be and bringing Christ into it. Where’s the spiritual sense of what we’re doing? So PSN might still speak in those value terms and Family Works have lost that, but I think they would still think we’re on the same page.

What this interviewee may not have realised is that the changes to the values had occurred within Presbyterian Support as well as within Family Works. The claim of shared vision and values was reflected in the material which I investigated. However, this staff member’s analysis was insightful, highlighting how these changes in wording reflected a much more fundamental shift in the nature and motivation of the agency. Another interviewee commented, “I don’t think that the values have changed, I think the words have changed, but then there are others in the organisation that wouldn’t align with those original values.... They don’t see Family Works as being a Christian-based organisation. So they have again watered it down to make it a bit more secular.” Although this staff member began by claiming that the values hadn’t changed, her explanation revealed the opposite. Later in the interview I asked this staff member if her perception that Family Works is still faith-based was simply nostalgia. She responded, “Yeah, probably. I would imagine so, actually. Yes, I would say so.” Both of these perspectives on the process and implication of the change in the value statement reveal a strong and cohesive commitment to what Family Works does, and a weakening faith conviction surrounding why they do it.
Nonetheless, staff members who possess a personal Christian faith are able to extrapolate these values from a Christian world view. While I was interviewing a long standing staff member, I asked whether she felt there was a connection between a desire to protect the foundational faith-based values of the agency and an understanding of the history and origin story of the organisation. She confirmed that this was likely to be the case for her and in her experience within Family Works. She commented that a previous CEO of PSNZ had dressed up as the founder, Duncan McPherson, and had “come in and explained and acted the [history] out. That was really nice and it sort of made it real.” She also commented that this previous CEO had been a strong Christian and that under his leadership she had felt safe and secure in her role within the agency. She praised the leadership of the current GM and the site manager, but the fact they did not share her strong faith convictions left her feeling a level of insecurity.

**Connection between PSNZ and the Presbyterian Church**

The GM also acknowledged a disconnect between Presbyterian Support and the church: “We have Christian support, but we aren’t part of the church.” However, she informed me that they had a community liaison staff member who had the task of connecting with churches and they have at times developed programmes to “give something back to the churches.” This reveals a desire for a level of practical connection with the church which was not apparent in the strategic and governance documents outlined above, particularly as they had been recently changed and the language surrounding collaboration with the church had been weakened.

In contrast to this, one interviewee commented that there is no connection between Family Works and the church, although he mentioned that he felt like there was still a connection between Presbyterian Support and the church, but could not define what that connection looked like. He also noted that they were put on a roster to produce anecdotes of client’s success stories. He felt that these stories were used by Presbyterian Support to demonstrate their Christian values and strengthen their position within the church network.

The Presbyterian Support Northern board member informed me that the strongest connection with the church occurs at the board level, which has Presbyterian ministers and church members on it in accordance with their constitution as detailed above. She also noted,

> There’s been a considerable amount of feedback that insistence on linking our works to “Presbyterian” isolates and prevents [some clients] from participating in the services.... It’s just another brand. It’s like KFC. You just take away the
“fried” and people think it’s healthy. Take away the “Presbyterian” and they think anyone can go there.

This rebranding to distance Family Works from its faith-based roots may have been motivated by a desire to meet the needs of potential clients and remove barriers for admission to services. However, the board member admitted that this, along with the fact that “there is not a great deal of communication backwards to the parishes,” exacerbates the separation of Family Works from the Presbyterian Church. She stated, “There’s actually quite a separation and in fact many of the church parishioners aren’t even aware that Family Works is part of Presbyterian Support.”

Discussion

The overwhelming impression that I had as I looked through the online presence of FWNZ, Presbyterian Support Northern, and Family Works Northern, was that their communication is clear and consistent. The warning that I received when I first sought to recruit Family Works, that they did not consider themselves to be a faith-based organisation, appeared to be a considered, intentional position which was being promoted by those responsible for managing the organisation. Consequently, the policy of having Presbyterian parishioners make up the majority of the board positions within Presbyterian Support Northern, and the statement in the latest 2017 to 2018 PSNZ annual report that they are a “faith-based” organisation appeared incongruent with the current values and direction of the agency. The older policy statements similarly demonstrated remnants of a past position. Notwithstanding these exceptions, the most updated messaging was clear and consistent throughout all forms of written communication and across both the Family Works and Presbyterian Support entities investigated – this was a professional, values-based agency with no stated faith-based motivations. However, the report of the board member suggested that the board had not departed from their foundational faith, although she acknowledged that Family Works had to a greater degree and she also understood this Christian foundation to be about works. Staff members of Family Works broadly supported this analysis of the agency.

However, this position appears to be at odds with the perception of the Presbyterian Church. Although they acknowledge that PSNZ operates “independently of the parent church,” the stated “shared faith and commitment” is conspicuously, and apparently intentionally, absent within the agency despite the constitutionally guaranteed governance collaboration between these entities. It is also remarkable that the board member I spoke to correlated Presbyterian Support with the Presbyterian Church, stating that “since we’re the church, I’d like to see less
business and more mission.” In this comment she essentially assumed that Presbyterian Support was in some ways synonymous with the church. This claim was directly contradicted by the GM of Family Works Northern, who stated, “We aren’t part of the church.” Similarly, the existence of PresCare, established in 2011 during a time when the faith position of Family Works and Presbyterian Support was more intentional, but which has languished in its relevance without being formally ceased, provides an example of the way that former commitments and values have lingered even after many people have abandoned them. Despite the clear and intentional values-based position that Family Works has formally adopted and the careful omission of any faith-based motivations in these values, the vestiges of their past faith-based position and the ongoing governance relationship with Presbyterian Support continue to make their connection with faith and the church unclear. It reminds me of a child that has left home some time ago and has been intentionally distancing itself from its embarrassing parent and the associated family name, but the fact that “you can’t choose your family” ensures that they cannot cut these ties entirely.

Why the drift away from an overt faith foundation has occurred is less certain. To some extent it has been an intentional strategic move to open services up to more resistant clients. This may be connected with pressure of resource dependency and a desire to meet criteria to access different public funding streams for services. The comment of one interviewee that the departure from having faith as an explicit motivator was in part a result of attempting to be attractive to funders supports this conclusion. Unlike many other FBOs, Family Works receives a very small proportion of their funding from donations and grants. While the government as a contractor demands evidenced based results to meet certain contractual outputs, grassroots donors are more likely to be interested in the culture and values of the agency. This lack of significant grassroots support ensures that there is little stakeholder pressure from individual supporters who may promote adherence to faith-based values.

The revision of values at Family Works may also be a result of the strong social gospel theology espoused by both those promoting a “values-based” approach to providing social services and the church in the “Justice & Action” study manual outlined above. Emphasising social transformation and service, without an overt inclusion of the importance of the gospel message as part of that transformation, may result in an FBO evolving to the point where an implicit faith motivation is no longer recognised or considered important. Consideration of

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the quintessentially Presbyterian model of boards, democratic process, and complex governance structures may also be pertinent. One interviewee noted that the diversity of opinions amongst the staff and the voice that they are afforded as part of a democratic governance structure was a significant contributor for the evolution of culture and values within the agency. A less democratic system may empower individual leaders of FBOs to assert and protect values and culture more freely. Conversely, a more autocratic approach could also allow a leader to take an FBO on a journey away from core values much more rapidly than this democratic alternative. This democratic model also highlights the significant influence of hiring practices and policies on the culture of an organisation over time.

Family Works is motivated by Christian values, but not by Christ. For those within the organisation who have personal faith or who have a clear awareness of the origins of these values, this poses a conundrum. For them, adherence to Christian values is a faith-based position. However, many within the agency appear to have divorced the correlation between Christian values and Christian faith. Although the board still proclaims an adherence to Christian values, they have intentionally removed references to faith from the guiding values of the agency. I asked the board member that I interviewed if she saw what I perceived to be Family Work’s tenuous grasp on a faith position, and whether she saw that disintegrating completely. Her response was that she did not see it disintegrating. For her, the ends justified the means:

I see the barriers.... I can understand the deterrent that the Christianity banner is to a segment of the community that would really want help. It doesn’t matter what they believe or whatever. We just want them to be able to get a foot up on the ladder and be able to start walking unsupported.

This raises significant theological questions surrounding the role of the gospel within faith-based social service initiatives, particularly when one considers verses like Mark 8:36 – “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” I asked the board member if, as a by-product of exceptional, loving care from a Christian staff member, a client stated something like “I felt the love emanating from you because of the service I received,” would it be appropriate for that staff member to connect the dots for the client and inform them of the source of their love for them, namely God. Her response was, “No, not at all. We are not here to increase parish numbers.” A more detailed discussion on this topic is included within the inter-case analysis below in Chapter 8.
Parenting Place\textsuperscript{1} is New Zealand’s largest specialist parenting organisation and it is the final major case study in this research. Founded by Ian and Mary Grant in 1993, today they have sites in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, with 120 staff and 585 volunteers. They serve over 500,000 families every year.\textsuperscript{2} In response to their stated objective of “supporting whānau to thrive,” Parenting Place offers a number of services and resources including toolbox parenting courses, one-on-one family coaching, an in-school education programme which meets the New Zealand health curriculum requirements, various media resources, postnatal support, camps, events, and relationship retreats. The services which are provided at a community level, principally the toolbox courses, are facilitated by regional co-ordinators who manage local volunteers, who in turn deliver the material.

As Parenting Place has developed a full suite of services to support families at all stages, they have partnered with other agencies in order to achieve this. A recent example is the incorporation of Space NZ Trust, an agency that provides support to new parents but which had limited scope and reach prior to this collaboration. The partnership allowed Parenting Place to provide a service which they had identified as being a need and also allowed Space to expand their services. Similarly, they have also partnered with a number of corporate sponsors, most noteworthy being Toyota, The Warehouse, Sentinel Homes, and Vodafone New Zealand. These corporate partners share the vision and mandate of Parenting Place to strengthen and support families in New Zealand, and their support helps to make up the 38\% of annual income received from grants and donations. A further 35\% is received through

\textsuperscript{1} “The Parenting Place” and “Parenting Place,” are organisational titles which are used interchangeably across printed material and verbally by staff. Re-branding to “Parenting Place” occurred in 2017.

operating income from course and workshops fees and other operational income streams. Parenting Place receives only 8% of its annual income from the Ministry of Social Development. The remaining 19% of their income comes from sponsorship and rental income.\(^3\)

Both the size of Parenting Place and the variety of resources and services which they provide made a comprehensive investigation of all facets of their operations unrealistic. Consequently, the content of the courses and resources which they deliver were largely omitted from my research. I focused on analysing the central website of Parenting Place, their foundational policy documents, internal reports and strategic document, and publicity material. The ten interviewees came from various roles within the organisation and all except two were based at the national office in Auckland. The two staff members not based in Auckland had regional facilitation roles in South Auckland and Hamilton. I also had the opportunity to interview Ian and Mary Grant, the founders of Parenting Place. Given that they no longer have any direct involvement with the agency I have treated the interview carefully with regard to how it is incorporated into the analysis. Nonetheless, it provides an invaluable macro perspective.

The process of recruiting Parenting Place as participants for this study is noteworthy. Greg Fleming, the current CEO of Parenting Place, was one of the earliest industry supporters of my research. While I was canvassing stakeholder opinions in late 2015 and early 2016, prior to putting forward a research proposal to the University of Otago, he indicated that he felt that this topic of enquiry was the primary concern for faith-based social agencies in New Zealand, and it had been the “central project” for his leadership in his first 14 months in the position. He also stated that he had had similar conversations with a number of leaders of other FBOs in New Zealand. Due to this overwhelming endorsement of my line of enquiry, I was confident that when it came to the point of signing on participant organisations, I would have no concerns with Parenting Place being a willing participant.

In early 2017, having selected the desired participant organisations for the project, I approached Greg once again. He met with his leadership team to discuss the proposal. In mid July 2017 they determined that they would not participate in the research. Greg informed me that the reason for this decision was that they were in the midst of an organisational and cultural transition. In the 20 years since its inception, Parenting Place had drifted from its

original conviction and motivation being based in the Christian faith. Greg reported that under the previous CEO, Parenting Place had evolved to become a secular organisation based on Christian principles. Since taking over the leadership of the agency at the start of 2015, he was consciously attempting to re-assert the foundational principles of Parenting Place as a faith-based organisation. He indicated that he believed that they could be market leaders within the secular marketplace and operate with professionalism while still being unashamedly Christian in their convictions. However, the leadership team of Parenting Place were aware that this organisation evolution had not yet been fully realised by all staff members. They were concerned that the findings of my research would demonstrate a lack of coherence in terms of how stated positions of faith were understood by different individuals within the agency and how they were enacted practically.

Ultimately I was able to convince Parenting Place of the importance of their story as an organisation that is in the midst of an intentional cultural shift. The final data collection was left until early 2018, which enabled their cultural evolution to become more imbedded at all levels. Nonetheless, Greg Fleming, members of his senior staff, and I still expected that a degree of incoherence would remain; the culture of Parenting Place is by no means static and is still being intentionally developed. This is exemplified by the creation of a new staff position that occurred within the three week period that I was onsite at the Parenting Place site in Auckland. This position was an internal recruitment of a staff member to work closely alongside the CEO and to be primarily focused on the people and the culture. The specifics of what the role entailed were still relatively undefined, but it demonstrated an ongoing commitment to calculated organisational cultural development and change.

As a result of the organisation change that Parenting Place was experiencing, they cannot be clearly placed in Sider and Unruh’s typology. A compilation of the observations and practices reveals a faith-affiliated position, although this appears to be moving toward faith-centered. Board selection practices and a lack of overt faith-based messaging in both written material and programmes were key contributing factors to the final classification result. The detailed analysis can be found attached in Appendix C.

**Online Presence**

The Parenting Place website was updated during the course of my research, with the newer version going live in early 2018. This allowed the opportunity to note some changes, although a thorough analysis of the older website had not been completed before it was updated. The
clearest amendments are the addition of “Mā tāua, oti atu ai” into their logo, and a change in their statement of purpose. The meaning of “Mā tāua, oti atu ai” was not immediately understandable to the native Māori speakers that I consulted. I asked the staff member who had been tasked with being my primary point of contact to clarify what it meant. She stated that “as with a lot of the Māori language – it is metaphorical. To us it means ‘we will do it together.’” The older version of the website instead had a heading with the following text: “Inspiring and equipping families to thrive: The Parenting Place is a charity with a heart for New Zealand families. We believe that healthy, loving families can transform society.”4 In contrast, the new website simplifies this message to: “Supporting whānau to thrive.”5 The new homepage cycles through four different pictures of adults and children, which the viewer presumes are representations of families. These include a picture of an Asian man and woman with two children, a white man and a boy, a child playing with two adults somewhat obscured, and a Māori or Polynesian man and a white woman with a baby (see Figure 7.1).

![Parenting Place website image](image)

These changes reflect an intentional move toward wanting to be perceived as culturally inclusive. This is particularly so in terms of the way they approach Māori culture. Both Greg Fleming and the other interviewees revealed that the amendments to the website – the inclusion of a Māori sub-title, replacing the word “family” with the word “whānau,” and including photos of ethnically diverse subjects – were not motivated by perception or marketing. Rather, they are reflective of a significant intentional and focussed *haerenga*, “journey,” which Parenting Place is currently undertaking as an organisation. This *haerenga* is

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5 The Parenting Place, “Homepage”, (01 June 2018).
6 The Parenting Place, “Homepage”, (01 June 2018).
worth exploring within the context of this research for two reasons. Firstly, every interviewee mentioned it either explicitly or implicitly as a significant feature within the organisation. Secondly, the re-assertion of foundational faith values appears to be dovetailed into this cultural journey.

Beyond the main banner, the information on the homepage is limited to trending articles on various parenting topics, a selection of upcoming events, and links to programme specific pages. An email sign-up to receive regular parenting tips is also available. Parenting tips, articles, and video resources are all produced internally by staff and contractors of Parenting Place. The availability of selected resources directly from the homepage suggests that there is a value placed on getting this information to the customer. This impression is also reinforced through the prominent “Share” bar placed across the bottom of the articles, which gives options of sharing via buttons for Twitter, Facebook, Google Plus, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and e-mail.

Additional content can be found in a drop down menu at the top of the homepage under the heading “Who we are.” These sub-pages include “Our Story,” “Our Team,” “Our Partners and Supporters,” “Annual Report,” “Job Vacancies,” and a contact page. Additionally, each of the various programmes and services have links to their own pages in another drop down menu under a separate heading. These programme pages contain only general information, with the larger programmes such as Attitude – the youth education division of Parenting Place – having their own dedicated websites. These independent websites were omitted from the analysis.

Within the non-programme-specific webpages, underlying values were more overtly expressed. “Our Story” contains a page heading which states: “Our Kaupapa – Supporting whānau to thrive.” “Kaupapa” is a Māori term that refers to the foundation and policies of a group. In an organisational context the kaupapa could be considered the heart and “why” that motivates the agency. In the Annual Report, the CEO explains that kaupapa is the purpose “that fuels and energises all our mahi (work) at Parenting Place.” On the “Our Story” webpage, the Parenting Place vision for the significance of families is spelled out:

Our dream at Parenting Place is for Aotearoa New Zealand to be a place where every whānau thrives and every child feels deeply loved. In fact, we believe that healthy, loving families can transform society.... It’s a vision for whānau to be a place where we are connected and belong, where we are listened to and are heard.

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feel safe and are trusted, where we can fail and be forgiven, are enjoyed and pursued, respected as individuals, challenged and believed in, and have hope for our future.\footnote{The Parenting Place, “Our Story.”}

This provides the clearest explanation of what motivates Parenting Place. However, reference to a faith foundation or motivation is conspicuously absent. At the bottom of this page there is a brief paragraph on “our founders” which states that Ian and Mary Grant began the agency “compelled by their deep Christian faith. They sought to outwork this desire to love others and leave the world a better place than they found it by equipping and encouraging parents to grow great family relationships.”\footnote{The Parenting Place, “Our Story.”} Although elsewhere this heritage is emphasised as a legacy upon which the agency draws, in this context it is presented as a history which they are proud of, but which is not overtly a part of who they are today.

The “Work with Us” page is similarly useful in an exploration of motivational values and culture of Parenting Place. In an attempt to provide an overview of Parenting Place for a prospective employee or volunteer, “A little bit about Parenting Place” is explained. The aforementioned “dream” is reiterated, with a small addition: “We’re a passionate, fun-loving team who truly believe that healthy, loving families can transform society.”\footnote{The Parenting Place, “Work with Us,” <https://www.theparentingplace.com/work-with-us/> (01 June 2018).} Despite this comparatively clear and articulate presentation of the values and motivation of Parenting Place, the most significant comments for my research are found at the bottom of the page. In accordance with the haerenga which was introduced above, an explanation is provided on engagement in “Te Ao Māori” – the Māori world. The reason that it is so significant is that it is in the discussion of Te Ao Māori that theological convictions are more clearly articulated.

The discussion explains that the unique cultural landscape of New Zealand both inspires their mission and informs and shapes their work. Among the cultural principles which they have committed to integrating into the work of the agency is “whakapapa,” which is normally understood as a genealogy. An explanation clarifies that within an organisational context this refers to “knowing and curating the relational, historical and circumstantial genealogy of our organisation.”\footnote{The Parenting Place, “Work with Us,” (01 June 2018).} Encapsulating the discussion of purpose and identity within culture, a concluding remark on the “Work with Us” page states, “We are journeying together in search of a new way of togetherness as we seek to give shape to an alternative vision for life that has Te Rongopai at its heart, and offers hope for every person and every relationship.”\footnote{The Parenting Place, “Work with Us,” (01 June 2018).}
significant statement as “Te Rongopai” is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the language of *journeying in search of something new and seeking to give shape* to an *alternative* vision, speaks strongly of a process rather than of something concrete and definable. It reveals intent to develop an identity which is rooted in and draws upon both the unique cultural heritage of New Zealand and the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, it also demonstrates that this identity is not yet a reality. It is a stated objective, but the implications of what that means in practice are yet to be determined. This is further validated by the fact that this statement is found in only one place on the website, and in a location where it is likely that only those looking to work for the agency may come across it. Despite the fact that this emerging identity has not yet been fully realised, it is being intentionally driven by the CEO who, in his 2016/17 annual report, states,

This year, we have been discerning the need for us to deeply weave the story of New Zealand, and in particular the vision of unity embodied in the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, into our own vision and work. We have also been reimagining the centrality of Te Rongopai (the gospel) into both the events of 1840 and our own founding vision cast by our founders Ian and Mary Grant in 1995.\(^\text{13}\)

The annual report, in an earlier place referencing the Christian motivation of the founders and the hope offered to all people through the gospel, states, “As heirs of this heart and vision, our work continues to strengthen and serve all whānau in Aotearoa, New Zealand.”\(^\text{14}\) The concept of being an heir carries with it the privileges and responsibility of inheritance. This imagery reinforces a commitment to the principle of whakapapa outlined above. However, although the journey of discovering and defining organisational identity encapsulates both faith and culture – or possibly faith expressed and understood within a cultural context – the Annual Report raises questions about the mutuality of this correlation. Under the heading of “Our Haerenga,” the report reiterates the CEO’s statement that they are on a journey of discovery with Te Rongopai at its heart. It goes on to detail some tangible, objective ways that the engagement with Te Ao Māori is being outworked.\(^\text{15}\) There is no corresponding list detailing how the heart of Te Rongopai is being incorporated. The impression that this gives is that, although faith is acknowledged and accepted as a significant part of the heritage of Parenting Place and is likewise espoused as a core foundation of their identity, there is a lack of coherence around what this looks like in practice.

The “Breakthrough” programme, described on its own page on the website, illustrates another way that Parenting Place is trying to talk about spirituality. The course is a collaboration

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\(^{13}\) The Parenting Place, “Annual Report 2016/17,” 5.


between The Salvation Army and Parenting Place and is focussed on equipping fathers with the knowledge and skills to provide an environment for their children in which they know they are loved, safe, and supported by their families. It draws on a Māori worldview and the stated values include wairuatanga, “spirituality.” The course “acknowledge(s) the spiritual existence through and all around us. Breakthrough weaves wairua throughout and is intentional in promoting awareness and experience for all involved.”16 “Wairua” is the spirit. Although this is not overtly Christian, the theme of cultural awareness and inclusion being combined with spiritual awareness is consistent. None of the other 13 additional programmes and resources described on the website contain any reference to spirituality, faith, or faith-based values.

The theme of making quality information easily and freely available is consistent across the social media profile of Parenting Place also. Although they have a presence on Twitter,17 YouTube,18 and Pinterest,19 these accounts are not freshly updated. The majority of the social media presence is found on Facebook20 and, to a lesser degree, Instagram.21 Material uploaded to Instagram is also uploaded to Facebook, usually consisting of photos with small parenting tips or a brief update of events at Parenting Place. The Facebook page also includes the aforementioned parenting articles, which are shared from the website, notifications of news and upcoming events, and videos or photos that provide short parenting tips and quips. Consequently, Facebook presents a cohesive representation of the Parenting Place social media presence. With over 15,000 followers, a response time within a few hours to messages they receive through Facebook messenger, and an average of at least one post every second day, Facebook is a significant communication platform for Parenting Place.

The majority of posts encourage positive parenting approaches or are humorous in nature, such as Figure 7.2 above, which was uploaded on the final day of a school term. Of all the posts in the first half of 2018, this one contains the only faint faith reference. The comment introducing the photo states, “I mean, can we get an amen?” Because “amen” is often used colloquially to indicate agreement, this use of “amen” does not indicate a strong connection with faith-based values.

The “About” tab on their Facebook page, which provides organisational information, states the Mission of Parenting Place: “To positively impact every New Zealand Family.”

Figure 7.2 Parenting Place Facebook post

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organisational “About” statement on the Facebook page is to “Support whānau to thrive. Our dream for Aotearoa is that every whānau thrives and every child feels deeply loved”24 (see Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.3 Parenting Place website image25

The consistent goal and values of the organisation are similarly reflected in the CEO’s report. It mirrors the “About” statement from the Facebook profile and the discussion on the “Our Story” webpage: “Our ambitious dream at Parenting Place is that Aotearoa New Zealand becomes a place where every family flourishes and every child feels deeply loved.”26 However, an article in the final edition of the “Parenting” magazine, raises some question with regard to this mission and will be discussed during the document analysis below.

Document Analysis

The Annual Report 2016/17, a PDF document, had a dedicated page on the website and was therefore included in the discussion above. I had access to the trust deed and trust reports and returns through the charities register. I personally collected copies of “Parenting” magazine from Autumn 2014 through to March/April 2017, and staff at Parenting Place provided me with the Strategic Plan 2017-2020, an internal document.

24 Parenting Place, “Facebook, About,”
Parenting Place produced its subscription based magazine titled “Parenting” between 2001 and 2017, replete with the subheading, “Parenting is everything.” It ceased publication following the March/April 2017 issue. An extract from the concluding editor’s letter states:

Even though we are changing tack and moving away from a subscription magazine, it doesn’t mean that we won’t be bringing you the very best parenting articles, stories and ideas. In fact, as we re-focus our energy and resources on our digital channels, we will be able to create and curate even more inspiring and relevant content for you. We would absolutely love to stay in touch with you and continue to walk alongside you and your family. If you haven’t ‘liked’ our Facebook page, signed up to receive our weekly Hot Tip emails or our monthly magazine Newsletter, make sure you do that today!27

I spoke to a staff member who had been involved with the magazine for a number of years and asked her about the motivation for cancelling the magazine. She stated that the dream had always been to reach families all across the country and they had realised that the content, articles and stories that they were telling were only getting to people who could afford to purchase a magazine and had the time to sit down and consume content that way.

Even though we were giving it out to families that were part of our toolbox programmes who were from different socioeconomic strata, it just wasn’t enough to meet the dream of meeting all of New Zealand. So we stopped that and moved to online content which then breaks the walls down and it is more likely that we can reach more people that we didn’t have access to before.

By focussing resources on easily accessible methods of communication which are more cost effective to produce, Parenting Place has demonstrated a commitment to removing financial boundaries from access to good quality parenting advice and support. This is an ethos which is also reflected in the practice of subsidising Toolbox parenting courses for participants who can’t afford to pay. However, one could also argue that the barrier to access has simply changed rather than been eliminated. Instead of needing time and money to buy and read a magazine, the end user now needs an internet capable device and data. I enquired about the uptake of online content. “Access to online content has grown over the last 18 months, but the bummer is that we didn’t have online content going out while the magazine was going out in the same way so we don’t have stats to necessarily compare to.” The interviewee also stated that their audience is primarily women aged 35-44 and mentioned that they are working hard to broaden that demographic.

The final issue of the magazine included an article on the founders of Parenting Place, Ian and Mary Grant. The editor of the publication stated that it showcases “their wisdom and beautiful

vision for New Zealand families – a vision that continues to fuel and inspire all of our
work.”28 The values expressed in this article focused on value of family as community.

   Basically, if we want children to grow up to be contributors to the community,
they need parents who nurture empathy and altruism and who take seriously the
privilege and responsibility of raising children well.... If we learn some healthy
ways of operating and how to include fun and communication into the family, we
can change things for everyone.29

This foundational value is consistent with the focus of supporting and equipping families
which Parenting Place espouses as a cohesive objective throughout their online presence.
However, the article fails to acknowledge the role of the Christian gospel in motivating the
founders, as stated by the CEO in his annual report.30 This leaves some ambiguity as to what
motivates the mission of Parenting Place.

Unlike the content in the magazine, The Strategic Plan 2017-2020, an internal document,
affords a greater degree of clarity with regard to the role of faith in providing an identity and
motivation for the practice of Parenting Place. In addition to the same major messages
discussed above, it includes a section titled “Shaped by Hope” which states,

   People are created for relationships that provide life and hope. For us, this is
rooted in the vision of Te Rongopai displayed in the person of Jesus, who offers
hope for every person and every relationship. This ambitious dream of
whanaungatanga [close relationship/sense of family connection] has been woven
throughout our nation’s history and underpins how we see all families and how
we work towards their flourishing.31

The document goes on to discuss the haerenga and the engagement with Te Ao Māori, with
Te Rongopai at its heart. Although the use of the term “Te Rongopai” rather than “the gospel”
may elsewhere be critiqued as a method of allowing a Christian motivation to remain hidden
by merit of the fact that most non-Māori speakers would not know what it means, in this
context its meaning is more clear. In addition to the reference to Jesus, this document is an
internal strategic document. It reflects the culture and language of the organisation. All
interviewees mentioned their haerenga and all referred to “Te Rongopai,” although some also
used the English word “gospel” interchangeably. Internally, the Māori name for the Christian
gospel is both utilised and understood.

The Strategic Plan reveals a vision of engaging with culture in a respectful and authentic way
with the goal of shaping the identity of the organisation and helping them to better engage

with and shape culture through equipping and supporting families and developing meaningful relationships in the process. The document advocates a perspective of the unique history of New Zealand and the role that Parenting Place can play in it, as interpreted and understood through the lens of the gospel of Jesus, “who offers hope for every person and every relationship.” The vision is cohesive, but it is not clear. Elsewhere the document states, “It is an exploratory venture that is breaking new ground, requiring us to be comfortable with ambiguity and mystery, and to walk with humility, vulnerability and a willingness to learn as we seek to understand.” This explanation of the journey within the Strategic Plan, as well as the way that the CEO and other senior staff members spoke of it, demonstrates that it is intentional and strategic. However, its exploratory nature and the lack of clarity surrounding what it means and how it shapes them as an agency lends weight to the thought that it is not unreasonable that this vision has not been publicly communicated elsewhere. This internal strategic plan is not available online to the public. Trust documents provide similar strategic oversight but they are available to the public via the Charities Services register.

The oldest trust deed for Parenting Place available on the charities register is dated 2008. The objectives of the trust in this document detail the purposes for which the trust exists. The stated objective of Parenting Place, found clearly on their website homepage and in their annual report is mirrored in the objectives of the trust stated on their trust deed. However, there is one notable addition in the trust deed which is not found so clearly stated elsewhere. In addition to declaring a charitable purpose and commitment to facilitating the development of parenting and relationship skills, one of the stated objectives is “to develop Christian character in parents in the context of their culture, community, and family.” Although defining and applying the aspiration of promoting Christian character in parents may present a challenge, the insistence that this be done within the context of culture is noteworthy given the organisational change which was being undertaken at the time of the interviews.

**Interviews: The Role of Faith and its Emergence as a Reasserted Foundational Value**

Although the interviews helped to clarify some of what is expressed in the analysis of the written material, they also raised additional questions. A manager within the organisation

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commented that the first thing that people say when they hear mention of Parenting Place is “Ian Grant.” He recounted a conversation that he had had with an associate who was not a Christian but who noted: “Ian Grant – He’s a guy that really brought his Christian faith into the mainstream in a way that we got and understood.” In admiring this legacy, the interviewee stated, “That’s what we want to be.” Talking about the way that faith plays a role in terms of the programmes and services that are provided, this manager stated, “We want to bring our faith through the help that we are giving to families ... by being with people and inviting conversations and not having any sense of ‘we’re not going there,’ but actually ‘absolutely we are going there.’” Similarly, a board member stated that the objective of Parenting Place is “flourishing relationships and understanding how the gospel can shape people and relationships and families to flourish.” In response to this strategic aspiration for Parenting Place, I commented to the manager that in order for faith conversations to happen, those that represent the agency as they engage with the end user of the services must share their faith: “It’s really hard to have a conversation about your faith if you don’t have a faith.” He acknowledged that this is a great challenge for them as an organisation. “If our mission is inspired by God to support families to flourish, and to discover and follow God’s desire for families in this country, then how is that understood, worked out and energised by the people on the ground who are dealing with families every day?” This is a probing, reflective question. It demonstrates the reality of the transition which Parenting Place is undergoing.

Without exception, all interviewees considered Parenting Place to be a faith-based organisation. A manager said, “This is not work. This is living out my faith.” A staff member shared that “when I am here at work I feel like I am in church.” Another, with a long history with Parenting Place, but who did not consider himself to be a Christian, stated that “this place fills my soul. I was never that interested in the values. What I was impressed by was the love of these people that filters into their work. And I do have a pretty good idea of where they get that from.” He later talked about a personal tragedy that he had recently experienced and noted that this place saved me. If the bars on your phone indicate your connection to God, my bars weren’t very strong. I was angry and disappointed. But when I look at the people that I work with, I see products of people who believe in God and I can’t argue with the product.

However, despite the cohesion in these responses, when asked how they knew that Parenting Place is a faith-based agency, no one except those in senior leadership positions mentioned that they were aware of any of the more formal statements mentioned above, such as the
Strategic Plan 2017-2020. The staff members who were not in leadership positions spoke of praying before meetings and singing worship songs together. One long-term staff member recounted how when the staff had had their first retreat with Greg after he became the CEO, they worked through the Bible. They noted that this was a line in the sand for Greg and it happened before “the mass exodus” of employees.

Greg took a risk and just said we are going to talk about the gospel from Genesis to Revelation and how our story fits in with this story that God has been telling since before we existed. It is more obvious now that we are faith-based. He communicated that “we are taking it back to the beginning” – referencing Ian and Mary.

However, when I asked the non-management staff members to identify any statement or policy which revealed a faith position, they were unsure. I was able to put this observation to the members of management that I interviewed latterly in the process of the data collection.

One member of the senior management said that the transition was still in progress and has been happening for two years, and it is a particular challenge that I feel in my role in terms of people development and connection of teams and strategy and the question of how we operate here as an organisation. How do we ensure that from the moment people first have a connection with us, to coming on board, and then being part of us, that they are both aware and enthusiastic about our faith foundation – and particularly aware of the strategic basis we have? I know that that challenge is there because as an organisation we have come out of a background where you just assume that it is known. We do not have processes in place, or an organisational maturity, to say “actually you can’t assume that. There has to be intention.”

These reflections reinforce the analysis that this is an emerging and evolving culture, despite the fact that it is an intentional strategic direction by the CEO and others. The manager quoted above continued: “It is clear that part of the reason that this hasn’t been established in the whole organisation is that this thing takes time and we probably need to be even more intentional, but what we don’t want to do is lurch to being token about it.” The managers that I interviewed hoped that, while this approach is likely to be slower than a more directive transition, it is also likely to be more sincere and be owned by the staff more effectively.

However, there is also a risk that if this emerging culture is not instantiated in governance documents with a formal faith or value statement, there is little long term protection from the culture evolving away from this position gain in the future.

I asked the CEO if he felt it was important for the end user to know that they are a Christian organisation. Having not considered the question before, he asserted that it is important that the course facilitators are shaped by the culture of the organisation, but was unsure if the end
user knowing that they were faith-based was particularly critical. When I spoke to the Chief Operating Officer (COO), he talked of his previous experience working at World Vision:

As the marketing director I developed a great deal of clarity on the donor side of things. It was that we would not mix our messages. We are there to help people, in communities and we wouldn’t mix the message by saying, “Oh, and by the way, we are also Christians.” We wouldn’t add that complexity to the message. But we would ensure, very carefully, that on our website or in our magazines, inside the front cover, and we would say that we were a Christian humanitarian organisation who follows the example of Jesus in loving people regardless of race, religion, or creed. Something like that. I think that that is what we are trying to do when we say “shaped by hope” in our strategic plan.

As mentioned above, if Parenting Place is going to see their staff and volunteers build authentic relationships with families which ultimately lead to conversations of faith, a key challenge is that some of the volunteers and staff do not have a faith of their own. This is not to suggest that faith conversations are the subversive objective of Parenting Place; one interviewee stated, “We are not there, frankly, to lead people to Christ. We are there to help people, and we do it out of a gospel motivated heart.” However, they have also stated that they want to work “deeper with families than (they) are at the moment.” If they want to be able to have those deep, informal conversations with users of their products and services and “absolutely go there” in terms of having conversations about faith, there is a practical limitation here. By way of an example, in the facilitator’s manual for the “Building Awesome Whānau” course, in the opening pages there is a message to the facilitator. It states, “When you act as a facilitator for our Toolbox groups, you are representing The Parenting Place. To help you understand who we are and why we have put this course together the way we have, here are some of our underlying principles.”36 In the list that follows one of the principles asserts, “We are Christian in our values and motivation, while respectful of the choices of others.”37 In 2016, when I attended a facilitator training day for this course, references to faith were notably absent from the presentation, despite a number of overt statements of faith from other course attendees. One participant stated that “God chased me until I got on board.” At one point the presenter shared a quote: “Without vision the people perish.” She then attributed this quote to King Tawhiao, the second Māori king, despite the fact he was referencing Proverbs 29:18 when he stated this. Although it may have been ignorance rather than incorrectly attributing the quote intentionally, as an attendee on the course, her failure to identify the fact that King Tawhio had been quoting from the Bible felt like a noticeable and intentional exclusion of a faith statement. This anecdotal experience occurred two years prior

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37 Building Awesome Whānau, ix.
to carrying out the interviews and in that time the cultural shift of Parenting Place was in its infancy. However, the challenge for them remains valid. If they want to see informal conversation about faith take place as a natural result of authentic relationships developing between their staff or volunteers and course attendees, if those who represent the organisation possess a faith of their own, these conversations seem to be significantly more likely to occur. This is particularly pertinent and challenging for toolbox facilitators, who are community volunteers that have little or no engagement with the agency except through the regional co-ordinators. These co-ordinators, who also have a lesser degree of connectivity to the culture of Parenting Place by merit of the fact that they operate with a level of autonomy within the regions, become extremely strategically important. As they recruit and train volunteers, they become gate keepers of the wider culture of Parenting Place. This challenge is recognised by the managers, one of whom said in an interview:

> If our mission is inspired by God to support families to flourish, and to discover and follow God’s desire for families in this country, then how is that understood, worked out and energised by the people on the ground who are dealing with families every day? It’s about this change; the thing that I am realising is that we have come from a place and we are changing to another place, and these are the questions that we have to address, but they take time. As long as we understand the questions, that is really key.

The CEO has tried to develop an awareness of the organisation’s culture shift among the regional coordinators by bringing everyone together from time to time to have an overnight stay on a marae;\(^{38}\) the regional coordinators can only promote the culture of Parenting Place to the extent that they know what that culture is. However, according to the interviews, this is proving to be a very slow process.

The data from both the written sources and the interviews acknowledge a strong faith motivation at the inception of Parenting Place and that this foundational value is being re-imagined and asserted today. Implicit within these statements is the assumption that there had been some departure from the original motivating values and the current managers have determined that faith is still significant for the agency. If there had been no departure then there would be no need to reassert the position and embark on a journey of discovery. Similarly, there would also be no need if there was no perceived value in the role of faith for the organisation. The sentiment of returning to ones roots implies that one has departed from them, but still values them and wants to recapture the connection. The interview data assisted

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38 A marae is a location with buildings and facilities which serves as a meeting place and cultural hub for Māori families who belong to that marae.
in explaining some of the factors surrounding this original evolution away from the founding values.

**The History of Mission Drift at Parenting Place**

In speaking to the founders, they explained that the agency had started out of Youth for Christ, a nationwide ministry which they led. Parents approached Ian and Mary Grant and asked them to speak to parents of teenagers. It began as a one-off event and expanded from there. A self-proclaimed evangelist, Ian noted that “if you want to share the gospel with people, you’ve got to scratch them where they itch.” Initially they would go to a town and run events, covertly permeate the talk with spiritual things, and then invite the participants to a “blue-moon” church service. “If you don’t go to church, or only once in a blue moon, come along.” Ian shared that what deeply motivated them was meeting practical needs and presenting the gospel in a way that was palatable to a general audience: “Christian people found it great to invite their neighbours to this parenting seminar and then talk about it afterwards about the spiritual side. That was our dream.” Mary noted that if people are paying for a parenting seminar, they don’t want to pay for a sermon. Rather than making an overt presentation of the gospel, they applied a strong Christian ethic which created opportunities for their friends to have discussions with them.

Ian and Mary established a nonprofit charity which, they informed me, had a statement of faith in it. This statement of faith has since disappeared from the trust deed, and they did not have a copy of it in its original iteration. Following the departure of Ian and Mary from the agency, it moved in a different direction from where they envisioned it would. Mary noted that in 2011 they left in a state of exhaustion and were relieved to have their competent marketing manager take over. However, the relationship between them and the new CEO soured quickly and they walked away completely. They acknowledged their lack of due diligence in this process, largely as a result of their exhaustion. The board member that I interviewed commented, “When you are a founder of an organisation, it takes quite a lot of humility and self awareness to be able to transition to a much bigger organisation that needs to take direction from a board that might be filled with people who aren’t actually your mates.” This comment suggests that this board member felt that Ian and Mary may have held the control and identity of the agency too closely. This critique of “founders syndrome” was countered to some degree by a comment that Ian made regarding the challenge of letting go as

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39 Founders syndrome is the phenomenon of founders of nonprofit agencies struggling to let go of control of the organization at the end of their tenure. It is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.
the “passionate founder”: “It is a big challenge to find others who share that passion.” As a result of this tension, and perhaps other factors, the transition to the new CEO was messy. Although a weak board that had not been empowered to provide governance may explain some of the upheaval, this is not a complete explanation.

The board member I interviewed provided an excellent analysis of the mission drift that occurred over the following years:

My perception of the shift that happened is that there wasn’t a clear articulation of what it meant to be an effective faith-based organisation living in culture. Because there wasn’t a clear articulation, they weren’t telling stories about that and there wasn’t a wrestling with how we do this. So the organisation just drifted with culture. It might not have been on purpose, but you have to be purposeful in how you position an FBO in culture or you will just drift with culture. The culture drift was just careless and negligent. There wasn’t an anchoring to any solid DNA or theological understanding of what it means to be this organisation and what it means to have the culture shape this organisation.

The intentional faith and cultural journey which the management have embarked on with Parenting Place appears to be an attempt to address this critique of organisational culture. However, the absence of an articulated faith position within the guiding constitutional document may indicate that there is still no “anchoring to any solid DNA” with regard to the underlying theological motivations of the agency. The board member continued, analysing how the desire for growth led to a process of seeking new funding streams, which in turn invited new actors to have influence over the organisation:

Part of the desire to expand and be big, which you can understand, is from the point of view of being more effective and a desire for professionalism.... All these things are good when they are anchored in the right theological underpinning and DNA. I don’t think that that was there. Then you have unanchored desires for growth and expansion, which are well motivated, but that creates funny outcomes because you need funding for that. You look to corporate sponsors and government for funding. That funding is not purely linked to you developing your mission because these sponsors are looking at “what’s in it for me?” The accountability relationship became much more to corporates and government. Those changes in donor funds had a really significant impact on the culture and the DNA of the organisation. It has this effect over the whole organisation. I am not opposed to corporate sponsors, but you have to know what you are dealing with and be really clear about what you will and won’t do. There became a real dependence on those sources of funds and that lead to an appearance of big, corporate organisation. The mum and dad donors dropped off; that was my experience as a donor. So, the one source of funds that wants to hold you accountable to actually helping mums and dads and furthering your outworking of the gospel are no longer a big source of funding.... You [want donors] that are going to hold you accountable to achieving your vision.

This perception was supported by members of the management team. One of them noted, “We – Greg – inherited an organisation that was not talking about things of faith.... It looks
like there was almost a decade\textsuperscript{40} of gradual and almost intentional move away from speaking about our ‘Christian-ness,’ certainly in our strategic documents and annual reports.” A manager stated that, as he understood it, the previous CEO had spoken to a number of other CEOs from other agencies and got the advice that “you can’t let your Christian faith be a key part of your message or even known.” This advice provides at least a partial explanation of the mission drift that occurred within Parenting Place in the four years prior to Greg being appointed as the current CEO.

I asked the staff about how Greg had attempted to re-assert foundational values and initiate a cultural shift that appears to be taking root. Several interviewees observed that Greg has been very purposeful. One of them said, “Greg has spent a lot of time wrestling with questions of how do you outwork your vision as an organisation and stay faithful to the call and have your DNA strong and effective.” Several interviewees also mentioned that he also has the ability to inspire people to get on board with a vision and believe that it is meaningful and significant. One interviewee said of Parenting Place and her commitment to the vision that “some days I am like, here, take my first born.” A staff member noted that Greg has initiated practices around story-telling and “connecting the team to their roots and the roots of the Parenting Place and the story of the gospel in New Zealand that we are a part of.” Both a staff member and one of the managers noted that Greg also invested heavily into a senior leadership team to ensure that he was not the only one carrying the vision. Finally, a number of interviewees described his ability to create an environment in which organisational change was expected. One interviewee noted, “He came with the expectation that people would either get on board or they would leave, and he was purposeful in creating an environment where there wasn’t room for ambivalence.” These practices of the CEO have all contributed to promoting the culture shift within Parenting Place and they appear to be deeply considered and intentional. However, the fact that more than two years in there is still evidence of this culture continuing to emerge and there are many factors that it brings up that the leadership team are regularly forced to wrestle with, demonstrates how slow moving and how challenging such an undertaking may be.

The Haerenga

Within the current social and political climate, there is much to be sceptical about when an organisation makes significant changes which appear to be overtly culturally sensitive toward

\textsuperscript{40} The time from the founders leaving to Greg Fleming taking on the role of CEO was four years. I took this reference of “nearly a decade” to be hyperbole.
Māori language is becoming increasingly utilised and promoted politically and within popular culture in New Zealand, despite the slowly declining rates of Māori who can converse in Te Reo. In late 2017, Labour MP Tamati Coffey was reported to be working on a private members bill to increase funding of mainstream programmes receiving New Zealand on Air or Te Mangai Paho funding where they contained content in Te Reo Māori. Due to the social and political movements to be proactively inclusive of Māori culture, an FBO that is seen as overtly and intentionally multi-cultural and inclusive is likely to be more positively considered for funding from government and potential corporate sponsors. However, it is disproportionately younger generations within the total population of New Zealand who are increasing in rates of Te Reo Māori usage. Incorporation of Māori vocabulary may exclude or create a barrier for older New Zealanders and those of Pacific Island and other non-Māori cultures who may have need for the services Parenting Place provide.

Due to the observations within the website material surrounding the haerenga, how Parenting Place was proactively engaging in Māori culture, and how that shapes and influences them as an agency which seeks to engage with all New Zealanders, I listened carefully to the ways the interviewees talked about their haerenga and faith. A white New Zealander employee explained the personal significance of this journey of learning and discovery.

What landed the haerenga in my heart and mind is the realisation that the talk of it has to come out of the role of the gospel. It isn’t side by side, and certainly the haerenga doesn’t sit on top or underneath. It is the Christian basis of who we are and what we do which was God moving and leading people to work with Māori. That gives us an identity around Ihu Karaiti as Jesus Christ, working through this land.

The COO recounted a story of an interaction he experienced with a funder and Greg Fleming, the CEO, which similarly explained the connection between their cultural haerenga and their faith:

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A funder said to me, “You guys aren’t still on that Christian sort of thing like you used to be are you?” and Greg sat there thinking, “I’m about to lose $50k.” But what he said was, “Well, actually what we are about is the story of New Zealand. Let me talk to you a bit about that.” He went on and talked about the missional basis of the treaty and how we were very enthused about what missionaries were trying to do at that time in bringing together the gospel of Christ into this land and then working in a way that reflected what the gospel was talking about. Their response was that that is amazing.

Both the faith journey and the haerenga are a process of exploring, defining, and owning an identity. It places an emphasis on who Parenting Place is, rather than what they do. Consequently, it is an interwoven journey with significant overlaps. The CEO explained that as a Christian, his identity is “rooted in who Christ says I am. I am also a human being, which means that I am in time and place and am therefore in culture. So the expression of that identity is unavoidably going to happen through culture.” However, he said that he was cautious in making this statement as he felt that it could be understood as a statement asserting that one is Christian before they are Māori, and that sounds like a colonising statement. He clarified that “the identity in Christ sits apart from cultural expressions, but we can only know it and express it through culture. That’s where the two overlap. I can no more separate them out than I can separate myself from culture.” Those nearest him and this journey would not misunderstand this claim. When I asked a Māori staff member of Parenting Place what the values of the agency were, his response referenced the integration of Māori culture. He commented that “as a Māori and having a spiritual connection to all sorts of things, connection with a faith-based organisation is a natural fit.” He went on to observe that at the start of staff meetings they would open with a prayer in Te Reo Māori. They would then pray for each other and at the end they would close with a Māori hymn. “If there was a team jersey that you wore, that’s the jersey.” This interviewee stated,

I am not interested in them [non-Māori staff members] becoming Māori. To me they are just enhancing their kiwi-ness. They bring to the table their Pakeha-ness, their Samoan-ness, and I bring my Māori-ness, and together we feast on that. I don’t mind being part of the boil-up, but I don’t want to be part of a soup that lessens anyone’s ethnicity and culture.

The CEO firmly believes that as they “land the haerenga,” it will help to clarify who and what we are within the context of drawing back to the founding vision of Aotearoa, which I firmly believe was this desire for an extraordinary relationship, which in the end would lead to two becoming one, the ultimate relationship. That’s John 17.... Let us sit and listen to one another. That challenge is the one

45 A boil up is a Māori dish in which a variety of different meat and vegetables are boiled in a pot and flavours infuse between ingredients. However, they are not boiled to the point of breaking down; ingredients remaining separate and whole.
that we take very seriously here, which is to engage so seriously with “the other,” with the neglected other, that we learn their language, we learn their stories, we learn their songs, we listen, we listen, we listen; we immerse ourselves completely until they genuinely are at the point where, along with the current dominant culture, we can then together say “what does it look like to become one?”

Although the cultural journey and the faith journey are not synonymous, the CEO and the staff I interviewed at Parenting Place talked about a close connection between the two. The CEO shared that their dream “is that Aotearoa would be marked by wonderful relationships. That’s our vision, but you look back and see that that is the very dream that this country was founded on, and it’s what the gospel is about – the reconciliation of all things. That is who we are.”

**Dependence and Financial Influence and the Involvement of the Board**

In the course of the interviews there were two noteworthy topics that arose that were not raised by the website and document analysis: the role of resource dependence and financial influence, and secondly, the nature of the board and their involvement in the faith journey of the organisation.

Comments made throughout the interviews asserted that the mission drift that had occurred in the years between Ian Grant leaving and Greg Fleming becoming CEO appeared to be in part a result of attempting to accommodate various funders. The board member I interviewed stated,

> When I came onto the board the financial pressures were so much greater on the organisation and so what they were willing to compromise on became stronger and stronger. The board was more fixated on financial performance than on the outworking of vision. It started to look at the organisation like a commercial operation. For example, Family Coaching wasn’t bringing in any money so it was on the block, but that is one of the core ways that we reach families.

The board member said that another member of the board confronted Greg not long after Greg took the CEO position. He told him that if he kept going on “about your Christian stuff,” he would lose their government and corporate funders. This emphasis on pursuing corporate funds had the additional impact of driving away smaller donors.

In contrast to that warning, donations have increased a great deal in recent years. The COO stated,

> If it is started by God, led by God, driven by God, and brings people who love God around who can continue to sustain it, that is how this organisation does its work. Why didn’t they get that earlier on? Why have we grown? It is from Greg going out and talking about this; what we are doing and what’s driving us and
shaping us.... We have had this corporate thing and this corporate money, but as we have more conversations about Jesus and who we are and what we are trying to do, it brings funders around who have a heart for God.

Both the COO and the member of the board I interviewed asserted that they could afford to be selective when choosing sponsors. The COO stated,

We try to have a listening posture to what God is getting us to do and where he is leading us. I think that that’s about figuring out not where the funding is coming from, but thinking about where do we go and then who do we need to talk to about helping to fund that.

The board member mirrored his sentiment.

There will be sponsors and donors out there for us. It is just a matter of finding the ones that are going to be life giving for us. If we need to hide our faith in order to secure a corporate donor, they aren’t our donor. They aren’t the provision that God has for us.

As Parenting Place has reasserted their foundational faith values, they have re-ignited the funding from grassroots level supporters. By becoming decreasingly driven by their corporate image and increasingly emphasising the values that underlie their practice, they haven’t lost corporate sponsorship. This is likely to be largely as a consequence of the management team’s emphasis on relationships and developing shared visions with these supporting agencies. The increase in both funding sources and total income, which has doubled since Greg became the CEO, enhances the level of security that Parenting Place has. This in turn allows them to assert their image and values in a way consistent with their convictions without fear of undermining their long term financial sustainability.

The interviews with senior managers and the board member also revealed a challenging dynamic that has developed in the course of the faith journey of Parenting Place. The non-management employees of the agency have a less consolidated view of the role of faith within the organisational context, but, based on the nature of their responses, they appear to be acquiring the culture by osmosis as they operate within it. This strategic journey has been initiated and driven by the CEO and the management team. However, unlike the staff members, the members of the board do not live within the culture of the agency. A member of the management team commented,

A board meeting starts and stops. They aren’t in the culture of the place.... A board member asked me, “Is the place becoming more Christian? Is God being talked about more?” I’ve know this guy for three years and I find it amazing that people are still asking these questions even after all we are doing.

His comments illustrate the difficulty of changing organisational culture. His words also provide an example of the disconnect between the board and the journey that the organisation
is on. The board member that I interviewed indicated that the board was not particularly unified. A manager commented, “The board are a perfect snapshot of what has happened over the last few years. It has been very corporate driven and led. The previous CEO was a corporate marketer and he gathered other corporates around him.” Ian and Mary Grant commented that they had been involved in ministries, including this one, where they felt like the board didn’t really understand the ministry. They commented that they largely ignored this fact, thinking that it didn’t matter very much. Mary noted, “But it does matter, because the moment you leave they don’t actually understand what your motivation was for doing things.”

I asked Greg about how he is navigating the journey of organisational cultural change without the guidance and support of the board.

The long term plan is that the board continue to come on this haerenga to the point that they are able to be the kaitiaki [guardians] of this well beyond me being here. The entire organisation is going on a haerenga, and that includes the board. Is the board going on it at a different rate from the rest of the organisation? Yes. I have been looking at ways in which I can help the board to take bigger steps along this. The managers and some of the staff are also aware of the philosophical and theological differences between the board and management. A manager commented: “It was a board member who first felt that Greg should come to the Parenting Place and convinced the others. He has people in there who get it and he will have more people over time who get it more than others.” A staff member noted: “This is our waka. Our chief may be still at the Pa, but our skipper is pretty good so we will follow him.” Although the fact that some of the staff are aware of a disconnection between the governance and management and this is not helpful for their feeling of agency cohesion, several of them indicated their confidence that Greg’s competence as a fundraiser and a charismatic leader help to bridge this gap. The board member I spoke to noted that “Greg’s ability to raise donor funds gives him a degree of freedom in his leadership. You are not subjected to the same critique from the board.”

Concluding Remarks

There are a number of challenges facing Parenting Place as they continue to attempt to evolve and mature into their new identity. If the board does not evolve with the remainder of the organisation, they may grow apart. In the long term this could undermine the culture of the agency. Strong, determined, and charismatic leadership, such as Parenting Place experienced

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46 Canoe. This is referencing the organisation.
47 The Pa is a Māori village.
under Ian and Mary Grant, and now under Greg Fleming, creates organisational culture and protects the vision encapsulated within that culture. However, unless the board also promotes and values this culture, when these leaders move on it leaves the organisation increasingly susceptible to mission drift through the pressures of resource dependence and natural organisational evolution.

The degree of incoherence which is evident in the written messaging about Parenting Place and what motivates them is similarly evident in what they both say about themselves and what their practice reveals. As the management team had feared at the outset of the research, it is an incoherent message. However, this incoherence is less between the managers and the staff – as they had feared – and more between what they say about themselves verbally compared to what they write about themselves. There is evidence that this may be changing slowly.

When I initially analysed the website and written material I noted that in addition to the paucity of comments relating to faith convictions as underlying motivators for their activity, the small number of comments were either ambiguous or in Māori. The impression it left was that an attempt was being made to acknowledge a faith conviction, but only in a way that was surreptitious enough not to cause offence. However, near the end of my analysis of Parenting Place, I revisited the website and noted that they had listed a number of vacant job positions. In each of these vacancies the following comment was provided:

[We are] committed to engaging with the story of Aotearoa New Zealand and our unique place in the world – a story which not only inspires our mission, but deeply informs our work. Our heart for relationships, and our hope for this land is also strongly connected to Te Rongopai – the Gospel.48

The use of “the gospel” to define Te Rongopai is significant for a number of reasons. It is overtly stated in English and is therefore plain for all to see. This does not alter the perception of what Parenting Place does, but it alters the perception of why they do it. Equally noteworthy is that this clear reference to faith motivation is found within a job advertisement. It indicates an intentionality with regard to the motivations of the people that they are bringing into the organisation; it is an act which will help to encourage and protect a particular ethic and organisational culture. Finally, the fact that the first overt statement of faith in English on the website was found very late during the research project may point toward the continuing evolution of the organisation and the journey that it is on. If this is to be taken as a marker of

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organisational development then it lends weight to the position of the CEO and senior managers that both the haerenga and recapturing their Christian motivation are closely connected.

The CEO commented that he is looking forward to having the ability to write down and declare “this is who we are,” but also asserted that he was unsure if they would actually do this just because they could. He wants staff to understand the organisation’s faith experientially by being immersed in it. However, when I raised the fact that Ian Grant had commented that a statement of faith had been removed from the original trust deed, he considered the potential benefit that it could afford.

The board are the kaitiaki (guardians) of the agency. A statement of faith for the board could make a lot of sense; I would just love for that statement of faith to be drawn out of an Aotearoa theology; a theology that is expressed out of the cultural, social, and historical context of New Zealand. I wonder if we could take a commonly used statement of faith, like the Apostles Creed, and express it through an Aotearoa cultural lens?

The commitment of the management team at Parenting Place to resolving their emerging identity is apparent. However, there is less evidence that they have considered how to protect it into the future. The nature of the practices which are acting as vehicles for organisational evolution are likely to protect the culture and values to an extent. However, the organic, experiential approach may be susceptible to mission drift again in the future without it being formally instantiated in policy documents. A statement of faith in the trust deed could go some way to providing a level of protection to the mission and culture of the agency by providing a guiding policy for the board, who in turn are responsible for guiding the organisation.

In addition to the internal challenges of developing an increasingly unified culture amongst the staff, volunteers, and board, the marketing and public messaging will become increasingly important for Parenting Place, as will the instantiation of that culture within formal governance documents. Having asserted the importance of faith in motivating what they do, Parenting Place now face the task of determining what role, if any, this plays within the context of their products and services. In order to support all whānau in New Zealand, their products and services, and their public brand, must not exclude or marginalise any groups, even unintentionally. The move away from a printed magazine means that public messaging around the role and influence of faith cannot mirror the example that the COO gave of his experience with World Vision, where they included an overt statement of faith within the
Parenting Place is going to have to decide where and how they might reflect their faith foundation in a way that is clear and unashamed, but does not mix the messages in terms of the resources and services that they provide. The observations that I have made in the course of the analysis of the online material suggest that the core message of wanting to support whānau to thrive is clear and central. There is currently no risk that the message of faith as a foundational motivation for the agency might get mixed with this message, as it is very hard to find, even if one is proactively seeking it out. How this message is introduced and incorporated is a complex undertaking, but key personnel within the organisation have demonstrated a commitment to the process overall, which suggests that they will engage with the challenge proactively and consider what opportunities it may present. The COO commented that “you find ways of connecting with people without making them feel uncomfortable. As a communicator I don’t think I would lead with the Christian message. We have to be clever about how we communicate without ever hiding who we are.”

Within the wider context of the research, this case study provides an important contribution as an example of an organisation that has identified mission drift and taken actions to reverse it. It reveals a number of the challenges and hazards associated with such a process, but also establishes that it is possible to begin the process of organisational change. The example of Parenting Place illustrates that the leader’s intentionality and strategic approach can play a significant role in providing a catalyst for this change. Even when initiated well, this transition is a difficult process and may take years to be established. It is likely that it is easier to protect culture, mission, vision, and values, than attempt to re-assert foundational values once the organisation has evolved away from them.
Chapter 8. Discussion of Findings: FBO-Church Relationships, Prayer, and Theology of Family

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, a number of subjects emerged which I had not predicted would be themes: the complexity of relationships between the FBOs and churches, the role of prayer with clients, and the lack of ability of most interviewees to articulate any theology of the family. Many interviewees from FBOs with formal connections to the church discussed the tension and complexity within this relationship. Interviewees from the FBOs without a formal relationship to a church alluded to different challenges as a result of their lack of connection to a faith community. The degree to which staff members of FBOs prayed with their clients, or felt the freedom to, provided a marker which revealed attitudes relating to the role of faith in their work. The lack of scrutinised and articulated definitions of family, particularly with a theological foundation, was striking in a cohort of organisations with a Christian history and a primary purpose of supporting families. In this chapter the findings in these three areas are discussed and some of the implications for both the faith-based sector and church communities looking to respond to social needs are explored.

Relationships between FBOs and Churches: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Challenges

In each of the three case study organisations that had formal connections to a church – The Salvation Army (TSA), Catholic Family Support Services (CFSS), and Family Works New Zealand (FWNZ)¹ – the relationship between the church and the FBO was identified as an area of difficulty. The remaining two case studies, which did not have formal ties to any particular church, experienced different challenges as a result of their isolation from the Christian community. Both CFSS and TSA demonstrated a commitment to navigate the tensions inherent in their relationship with the church, in order that both the church and the social service provider may be strengthened by the collaboration. However, although these values were espoused both formally and informally by those in management positions, the staff within each of these organisations expressed the difficulty of actually achieving this desired collaboration and unity. Family Works New Zealand (FWNZ) provided an alternative example. This FBO had sought increasing autonomy from the church, and while the affiliated Presbyterian Church was still formally connected at a governance level, many of the church leaders and parishioners seemed unsure of the nature of the relationship beyond governance

¹ Given that it is conceivable that a reader may omit the preceding data chapters and instead look to the concluding chapters for the discussion of findings, it is prudent to reiterate that the investigation of TSA and FWNZ, while taking into account documents and web material which encapsulate the entire organisations, focused in on the Northern region of FWNZ and the Midlands and Northern Divisions of TSA.
ties. In the examples provided by TSA, CFSS, and FWNZ, there were a number of reoccurring themes which were consistently highlighted as influencing factors on the FBOs as it pertained to their relationship with the church. The influence of money and other sources of resource, the FBOs’ organisational and governance structures, and the degree to which their social services were perceived as a ministry of the church were common topics of concern.

Resources: Money and Personnel

In the New Zealand context, those FBOs that are engaged in the provision of social services for families tend to align themselves to the contractual requirements of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). As a government department, the MSD is responsible for leading social development “to achieve better futures for all New Zealanders,” including providing support to families.² The government sets priorities for the Ministry and assigns outcomes.³ In order to achieve these outcomes, the Ministry subcontracts external agencies. FBOs that apply for MSD contracts functionally become a subcontracted government department. One interviewee stated that “MSD are both the client and the employer.” Talking about the formation of CFSS, a manager stated that “there wasn’t a lot of money. The Bishop of the time basically said that we’ve got to go and get contracts to do it. So we are beholden to the Ministry of Social Development; we have Ministry of Social Development contracts.” The majority of CFSS’s funding now comes from government contracts, as is the case for most of the other agencies investigated. As a consequence of this funding model, one staff member stated that while the Bishop “has a huge say in what we do, he is not actually, you know [my employer].” As the proprietor of CFSS, the Bishop is in fact this staff member’s employer, but the external source of funding significantly confuses this relationship.

The approach of seeking external funding is entirely understandable for a new or struggling FBO. If the FBO has been established to meet a social need, and there exists external funding streams that will fund them to do exactly that which they have been mandated to carry out, it would seem wise and prudent that those contracts be pursued. This would theoretically lead to increased stability for the organisation. However, as will be expanded on in more detail in the next chapter, where critical resources are provided by any source, that source becomes increasingly influential on the organisation. The Bishop of the Hamilton Diocese cautioned, “It’s like walking a tight rope at times…. We don’t want to be beholden to government and

just don’t want to, you know, be their servant.” Notably, the manager of CFSS also chose this same phrase, “being beholden,” to describe the relationship of CFSS with the MSD; he commented that, with 60% of the funding coming from government contracts, “We are beholden to the Ministry of Social Development.”

While the impact of resource dependence is most readily seen in the context of finances, the influence on human resources is also noteworthy. Increasing professionalisation in the social service sector, driven by both contractual requirements and professional bodies, seems to have exacerbated the divergence of FBOs and the church. This was highlighted in the research of Jason Davies-Kildea outlined in Chapter 5 and was reiterated by a number of the interviewees. One manager in TSA noted that increasing professionalisation has tended to lead to secularisation of the work force, because the most qualified applicants for a role have not always shared the foundational faith values of the agency. The manager of CFSS informed me that professional standards were the number one influence on their day-to-day operational practice.

The Open Home Foundation (OHF) provides an example of an FBO which is overtly faith-based, but which has no formal association with any church. Nonetheless, their separation from the Christian community is one that impacts them through the lack of availability of human resources, especially volunteers. Recruitment of Christian foster parents has become increasingly challenging for OHF due to a disconnection with the faith community. One of the interviewees noted that OHF’s baseline or foundation was to work through the churches. Churches these days don’t like agencies taking time out of their limelight, if you will, to promote what they’re doing. But even though that’s what we were fundamentally out there to do, to try and find foster parents, or caregivers, to look after vulnerable children, and because we’re a Christian organisation, it would be through the churches. But now the churches just don’t have the time, or are too big, and don’t do notice boards. Open Home Foundation has grown massively, hugely over the years, nationwide, but outside of the church, so it’s been really interesting.... [Our mission was to do it through the churches], but it’s no longer happening through the churches because the churches are now closed [to us].

Parenting Place, the other FBO not formally connected to any church, similarly experienced a drift away from their Christian supporters as they focused on corporate sponsorship. This decision had the unintended consequence of losing connection with the grassroots funders who had both supported them financially and held them accountable to their faith-motivated

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mission. However, as they re-connected with their core foundational values and reasserted them publicly, Parenting Place was able to re-energise their grassroots supporters, while at the same time retaining corporate sponsors. Although they had felt they needed to adjust their identity to better align with the values of potential funders, this perception appears to have been largely self-imposed and untrue. A board member stated, “Maintaining relationships with corporate partners is easy because people like authentic people. They like honesty. They like transparency. They like people who will say, ‘This is what we are about. Faith is instrumental to this.’ Their response is that that’s cool.” This example is explored in more detail in the discussion on mission drift in the next chapter.

By seeking funding from external sources, FBOs are able to grow and efficiently resource meaningful initiatives that are consistent with their ethos, values, and mission. However, this research highlights the cost associated with this support. Decreasing reliance on a faith community for financial aid decreases the connection that the agency has with the church. Similarly it reduces the sense of ownership that the church community has for the agency and their social aid initiatives. Although looking for available funding streams for work which is aligned with the FBO’s vision makes good business sense, it can undermine the sense of responsibility that individual Christians within the affiliated faith community have to meet the needs of the vulnerable in the community. This research shows that, through no intention of the church or the managers of the FBO’s, external funding often drives the FBO and the church further apart both operationally and relationally.

Conversely, when funding comes from the faith community, this can serve to maintain and enrich the relationship with the church. In the case of FWNZ, they had proactively removed references to faith from all of their material and did not consider themselves to be an FBO in their own estimation. Nonetheless, one interviewee commented that the anecdotes of success stories that they were required to provide for advertising purposes were used by Presbyterian Support New Zealand to “strengthen their position in their Christian values because they’re getting these stories for … their donors, the people who read these stories and give legacies, and leave wills and stuff like that.” Looking at the funding that a church provides to an FBO engaged in social service activities may be one method of measuring the extent that the faith community “owns” that initiative. However, funding was not a complete representation of the degree to which the FBO was perceived as a ministry of the church. This was another topic which was raised by many of the interviewees.
Social Service as a Ministry of the Church

The question of whether the provision of social services is a ministry of the church or a separate function carried out by an affiliated organisation was a topic which was raised in the context of each of the three FBOs with formal links to a church. It was of particular concern for TSA. Despite the unified ethos which was clearly communicated in all of their documentation and espoused by the centre managers and Territorial and Divisional leaders, they also acknowledged that this idealised unity did not always reflect reality. While social services are an integral component of the mission of the TSA as a faith community, one Team Leader commented that the Community Ministry Centres are “an autonomous place from the Corps.” Another interviewee declared that most of her colleagues don’t feel as if they are affiliated with the church. A Divisional leader confirmed this perception when she stated that many of the staff did not feel part of TSA: “They work for The Salvation Army during the week, but they’ll say things like, ‘Oh well, I’m not a salvationist.'” This perception was not universal, but it was a frequent theme from the interviewees.

Similarly, the relationship between CFSS and the church demonstrated dissonance in what was formally stated and the perceptions of the staff. The formal purpose statements from CFSS declared a close affiliation with the church. They referred to themselves as the “Social Services Arm of the Catholic Diocese of Hamilton,” and the “caring arm of the Church.”

The purpose of CFSS’s existence as a ministry of the church is incorporated within its name, and some degree of importance is placed on this. During his interview, the Catholic Bishop mentioned that there had been talk about changing the name of CFSS in order to make it appear more accessible to a wider range of people. However, while FWNZ had removed references to faith for the same reason, the Bishop was referring to a discussion about removing the word “family.” He clarified, “We would keep the ‘Catholic’ name because that’s our ethos and provides our ethos and direction.” However, despite the agency’s strong affiliation with the church, the non-management staff members felt a degree of disconnection from the church. One interviewee commented that she did not feel that CFSS is a faith-based organisation – “it’s an element, but it’s not the driver” – but also stated that the values of the agency “come from the fact that we’re connected to the church.” Another noted that the thought of doing the job because of the ability to reflect God’s love to those in need was never a conscious thought for her. The only consistent connection that the staff felt the organisation had with the church was through the involvement of the Bishop. The Bishop also noted that

5 Catholic Family Support Services, “Home.”
6 Catholic Family Support Services, “About.”
he proactively encouraged the staff to consider the people they were dealing with as more than clients: “I’ve been really working with our staff … to look at the spiritual dimension of the human person.”

At TSA and CFSS, the interviewees’ perceptions of the relationship between the FBO and the church was complex and nuanced. However, at FWNZ the staff’s views were more definite; there was no meaningful relationship between the church and the FBO. I asked one interviewee if there was a connection with the church. He responded, “Certainly not from Family Works.” This response referenced the fact that he believed that Presbyterian Support Northern, their parent agency, had a connection to the church, but that the church was two degrees separated from the FBO. The manager I interviewed used the word “disconnect” when she described the relationship between FWNZ and the church. A board member confirmed this perspective: “There’s actually quite a separation [between the church and Family Works], and in fact many of the church parishioners aren’t even aware Family Works is part of Presbyterian Support. The separation of branding has become so complete that they’re just not even aware.” The manager acknowledged that there had been a number of Presbyterian ministers who had been critical of the separation of FWNZ and had accused them of “just want[ing the church] for the money.” She also shared that FWNZ “have actively looked at ways to – not to address it, because it’s certainly not at the top of the list – but ways to … generate funds from the churches and also do stuff to give back.” Although the perception of the staff at FWNZ demonstrated a clear relationship separation from the Presbyterian church, it appeared that some church members still felt tied to FWNZ. This perception was reinforced by the PresCare publication *Justice and Action*, in which the church was encouraged that one way of engaging with the needs in their community might be by supporting Family Works services in the local area.\(^7\) Within the comments recounted by the FWNZ manager, the hurt expressed by some Presbyterian ministers is understandable. The church and the FBO had different perspectives of their relationship and therefore different expectations.

Although I did not interview parishioners of the churches that are associated with the FBOs except for those who happened to work for the agency, a number of the interviewees shared their perception of how church members viewed the agency. The staff of TSA all considered that the parishioners were both proud of the Community Ministries and felt a sense of ownership for this work of the church. However, a Divisional Director revealed that for some

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\(^7\) PresCare, *Justice & Action: Social Transformation in our Communities*, 57.
salvationists there may be a sense of guilt in the fact that they are granted the kudos which TSA enjoys as a result of their social services without actually being personally involved in the service. She called this “ministry by proxy.” The Corps Officer who I interviewed similarly expressed concern that they had “unwittingly disempowered [the] congregation” from being involved in Community Ministries. The Territorial Manager of social services for TSA reflected on this:

We have this challenge with the people in the professionalisation of social services have gone, “We have those people over there that do that work for us, we don’t have to be a good neighbour, we don’t have to feed the poor or whatever. We can volunteer and do a little bit but actually we’ve got those people over there. As long as we pay our tithes they’ll carry on and do that work for us.”

Despite the risk of disempowering parishioners due to the professionalisation of the ministry of the church, the Corps Officer also clarified that a member of the congregation would be “pretty hard pressed to … feel like [they] can get out of that [responsibility to respond to social needs.]” The concept of responding to community needs is an integral part of their Christian mission. This ethos was similarly encouraged in the Catholic diocesan newsletter in a list of questions aimed to challenge the reader’s perception of mission: “What outreach mechanisms does your community have to meet the myriad of social needs that the wider community, and families in general, are facing?”

An interviewee from FWNZ, who professed a personal Christian faith, reflected on this topic and the implications that it may hold for the church, the individual Christian, and the role of the FBO as a ministry arm of the church. His musings provide an effective summary of the theological tensions that may surround the extent to which a church might consider an FBO to be a ministry of the church:

How much of the social responsibility is the church’s responsibility? Or is the church, in the sense of faith, my personal relationship with Jesus? Is that the full business of the church, and then from that I work that out in my daily life, whatever I do, personally? How much of the biblical mandate is a personal responsibility, a corporate church responsibility to its members and other believers, or a corporate responsibility to those outside of the church? This is as it relates to social justice action and meeting social needs, rather than the mandate of the Great Commission to make disciples. Jesus calls for a personal response and responsibility. The introduction of deacons demonstrates a corporate community response to care for those within the church – “They will know that you are my disciples by your love for one another. When you do this for the least of these my brothers and sisters, you do it for me.” To what extent is the church called to engage in such “social gospel” initiatives beyond its walls?

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Organisational Structure / Governance

For each of the three FBOs with a formal connection to a church, governance structures played an important role in maintaining the relationship between the FBO and the church. While “money” and “ministry” appear to have the capacity to connect them emotionally as well as in practice, “management” formalises this relationship. It provides a foundational structure which arrests natural relationship divergence. Having the church involved in the governance of the agency ensures that ties to the faith community are instantiated in policy and practice, and ensures that the relationship between the FBO and the church cannot drift apart without a conscious decision of those in positions of governance.

The example of FWNZ demonstrates both the importance of governance structures for maintaining formal relationships with the church and the limitations of what these formal connections might be relied on to achieve. Throughout New Zealand the FWNZ regional entities operate under the umbrella of the regional Presbyterian Support agency. For the purposes of this research, this relationship required an assessment of Presbyterian Support Northern’s constitution. One of the objectives of the trust detailed in this document was “co-operation with ministers and parishes of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand in furthering the objectives of the Trust.” Additionally, the constitution requires that eight of the eleven board members be members of the Presbyterian Church. This guarantees the involvement of the Presbyterian Church in the governance of Presbyterian Support, and by extension FWNZ. However, this structure also explains the separation that the staff members felt from the church as described above; for them the relationship feels two degrees removed.

Although Presbyterian Support has a formalised and protected governance relationship with the church, this connection at a strategic level is insufficient to influence the experience of the staff on a day-to-day basis. Given the relational distance between FWNZ and the Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church members and FWNZ staff can feel justified in claiming that the Presbyterian Support’s formalised governance link with the church is the only reason that any relationship exists in any way other than an historical connection.

The governance connection between CFSS and the Catholic Church is similarly guaranteed within their organisational structure. However, unlike the structure of FWNS, there is no intermediary agency between the church and CFSS. Additionally, the Bishop is the proprietor

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of CFSS and also provides care and oversight for the church within the diocese. Consequently, although the staff also felt some distance from the church, the interviewees were each deeply impacted by the care of the Bishop and his involvement with them. Because of this relationship, the Bishop and the manager of CFSS had a real working relationship – described by both of them – which caused the manager to feel personally connected to the mission of the church. Due to the Bishop’s shared oversight of both the needs and practices of CFSS and those of the parishioners in the church, he talked about being able to address and encourage the relationship between CFSS and the church. Similarly, he mentioned trying to encourage the sense of mission and shared responsibility felt by those within the church in relation to meeting social needs.

The Salvation Army provided a further example of an organisational structure which guarantees a close relationship with the church. Legally, the church and the social service arms of TSA are a single entity. Although the Territorial Manager suggested that the lack of financial transparency may be an issue at times, the overwhelming consensus from those in leadership positions was that being a single entity was a significant strength for TSA. However, like all close relationships, this one was prone to challenges. Interviewees spoke of the administrative separation of the church and social services, and a journey of “coming back together.” The challenges around shared ownership of a single mission, as discussed previously in this chapter and in Chapter 5, are real, and they cause tension in the relationship between the social service providers and the church. A Team Leader stated that “a lot of The Salvation Army see Community Ministries as separate from the Corps.” Similarly, the question of the identity of the staff who do not share the agency’s faith, but whom the national church leaders include when they refer to “salvationists,” raises questions. Despite the issues within the relationship, the organisational structure forces those within TSA to constantly wrestle with the tension they experience and to work toward unity. In the words of one of the Divisional Directors, “So we’re not a church or a social service, we’re a church and a social service. So how do we come together?”

For these three FBOs, the formal organisational relationship that they have with their respective affiliated churches has a profound impact on their relationship with the church. Without mandated leadership from the church; FWNZ may have cut even the weakly remaining ties to the church; the Catholic Bishop would be unlikely to share the same degree of care and investment in CFSS which the staff value so strongly and which connects them to the church; and the two pronged single mission of TSA may have long since separated into
two agencies with related, but separate, objectives. Involvement of the church in the governance of an FBO does not guarantee a healthy relationship between the church and the FBO, or ensure that the church supports the social services either financially or as a ministry of the church. However, it does ensure that the two entities cannot drift apart without a formal decision being made to reformat the governance structures and amend the relevant constitutional documents.

**Money, Ministry, and Management**

Although it would be unwise to draw universal conclusions for all FBOs which have formal connections to churches based on the example of three cases, the common themes which presented challenges in these FBOs are likely to be similarly reflected within other agencies. Consequently, these observations may assist other organisations to identify and understand potential sources of tension in their relationships with their supporting or founding faith community. The source of money as a primary component of resource dependence, the degree to which the church and faith play a formal role in the FBO’s organisational structure and governance, and the extent to which the social service practices of the FBO are perceived as a ministry of the church each reveal values and sources of influence on the FBO. These markers may assist in predicting the health of the relationship between a church and an associated FBO, as well as predict the potential for divergence in the future.

However, the significance of these markers must not be over-emphasised. The Salvation Army was a case which provided rich examples of the challenges of maintaining a relationship between an FBO and a founding faith community. A number of attributes exist which assist in providing stability to the agency and encouraging the relationship between the social services and the church: they are financially secure and enjoy a greater degree of diversity in their funding streams compared to the other FBOs in this study, their organisational and governance structures instantiate the unity of the church and their social services, and the church parishioners are supportive of the Community Ministries and are proud of their success. However, even with these significant strengths which encourage and protect the relationship between the church and their social services, the concern of how to promote unity and corporate ownership of both faith and social service as a single cohesive mission was the most significant concern for almost all interviewees. The value espoused by many of the managers within TSA was not a desire to become more unified with the church. Rather, they desired the ideal of a single entity on a single mission to be realised. The goal was for congregants to be “integrated into the mission, mobilised … into the ministry, and
given opportunity to be mobilised.” The example provided by TSA demonstrates that, while the questions of money, management, and ministry are influential on an FBO’s relationship with the church, even if they are all addressed positively there may still be challenges in maintaining this relationship.

These findings may also assist churches who want to corporately respond to a social need on a larger scale than at the individual level. The examples provided by these case studies can help facilitate churches’ understanding of the risks and benefits of institutionalising their social service response. A commitment to care for the vulnerable in society is a Christian mandate which permeates the scriptures. Isaiah 1:17 states, “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.” Similarly, the Christian commitment to social justice is most comprehensively established by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7. Beyond simple obedience to biblical teachings, Mark DeKraai and his co-authors reference the work of Presbyterian minister David Bos, who outlines seven benefits to congregations who engage in community ministry. They claim that:

1. It enables congregations to relate to a total community;
2. It encourages a sense of pastoral responsibility for the immediate neighborhood;
3. It furthers indigenous cultural, social and other patterns important to the identity of the area;
4. Church members have a sense of both giving and receiving through active volunteering;
5. It expands the concept of congregation to include the way it relates to the community at large;
6. It increases the respect of the congregation for the neighborhood as a gift from God; and
7. It provides a concrete means by which the congregation can express its faith.10

However, if a faith community has mandated an FBO to act on their behalf in providing care to the vulnerable in society, many of these advantages may be lost. A gradual loss of connection with the organisation which has been entrusted to carry out these obligations on their behalf may lead to a decreasing level of pastoral responsibility for the needs of the vulnerable within the community. Even if the church leaders and FBO managers espouse a value of ecumenicism, for both the staff of the agency and parishioners, this relationship may become challenging. Institutionalisation of a social response may also promote feelings of guilt within congregation members for a lack of ownership in meeting existing needs. This is similar in concept to the critique of Christians who abdicate their responsibility to proselytise in fulfilment of the Great Commission by instead donating to missionaries or evangelists who perform the function of professional proselytisers on behalf of the remainder of the Christian community. Pope Francis condemned this perspective in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are

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10 Mark B. DeKraai, “Faith-Based Organisations in a System of Behavioural Health Care,” 258.
agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients.” This principle may be extended into the context of believers being called to respond to the needs of the vulnerable within their community; for those who claim a Christian faith, the personal responsibility cannot be abdicated to a professional.

As was highlighted in Chapter 3 during the discussion on the development of terms and characteristics with which to define religious organisations, Thomas Jeavons, a researcher and author in the field of religious organisations, includes both “sources of resources” and “the development and distribution of organisational power” as key considerations when defining a religious organisation. Jeavons’ use of these categories is supported by the findings of this research. However, while the influence of these factors on the FBO may be able to be predicted to some degree, the influence on the faith community is less certain. Based on this research, it is impossible to determine exactly what impact the formation of an FBO has on individual and congregational ownership of the work that the agency has been established to carry out. This would make for interesting further research. It raises the question of how an FBO might not only meet social needs directly, but also encourage and promote Christians to possess a sense of ownership and obligation for meeting needs within society.

The idea that the FBO might rely heavily on the faith community for financial support when there are other sources of funding available seems to make poor business sense and would drain the resources of the local church. However, money spent by a church on social service initiatives through an FBO may also purchase something less tangible and possibly more important from a faith perspective. It may nurture attitudes and values in the hearts of the Christian funders which are essential to the Christian faith, and promote a value of caring for the vulnerable in society. “Where your treasure is there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21).

While an FBO’s influence on the church cannot be totally predicted from the data collected in this study, the evidence suggests that, without carefully and intentionally arresting the influence of resource dependence, a relational drift between them is likely to occur. In the words of the manager of FWNZ, “We have Christian support, but we aren’t part of the church.” Similarly, separation of the governance structure of an FBO from the church may

also exacerbate this relational divergence. While a closer affiliation with the church would be likely to in turn encourage theological positions as part of the FBO’s identity, those FBOs that are not closely connected to a specific church or faith community are equally able to express and enact statements of faith. The way that staff members prayed with clients became a reoccurring theme which revealed aspects of how the staff members understood their roles and the organisational values and objectives, and how they perceived that their clients viewed them. Interviewees’ attitudes and practices around prayer highlighted whether or not they considered their work to be a Christian ministry.

Praying with Clients

I was intrigued to find that a staff member at CFSS who openly stated that she was not a Catholic or Christian, but rather was “spiritual,” would regularly pray with clients. Conversely, the other staff members of CFSS who professed a Christian faith did not normally pray with their clients at all. This was a point of frustration for the Bishop, who wanted to encourage prayer within the diocese at large. In the diocesan newsletter, writing on Christian mission, he declares, “We need the courage to go beyond just saying ‘I’ll pray for you’ and say, ‘How about we pray about this now?’”13 It appeared that the reason that Christian staff members would not pray with their clients while a non-Christian staff member would was due to a power dynamic at play. The staff were aware of the organisation’s power in the FBO-client relationship. By distancing themselves from the faith component of the FBO’s identity, they reduced the perception that they were acting as a proxy for the agency. It was believed that this would assist in mitigating the power imbalance in order to establish a rapport with the client and ultimately achieve better outcomes for them. Due to the fact that the non-Christian staff member did not share the FBO’s faith, she was able to distance herself from the agency and still address the spiritual component of the client: “It’s a Catholic agency, but don’t be put off by the name…. I’m spiritual more than religious.”

Catholic Family Support Services is not alone in this predicament. Despite the fact that OHF uses exclusively Christian foster parents and has a culture which includes regular prayer within the office and with foster parents, the staff very rarely pray with their clients. When asked why they did not pray with the foster children or the families that they come from, one of the interviewees replied, “I think I’m really self-aware about my own values and that these are my own. I don’t want to put those onto other people.” Although the OHF staff felt this

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tension personally, they did not use the restrictions of their professional boundaries to abdicate the responsibility of representing Jesus, a role which they considered to be core to their mission. Instead, the strategy of the agency in using Christian foster homes ensures that children are placed in a context where they are introduced to Christian faith in a way that is organic, as part of a supportive and caring foster relationship.

The OHF’s approach to presenting faith and meeting the spiritual needs of clients differs from CFSS. Although OHF’s stronger commitment to the core theological values of the agency may be in part responsible for this difference, the variation in the type of services which the two agencies provide is also likely to be a factor. (The OHF provides foster care services on behalf of the state, while CFSS provides more general social work and financial mentoring services.) FWNZ provides services more similar to CFSS, and the interviews revealed unexpected findings related to praying with clients. Due to the lack of any perception that FWNZ is a faith-based organisation, there was no need for staff to distance themselves from positions of faith, or from engaging with a client on a spiritual level if appropriate. Despite this fact, the manager insisted that it would be unprofessional and unacceptable for her staff to pray with their clients. However, both of the Christian staff members that I spoke to indicated that they had prayed with clients where they felt that it was beneficial for the client. This reinforces my interpretation of this being a question of power dynamics and conflicting motivations in the client-professional relationship.

In contrast, I found that within TSA, Christian practitioners were more inclined to pray with their clients than in the other agencies, and some who did not have a personal faith would refer them to others within the agency who could pray with them or provide spiritual direction. Moreover, despite the fact that some interviewees commented that a number of people in the wider community did not perceive TSA as a Christian organisation, a Divisional leader noted that, when in uniform, people would often walk up to him on the street and ask for prayer. When I queried why he felt that TSA staff members were able to pray with clients without creating relationship barriers, the Divisional Secretary indicated that he felt that TSA had earned social capital over the course of their history internationally and were afforded a degree of trust which other FBOs may not enjoy. As a consequence, staff members do not feel the need to distance themselves from the identity of the FBO; the faith undergirding of TSA itself is valued by clients, or at least that is the perception of the staff, many of whom seemed to desire to be viewed as an agent of TSA and the values that it stands for.
I am arguing that social workers and counsellors who work for FBOs may attempt to distance themselves from being perceived as an agent of the FBO that employs them in order to develop a rapport with the client. The willingness of Christian staff members to pray with clients, in contexts in which the agency they represent is not perceived as being faith-affiliated, lends weight to that analysis. A Christian staff member of a Christian agency would therefore be less inclined to overtly exercise their faith in a professional capacity than would a Christian staff member of an agency with a weaker faith affiliation. The example of the praying “spiritual” staff member also aligns with this analysis, as she distanced herself from the FBO’s faith position prior to praying. Because of their unique history and the position that they hold within social consciousness as a respected faith-based social service provider, TSA stands as an outlier to this observation. However, the sample size of five FBOs is not sufficient to draw major conclusions about prayer. The patterns observed were unexpected, varied, and somewhat confusing. I suspect that my proposed analysis would not hold true in agencies that are not values based, such as government organisations like Oranga Tamariki. In this context, a Christian staff member may have other institutional pressures acting upon them that may disincline them from praying with clients. Nonetheless, the complexity of the topic and the nature of the findings make the analysis significant, albeit tentative. It is a subject that could be pursued in future research.

Theology of Family: What is a Family?

Foundational to this research was a deep personal interest in articulating a theology of the family and exploring sociological research on families. In the very early stages of the research, while talking with FBOs about participating in the research, I was studying and writing about what the Bible has to say about families, as well as exploring research on family structures. That exploration laid the foundation for Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this thesis. I assumed that people working in FBOs that serve families would be equally interested in discussing how “family” might be defined, what the Bible has to say about families, and what sociological research indicates about the comparative effectiveness of various family structures. Instead, I found that the theology of family and biblical perspectives of family were topics that the vast majority of interviewees had not engaged with to a sufficient degree in order to develop a strong position, or to articulate any of the complexities in biblical, theological, or sociological literature. A careful reader may note that I have not provided a single sentence definition of what a family is. This is intentional. In addition to acknowledging the complexity of such an undertaking, my desire not to impose or measure against a normative position necessitated that I not promote a particular definition, even to
myself. However, unlike the majority of my interviewees, I have considered the biblical, theological, and sociological landscape of “family” in depth. I expected that most of my interviewees would have engaged in some of the same exploration, whether or not they were able to articulate a favourite definition. As noted in the chapters describing the FBOs, very few of the interviewees had thought or read deeply on this subject.

As a result of recognising this challenge to my research, I added questions which followed on from asking interviewees to define family. “If that is what a ‘family’ is, is there an ideal family structure (and what is it?).” I asked if they were aware of any of the sociological data investigating child outcomes from various family structures. Finally, I asked if they would advocate for a family structure that statistically provided more positive outcomes for clients and their children. In addition to posing a question enquiring whether they felt that their definition of family corresponded to a biblical perspective of family, I wanted to investigate the participant’s perception of an ideal and compare it with the sociological data. I wanted to discover if they were prepared to make objective claims about family structures based on external standards – whether those be theological or sociological data – or whether they would rather make assessments based on social norms or some other criteria.

When asked to define what a family was, the response of interviewees became predictable: “Oh ... that’s a good question!” Almost every person initially responded with surprise that they had not stopped and considered this question before. There was an implicit assumption about the nature and value of family which few appeared to have critically reflected upon; it was an assumed norm. Despite the fact that the purpose and mission statements of these FBOs focused on strengthening and supporting families, the definition of family was noticeably underdeveloped. Feedback on the question of why families matter and are of value was somewhat more considered. However, it was still apparent that many had not thought deeply about the issue and asserted uncritical responses without explanation. For example, several interviewees expressed their belief that families matter “because they are the building block of a healthy society.” Although one could certainly defend such a claim and develop it further, this common response is noteworthy because of the lack of nuance and critical thought.

Another common response was that family is “people who love and care for each other,” or words to that effect. I specifically asked about non-traditional family make-ups, such as same-sex couples with children. Consistent with their definition of family, most affirmed that these were legitimate examples of family.
When asked about the biblical perspective of family, and whether their definition aligned, most responded that they didn’t know, or acknowledged that it probably didn’t. As was discussed in the opening chapters of this document, the idea of defining a “biblical perspective of family” is at best a messy undertaking. However, the question was asked in a way that allowed the interviewee to either apply their preconceived assumptions about biblical teaching on the topic, or to acknowledge that they were unsure of the biblical perspective. Parenting Place espoused a somewhat developed definition of family and why it is of value in their online material, but within the interviews, most of the staff who were not in strategic positions still responded in vague terms and without conviction.

In response to the question relating to ideal family structures, the common answer from interviewees was to insist that individual situations of those who come to agencies for support would often preclude the possibility of a nuclear family. Consequently, the definition of a family must be sufficiently broad to encompass “non-ideal” family structures. This response alluded to a perception that a nuclear family structure was “ideal,” but interviewees carefully avoided stating this overtly. A statement which states that one model is optimal will by definition imply that other models are sub-optimal. The way that the position was articulated was adequate to allow interviewees to meaningfully support their clients without discrimination, but also enabled them to side-step the question of ideal family structures. As the interviewer, it seemed to me that the majority of interviewees were aware of the complexity implicit within the definition of family and considered it to be a topic too large and too prone to causing insult to be worth espousing. The reticence to develop a formal position of family may have been due not only to its difficulty, but also to its perceived danger.

It was astonishing to me that undeveloped definitions of family appear to be an industry-wide characteristic. Only one interviewee had a strongly developed view of family which was informed from a biblical position and which she could espouse, and she was excited to share it. Although some other interviewees had more definite ideas about what they considered a family to be, even these appeared to be founded on their own personal values and perspectives, and were only verbalised because I had asked the question. Employees of FBOs

14 The Parenting Place, “Our Story.” We believe that healthy, loving families can transform society…. It’s a vision for whānau to be a place where we are connected and belong, where we are listened to and are heard, feel safe and are trusted, where we can fail and be forgiven, are enjoyed and pursued, respected as individuals, challenged and believed in, and have hope for our future.
that support families may become so task-focused on the day-to-day operations of the organisation, or even the strategic governance of it, that they rarely set time aside to consider the deeper philosophical and theological questions which are implicit within the industry that they operate in. At the conclusion of the interviews, interviewees would leave the room, and I would often hear them speaking to their colleagues about how enjoyable and useful they had found the experience. They would talk about the value of stopping to think about why they do what they do and what motivates them. The nature of their positive responses to the interview process as a whole supports the assertion that the lack of clarity surrounding the definition and value of family was not due to absence of interest, but rather to the fact that these were assumed norms and therefore were rarely considered unless staff were prompted to do so.

Despite the general lack of a developed theology of family, most of the interviewees referenced a strong value of compassion and love. Some understood this in theological terms. A manager stated that “caring for people is probably the heart…. You can know Christianity in the head but it’s got to be here [in the heart].” Another interviewee shared, “I do this job because I look around me, and I see the need that is out there…. No one is ever too far away to show grace to. I truly do believe that…. I feel God’s peace around me when I’m doing it.” For others, care for clients and their families was values-based, rather than faith-based. A counsellor stated, “There’s a hope for a better future for everyone, and if I can be part of highlighting that and driving that, then that’s my mission.” Other staff members were similarly motivated by the reward of helping people: “The relief that they get from feeling normal in their mind…. It’s amazing. It’s addictive.” Still other interviewees, who expressed a personal Christian faith, referenced the same values of compassion and care for clients, but explained their primary motivations in terms of obedience to God: “There is nothing worse to me than sitting at a desk. I hate it, and there’s a lot of desk time. But I really sit comfortable knowing I’m doing what God’s asked me to do.” Consequently, although I did not find the strong theological motivations relating to families that I expected, I nonetheless still found strong theological or values-based motivations in many of the interviewees.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The evidence of these case studies reveals that social service ministry which comes from a Christian foundation in practice regularly involves prayer for God’s guidance and strength in the work being done, prayer and praise together as a team, and Christian language about the work. For many, the act of loving and caring for their clients is an explicit expression of Christian faith, based on a conviction that Jesus Christ calls Christians to show love to the
vulnerable and marginalised. But an understanding or interest in a biblical and theological foundation related to families did not emerge in most interviews. This critical theological concept for an FBO supporting families was acknowledged as fundamental to the function of the organisations, but remained ill-defined and underdeveloped.

Choosing to pray with clients, or choosing not to, illustrates one on-the-ground challenge in the relationship between FBOs and churches. Staff choices with regard to praying with clients, illustrate the complexity of the FBO-church relationship in the area of power. That relationship is further illustrated by the range in formal connections between churches and FBOs, and the extent to which money, ministry, and management influence their formal and relational ties.

When considering the risk of relationship divergence between a church and “their” FBO, organisational evolution is a related topic. Organisations change over time in many areas, influencing their relationships with funders, clients and other stakeholders. These changes may include their commitments to values. Unplanned and unintentional shifts related to the values and practices of an organisation are often called “mission drift.” This is distinguishable from organisational evolution, which occurs intentionally in response to many factors. Mission drift was another significant theme which emerged as part of this research project and it is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 9. Discussion of Findings: Organisational Mission Drift

This project began with the question of how theology shapes practice in FBOs serving families. However, it quickly became apparent that perhaps a more pressing and tangible concern was the question of how practice shapes theology. The first suggestion of this was found during the recruiting process. When I contacted Family Works New Zealand (FWNZ), a manager informed me that they “weren’t really a faith-based agency anymore” and wondered if they were in fact the sort of agency that I was looking to study. The manager that I spoke with at Parenting Place also had reservations about their involvement as they were in the process of a significant organisational re-focus to align once again with their founding principles. They were hesitant to be put under scrutiny because, although they knew that their practice and culture was slowly returning to a more Christian faith-based approach, they also knew that there would still be significant variations between what their espoused values were and what their practice revealed.

Although I was aware that agencies evolved over time, often diverging from their foundational core principles, I hadn’t predicted the pervasive nature of mission drift in the faith-based nonprofit sector. This may have been an advantageous omission on my part. Rather than looking for characteristics within the FBOs which would ratify the findings of other scholars on the subject of mission drift, I became aware of the ubiquitous pressure of mission drift in relative isolation from the academic literature. I also made observations and identified characteristics that appeared to influence mission drift without first learning of the findings of others. Due to the fact that the phenomenon of mission drift became a focus for this research only as a result of its emergence as a theme from the data, a review of the existing literature on the subject was not compiled prior to data collection. An overview of this research is provided later in this chapter.

Based on the examples provided by the case studies within this project, it appears that over time, if an organisation focuses on operational outputs — what they do — and fails to consciously and intentionally emphasise their mission and values — why they do it — their mission and values will change. This happens largely unconsciously. Both Parenting Place and FWNZ arrived at points at which they became aware that their mission and identity had changed, and in order to mesh the mission and values statements with their practice, they were required to make a decision to redefine their missional objectives. They therefore had the opportunity to either restate and emphasise the founding principles of the agency, or to
develop and espouse a new mission and set of values which more closely aligned with their practice. Over time various pressures acting on and within the agencies had caused their practice to evolve. Inevitably these led to the operations of the agency diverging from their original mission. The point at which FBOs recognise and confront their gradual drift is essentially a crisis of identity. The intensity of such a crisis will vary greatly, but the issue at stake is organisational identity. The FBO is forced to consider who they really are and whether they are better defined by the values which their practices reveal, or by their original espoused mission and values. This observation is consistent with the findings of Peter Greer and Chris Horst in their book *Mission Drift*.¹

The vulnerability of nonprofits to mission drift is the primary theme of the research carried out by Greer and Horst. Their investigation involved between five and eight experts in each of six different industry sectors,² each of whom selected between three and five industry exemplars of “mission true” organisations. A “mission true” organisation was characterised by having existed for more than 50 years, recruited a minimum of $50 million over their organisational lifetime, and having been both founded on and remaining committed to a clear Christian mission.³ Based on their research into these agencies, they conclude that “the pressures of Mission Drift are guaranteed. It is the default, the auto-fill. It will happen unless we are focused and actively preventing it.”⁴ One of their interviewees, a board member for a number of FBOs, stated, “Mission Drift is so slow you don’t often see it. Consequently a lot of people don’t really talk about it.”⁵ In analysing the experiences of the organisations they studied, Greer and Horst identify key characteristics of these “mission true” agencies. They assert that “mission true organizations know who they are and actively safeguard, reinforce, and celebrate their DNA. Leaders constantly push toward higher levels of clarity about their mission and even more intentionally about protecting it.”⁶

The conclusions drawn by Greer and Horst are visible in the cases within this study. Family Works New Zealand has drifted and recently restated their purpose and mission to the point that they no longer consider themselves a faith-based organisation. Parenting Place has experienced a similar evolution and is now in the process of returning to its founding

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² International social sector, domestic social sector, educational institutions, charitable foundations, denominations/church networks, and businesses.
principles under the influence of strong and intentional leadership. Conversely, the Open Home Foundation is proactive in protecting its foundational values and Christian ethos; the values on which it was based have remained central to their identity. The significance of strong leaders who intentionally promote and protect the founding mission and values of the agency cannot be overstated. However, the evidence provided by the case studies in this research also revealed other factors which influence the degree to which an FBO may be vulnerable to mission drift. In addition to strong and intentional leadership, these include: understanding organisational origin stories and creating a culture which recounts and values them, having foundational documents with overtly stated faith values, and drawing on diverse revenue sources including financial support from faith-motivated stakeholders.

**Recounting and Valuing Origin Stories**

Among the case studies, two stood out with regard to the extent that their origin stories, and the mission implicit within those stories, were referenced. Every staff member that I spoke to at both the Open Home Foundation (OHF) and The Salvation Army (TSA) knew at least the basic details of how their organisation had been formed and what the major motivators for its inception were. This provided the interviewees with a sense of purpose and identity beyond their practice on a day-to-day basis, and I assume that others in the organisations may have been influenced in the same way. A staff member at OHF shared that the founders “saw the need for children needing loving homes, and Christian homes. I think that was the real driver behind this Christian organisation. It’s been grown from there and is possibly the point of difference we had.” Another interviewee clearly articulated the correlation between her own values within her role and those of the founders. She stated that the founder emphasised “the faith side of things” as a part of the care for children.

For us that’s important or for me it is. I want my kids to know it and to be brought up with it. I would envision the same for any child that comes into play with one of our caregivers – that they’re also brought up knowing that there is a God and that they do provide and the power of prayer, and those kinds of things. I think that is what they (the founders) saw and what they wanted.

A similar sentiment was expressed by one of the Divisional Managers in TSA, who reframed his response mid-sentence to express both a personal and an organisation adoption of the founding values. He spoke of the motivations which drove William Booth to found TSA:

The greatest impact is the terminal salvation, the relationship with God through Jesus Christ. So always [Booth’s] main driver – always the main driver – the king on the hill, you know. So yeah, that’s my understanding of the context of the form of what we work in today. Over 100 and something years down the track, really.
For the interviewees in both of these organisations, their origin stories were a source of pride and identity. Particularly within TSA, staff members knew many of the details of the stories such as people’s names and key events which shaped the founder and the organisation. As both a larger and an older organisation with an internationally known founder, perhaps it is unsurprising that the role of the founder would be more widely celebrated within TSA. However, in both of these FBOs there was a feeling from the interviewees that they were connected to the stories of their past and they appreciated the opportunity to continue to fulfil the legacy of their founder. This was reflected in TSA’s website, which explains “why employment is important to mission” and outlines the connection between the origin of the agency and the work they do today.

Parenting Place also placed emphasis on the practice of remembering and considering origin stories as a source of context, identity, and purpose. However, for Parenting Place, this took a different form than OHF and TSA. The interviewees all spoke of their organisational focus on the origin story of the gospel within New Zealand. The bi-cultural nature of this identity was increasingly informing the nature of Parenting Place. However, this emphasis was also closely and intentionally aligned with the faith convictions of their founder; the two are closely interlinked. In the process of reinvigorating the foundational faith convictions of the agency, the CEO communicated that they were “taking it back to the beginning.” One staff member noted that their cultural journey “has to come out of the role of the gospel…. It is the Christian basis of who we are and what we do which was God moving and leading people to work with Māori. That gives us an identity around Ihu Karaiti as Jesus Christ, working through this land.”

Within Māori culture the pepeha is the formal, ritualised recitation of personal origin, usually including waka (canoe in which ancestors arrived in Aotearoa, New Zealand), iwi (tribe), hapu (extended family group), and geographical markers such as tribal lands, mountain, and rivers. Within a mihi (introductory speech), the pepeha is usually accompanied by the whakapapa – a recitation of the speaker’s genealogy. Māori psychologist Awanui Te Huia explains, “Whakapapa spans over time and space giving those with shared whakapapa a shared history and narrative. Whakapapa claims to identity are founded on relationships that a person has with their whānau or wider groupings.”

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that “as individuals we have no identity except by reference to [our ancestors]. We are beings only because they prepared the way for us, gave us a slot in a system of human relations, a place in the whakapapa lines, and membership in a whānau and in an iwi.” Reciting one’s pepeha and whakapapa is a ritual of both remembering and creating one’s identity. In addition to speakers consolidating the knowledge of their history, the process of recounting it creates connections and bonds with hearers who share common ancestral, tribal, or geographical affiliations.

Similarly, within the Christian faith the sacrament of the Eucharist is an act of ritualised remembering in which the participants collectively participate in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Worshippers physically take the bread and wine “in remembrance” of him, a ritual which unifies the participants as a single body “in Christ” (1 Cor 10:16, 17). Although the creation story precedes the crucifixion of Jesus, for many Christians the crucifixion represents their most significant spiritual origin story, and its regular symbolic re-enactment in the Eucharist provides an excellent example of ritualised remembering and the unifying nature of a celebrated origin story. The historical narrative of the Old Testament also contains examples of ritualised remembering. The establishment of altars, such as the one erected by Israel after they crossed the Jordan River in Joshua 4, was used with the instructions, “When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in front of the ark of the covenant of the Lord.” Similarly, Deuteronomy 11:18, 19 instructs the Israelites to teach the words of God to their children so that they would be fixed in their hearts and minds.

Within both the Māori culture of New Zealand and the Christian faith, ritualised and formal remembering helps participants connect to the past and form a shared corporate identity in the present. Greer and Horst provide an example from within their research of an organisation which practiced a form or ritualised remembering. The Crowell Trust was established by Henry Crowell in 1927 to provide “teaching and active extension of the doctrines of Evangelical Christianity through approved grants to qualified organizations.”

Once a year, the trustees gather to observe a rather particular tradition written in The Crowell Trust’s charter: First, they begin in prayer. Next, they read—aloud—

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10 Joshua 4:6, 7
the mission and vision Henry Crowell himself wrote. They read his words and mediate on the vision God gave him before starting official foundation business. Greer and Horst report that this process takes around three hours. The practice both demonstrates and creates a deep commitment to the original values and mission of the founder.

A long-standing employee of FWNZ, who espoused pride in the values of the agency, told a story of a previous CEO visiting their office dressed up as Duncan McPherson, the founder of the organisation: “He came in dressed up and was sort of explaining [the history] and they acted it all out. That was really nice and it sort of made it real in what was happening.” This interviewee also clarified that faith does not influence the agency’s practice any more. “The last CEO that we had, and the management team, they really sort of pushed [the faith history], whereas I don’t think that a lot of the new staff that come in do.” Whether the creation of rituals as a means of remembering creates the value of the origin story within the culture of the agency or whether it reflects an existing value, there appears to be at least some correlation between an FBO’s celebration of their past and the clarity and stability of their mission in the present.

It is likely that the creation of formal rituals which symbolically re-enact the organisational origin story would strengthen organisational identity and provide a strong protection against mission drift. However, regardless of the means with which it is accomplished, this research indicates that an organisational culture which is connected to the values and mission of its foundational story can help the organisation resist the pressures of mission drift. In addition to forming identity, a primary reason for this may be the visibility and awareness of mission drift that such a connection provides. The gradual and invisible nature of mission drift results in many organisations being unaware of the changes they are undergoing until new values are already ingrained within the culture and practice of the agency; this was the experience of both FWNZ and Parenting Place. However, regular reference to the origin stories of the organisation provides a base-line reference which can be regularly consulted. Telling origin stories avoids an organisational pattern that could be said to resemble Chinese whispers; origin stories are akin to hearing from the originator of the message. In this environment, any organisational change is less likely to go unnoticed.

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Foundational Documents with Overtly Stated Faith Values

The constitutional documents of an organisation instantiate foundational identity, mission, and practice. In addition to the description of the agency, trust deeds include objectives and purposes of the trust. Although these documents can usually be amended, the amendment process requires a conscious act by the trustees. Consequently, as long as the objectives, values, and mission of the agencies are explicitly stated, foundational documents can provide a degree of security to the FBO from the pressures of mission drift. Implied or vague values or objectives leave room for interpretation and therefore do not provide the same defence against unintentional organisational evolution.

Both the OHF and TSA provide examples of overtly stated foundational documents which reinforce the original purposes of the organisation. The constitution of the OHF includes a “Statement Concerning Spiritual Matters,” which contains a declaration of the organisation’s theological position along with the Apostles Creed written in full and an affirmation of the Bible as the inspired word of God. This document also formalises criteria for recruitment processes, insisting that all board members, staff, and foster parents must be Christians and committed to the outworking of “the original OHF vision.”

The trust rules of TSA are similarly explicit. The document contains a statutory declaration from the Territorial Commander of the Salvation Army in New Zealand, followed by the inclusion of the Salvation Army Act 1980 (United Kingdom) in full. This Act details the objectives of TSA as “the advancement of the Christian religion” in accordance with the schedule on the “Religious Doctrines of the Army,” and “pursuant thereto, the advancement of education, the relief of poverty, and other charitable objectives beneficial to society or the community of mankind as a whole.”¹³ The referenced schedule includes eleven doctrines of faith which closely reflect the major creeds of the church. By explicitly stating that their social responses are pursuant to the advancement of the kingdom, the rules of TSA clearly define their social mission as integral to, and an extension of, the Christian faith. The clarity of vision and purpose within the documents of these two FBOs ensures that, without a formal amendment of their constitutional documents, both the OHF and TSA are protected to some extent from the forces of mission drift taking lasting effect.

Parenting Place provides an example of a comparatively young organisation which experienced mission drift following the departure of its founder. Although, at the time of the interviews taking place, they were in the process of re-establishing their foundational values, there are lessons to be learned from the experience of Parenting Place in its early transition period from the founder to the first recruited leader. Their trust deeds, which are held on the charities register, appear in three different iterations. These pertain to various changes to the name of the agency and minor changes to regulation, but the objectives of the trust remain the same; they emphasise the education role of Parenting Place for parenting and relationships, and state that they are to “develop Christian character in parents in the context of their culture, community, and family.” Despite this reference to Christian character, the role that Christian faith and values are expected to play within the organisation is ambiguous. The vague wording in the trust document provided little protection from the pressures of mission drift following the departure of the founders. While interviewing the founders, I was able to discuss the process of mission drift that the organisation had experienced. They explained that there had been a statement of faith which was removed in the time following the transition. Although they thought that this was in the trust deed, I found no evidence for this and was forced to assume that it was an internal policy document. Ian Grant noted that

the organisation became pseudo corporate under a CEO who changed the whole culture from collegiate to hierarchical. He was then able to change the make-up of the board to less theologically-committed people. A personal observation would be that the mentor role for the organisation went from [us] to the board chairman, who, although a fine man, was less committed and understanding of what Parents Inc\(^1\) was all about. It was this combination that changed the statement of faith, and the whole staff culture changed from a collegiate group of leaders to become one of autocratic decision making.

Had Parenting Place had a constitutional document with overt statements of values and mission, and objectives akin to those of the OHF or TSA, this rapid evolution away from their foundational principles may have been less likely to occur. A document which required board members and employees to support a defined mission and values may have disqualified some of the personnel who promoted this shift from ever having a seat at the table, or at least ensured that they had a defined scope of practice within which they were expected to work. The current CEO still has to fight the climate which this vague trust deed has resulted in. Instead of receiving guidance and support from the board to ensure Parenting Place remains mission true, he has been redefining the mission of the organisation once again in an attempt to realign it more closely with its foundational values. He is attempting to bring the board along with him. However, the fact that it is possible for him to lead the culture of the

\(^{14}\) This was a former name of Parenting Place.
organisation, without the explicit guidance of the board or the protection of a constitutional document, demonstrates the role and influence that leaders can have in the process of mission drift in FBOs.

Leaders who Promote and Protect the Founding Mission and Values

Although the characteristics outlined above have significant influence on the degree to which an FBO is positioned to withstand the natural pressures of mission drift, nothing appears to be so influential as the conviction of significant leaders within the organisation. Both the individual leaders and the governance structures within which they operate play important roles in creating and promoting organisational culture. The aforementioned example of Parenting Place demonstrates the influence of the leaders. The CEO who replaced the founder, as well as a like-minded board, was able to effect rapid change within the culture and practice of the FBO. The current CEO is enacting change, initially without the overt support of the majority of the board. Consider also the organisational model of FWNZ, which discourages or disempowers a single strong leader through the complex governance structure of boards and democratic process. A governance structure that is less democratic may empower individual leaders of FBOs to assert and protect values and culture more freely. On the other hand, increased authority resting with a single leader may also increase the possibility of an organisational drift away from a set of foundational values. The Salvation Army employs a system which both affords the local officer or manager a degree of autonomy in their command, but also rotates personnel through these positions on a regular basis. (One interviewee noted that three years is a usual term.) This rotation practice protects against strong personalities who may not promote the mission of TSA, but it also limits the degree of momentum which a leader may achieve in any given role.

The utility of TSA’s approach to regularly moving officers was revealed within the examples provided by interviewees. The Salvation Army has well formulated policies, and their mission is engrained within both their foundational documents and their organisational structure. However, a number of staff members reported that at sites where the manager did not espouse the importance of TSA’s mission, its relevance for the staff in that location was less significant. One interviewee provided an example of a site she had worked at where the emphasis was on the work, and faith was a background acknowledgement. She clarified that “it comes back to the leadership on the site…. I still come back to who’s leading and if that allows whatever beliefs to come through from the Salvation Army.” Similarly, in the case of Presbyterian Support Northern – the governing body of Family Works Northern – policy
ensuring that the majority of board members are church parishioners has not been sufficient to
keep the original faith-based mission and values from drifting. For FWNZ, the objectives and
purposes of the trust seem to have more bearing on the activities and motivations of the
agency than the individuals who make up the board do. As a well-known quotation of
uncertain origins which appears with regularity within business management publications
declares, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast,” and the leader of a team at any level has a
significant influence on culture.

Although the example of Parenting Place demonstrates how an FBO may rapidly depart from
its original values when a leader who does not support the mission is given sufficient
authority and autonomy, the OHF reveals how policy documents can assist in providing a
framework from which a leader can operate with limited risk to foundational culture and
values. The overt nature of the governance documents of the OHF allows the board to provide
guidance and oversight consistent with the original mission and values of the organisation. In
addition to helping the board guide the leaders of the organisation, the principles within the
trust deed also steer recruitment practices and criteria. Due to the influence of leaders in
creating organisational culture, getting the right people in key roles is an important
consideration for protecting against mission drift. Failure to recruit leaders or board members
who can support and promote the mission, vision, and values of the organisation is the surest
way of enhancing the possibility of mission drift in the future. Lack of explicitly stated values,
particularly in governance documents, results in a vision that is uncertain; it is difficult to
recruit those who support certain values if those values are not clear. Likewise, even with
clear values in place, rushed or careless succession plans for management positions are liable
to increase the possibility of recruiting personnel who do not conform to the culture of the
FBO, increasing the likelihood of mission drift. The founder of Parenting Place emphasised
this point:

Our biggest failure in the mission drift was allowing ourselves to get so
overworked (travelling for 7 years – running evening seminars and coming back
to projects and deadlines) that the relief of someone else taking the load blinded
us to the fact that we handed over to someone who really hadn’t been in the
organisation long enough to have understood the nuances of the mission.

Overt values and mission statements within the constitutional document may have protected
against this appointment, but the testimony of the founders reveals that exhaustion and a
rushed recruiting process were also significant contributors.
Appointing the right person to carry the mission of the agency forward is a particular challenge for FBOs at the point of the departure of the founder. “Founders syndrome” is a description of the phenomenon of founders of nonprofit agencies struggling to let go of control of the organisation at the end of their tenure.\(^\text{15}\) The departure of the founder results in a shift in cultural and operational practices within FBOs. Of the 302 nonprofit organisations which University of Colorado researchers Stephen Block and Steven Rosenberg surveyed, organisations led by founders on average met less frequently for board meetings, had longer permissible terms of office for board members, and had smaller budgets than those led by non-founders.\(^\text{16}\) The emphasis on the mission of the agency was also influenced: “Because the mission of a nonprofit organisation is the driving force for policy and programme development, the questionnaire asked founders and nonfounders about the last time their organizations formally reviewed their mission statements.”\(^\text{17}\) Of the founder-led nonprofits, 45% had reviewed their mission statement within the last 6 months, compared to 36% of the nonfounder led organisations. This statistic reflects the tendency for founders to be more committed to the mission of an FBO than their successors.

The founders of Parenting Place noted that it had been hard to find someone to lead the organisation who had a level of passion that was similar to their own. Their example suggests that the risk of a founder holding on too long and too tightly to the reins of an FBO may undermine the ability of the board to grow in its governance role and ultimately be prepared to provide guidance that a new CEO will require. It may also risk overworking the founder to the point of exhaustion, at which time a replacement may have to be recruited with a degree of urgency that could undermine the due diligence process.

Based on the examples of the cases within this study, it appears that a strong leader who is supportive of the mission and has the authority to act, along with a board governance structure which has clear guidelines relating to the protection of mission and values, will enhance the possibility of an FBO resisting mission drift. Catholic Family Support Services (CFSS) provides an alternative approach to protecting against mission drift, which appears to be effective in part. As was detailed in the discussion on church engagement, the authority of the Bishop as the proprietor of the agency ensures that their faith-based ethos is not sidelined. However, because the Bishop does not physically work at their site or directly manage the


\(^{16}\) Block and Rosenberg, “Toward an Understanding of Founder’s Syndrome,” 353-368.

\(^{17}\) Block and Rosenberg, “Toward an Understanding of Founder’s Syndrome,” 364.
staff, his influence does not permeate the culture of the agency as much as it would if he were more directly involved. Consequently, although the espoused values are protected from mission drift, the efficacy with which they are owned by the staff members is vulnerable to the other forces outlined within this discussion.

An additional consideration that influences the commitment of leaders to upholding the vision, values, and mission of an FBO is the question of stakeholders. Who holds the organisation and its board accountable for their operational practices and the values which they reveal? The most obvious answer to this question is whoever is paying them.

Resource Dependence and Stakeholders

The fact that funders can hold influence over FBOs is predictable. In Greer and Horst’s book on mission drift, one of the chapters is titled, “Follow the Money.” Here the authors confirm what most would predict: “Financial incentives are a potent factor in mission drift.”18 Resource dependence theory helps to explain the observable process of mission drift. It details how organisations are dependent on their environments, explaining that their processes and missions are influenced by sources of revenue, labour, equipment, and raw materials.19

Nonprofit organisations are particularly vulnerable to resource dependency given that organisational survival is contingent upon the “ability to acquire and maintain resources.”20 In response to this organisational vulnerability, social-enterprise nonprofit agencies, such as the FBOs that this project focuses on, tend to look for more diverse revenue sources in an attempt to enhance financial stability. Deborah Carroll, the director of the Center for Public and Nonprofit Management at the University of Central Florida, and sociologist Keely Jones Stater, studied the financial information collected by the National Centre for Charitable Statistics (NCCS) on nonprofit agencies in the United States between 1991 and 2003. They found that increased revenue diversification enhanced financial stability despite the associated increase in complexity.21 They also note that

organizations that rely mainly on contributions appear to experience greater levels of instability and thus may experience greater financial risk from resource dependency than do commercial or mixed nonprofits. As a result, primarily

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20 Pfeffer and Salancik, *The External Control of Organisations*, 2
donative organizations may do well to embrace diversification strategies and potentially increase their longevity in the process.22

The process of revenue diversification and the pursuit of organisational stability is a consistent theme within the stories of the FBOs that I investigated. Pursuit of new and more stable income streams causes the operating environment to evolve and new actors to hold influence over the FBOs, their processes, and their mission. Within the New Zealand context, most of the funding for FBOs engaged in social service provision comes from the government contracts. Although there is likely to also be some corporate or personal donor pressure to adhere to a particular ethos, the largest funder with the most influence is usually the Ministry of Social Development or other government departments that administer the various contracts which the FBOs deliver on their behalf. This provides a degree of security for the agency, but it also removes organisational influence from the grassroots level supporters. The influence of this on the relationship between the church and the FBO was discussed in the previous chapter, but this influence also extends to mission and values. In the examples of both FWNZ and Parenting Place, references to faith were purged from their promotional and policy documents, in order to remove barriers to entry for both clients and potential funders. Talking of the financial pressure that Parenting Place had been under, a board member commented that, as things became more dire financially, what they were willing to compromise on “became stronger and stronger.” Although FWNZ is financially robust, a board member of Presbyterian Support Northern said, “Family Works is a business, and has hundreds of employees. They have self-preservation as a motive.” Organisational behaviourist Gary Johns provides a theoretical framework for this self-serving behaviour which corroborates both the observations of these board members, and the influence of resource dependency in the inherently unstable nonprofit sector. He claims that core causes of self-serving behaviour are common within individuals, groups, and organisations, and include “identity protection and the pursuit or protection of material resources. Uncertainty and retroactive scrutiny… exacerbate self-serving tendencies.”23

The examples provided by the case study FBOs raise questions with regard to the validity of the assumption of those leading FWNZ and those previously leading Parenting Place. They demonstrated a belief that overt faith positions would be viewed unfavourably by government and corporate funders. This assumption may not be accurate. Since reinvigorating their faith

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22 Carroll and Jones Stater, “Revenue Diversification in Nonprofit Organizations,” 964.  
position, Parenting Place has had the opportunity to speak to various funders about their faith-based values. The chief operating officer reported that this had not resulted in any loss of funding. Moreover, returning to their foundational values had reinvigorated the grassroots, “mum and dad” supporters. Within the nonprofit sector, individual supporters are those who believe in the mission of the agency. Consequently, they often exert pressure to remain aligned to that mission. As in the example of Parenting Place historically, departure from this core base in the pursuit of corporate or government funds may destabilise the mission security that accompanies grassroots level support.

In contrast to this example, the OHF demonstrates that it is possible to rely heavily on government funding and remain mission true. They receive only a very small proportion of their income from donations. The operational expenses are almost exclusively funded by government contracts. The OHF is more overt and explicit than Parenting Place in their faith motivations. However, professionalism in a very difficult sector of social work, leads to them being embraced by government funders. It is unsure whether these funders are forced to accept their faith position in order to engage their professional services, or if there is a degree to which they value the faith-based motivations which drive them. Contrary to what might be considered common sense, in these instances government and commercial funders are apparently not significantly deterred by an overt faith position and may even view such a position favourably.

Nonetheless, resource dependence holds a powerful influence over FBOs and may increase the risk of mission drift. Becoming “unequally yoked” (2 Cor 6:14) to a funder who does not share the values of the agency is likely to create tension for the FBO and result in pressure to depart from the core mission of the organisation. If the protection of the core identity of the FBO is an objective, then saying no to certain funds may be the wisest decision in some circumstances. In the words of a board member from Parenting Place,

> There will be sponsors and donors out there for us. It is just a matter of finding the ones that are going to be life giving for us. If we need to hide our faith in order to secure a corporate donor, they aren’t our donor. They aren’t the provision that God has for us.

**Mission Drift**

Mission drift is like weeds in a garden; do nothing and it will happen. This research identified several attributes that protect an FBO from mission drift: strong leadership which promotes the mission, understanding origin stories and creating a culture which recounts and values
them, overtly stated faith tenets in foundational documents, and diverse revenue streams which include faith-motivated stakeholders. However, the fact that an organisation may not exhibit one or more of these characteristics does not necessarily predict that mission drift will occur. A strong leader who promotes the mission may protect an FBO from mission drift despite numerous other pressures. The Salvation Army in New Zealand presents another example of ways mission drift can be avoided. They do not have one strong leader, but staff members’ strong connections to the origin story, the strength of its founding documents, the sources of its funding, and the overall culture of the organisation have prevented mission drift. Based on the evidence of the agencies within this study, mission drift is usually multifactorial, and preventing it usually also involves multiple strategies.

Mission drift is a significant consideration for any organisation, but FBOs are particularly susceptible because of their origins in a particular faith tradition and the pressures of the nonprofit sector. However, not all evolution of organisational mission is necessarily negative. Change in mission may be both reasonable and considered. However, my observations within the FBOs that I investigated suggest a natural tendency for these agencies to evolve passively, in a series of small changes which collectively contribute to create significant organisational change. Among the FBOs I surveyed, only after the FBO had already evolved was the decision made to consider what the appropriate mission might be, seemingly retrospectively.

For the purposes of summing up this chapter, the following terminology is proposed and is used below in Table 9.1, where the patterns of mission drift observed in the five case study FBOs are summarised.

1. **Mission Coherent.** This refers to an organisation where the foundational and policy documents, publicly available information, staff members, and leaders of the FBO all present a unified perspective on the values and practices of the organisation. This does not mean that the organisation is not struggling in areas, but that there is little evidence of forces overtly or covertly pressuring the agency to change at a core, values-based level. The Open Home Foundation was the only mission coherent FBO in this research.

2. **Mission Aligned.** This refers to an organisation where mission drift is not occurring to any significant extent. There may be evidence of a relatively small amount of incoherence related to faith values, seen in variations between policy and foundational documents, publicly available information, perspectives of staff members, and
perspectives of leaders. However, *mission aligned* organisations maintain practices which largely reflect the values of their original mission and values.

Although the FBOs other than OHF were not considered *mission coherent*, not all of them showed evidence of mission drift. The term *mission aligned* is used to describe this somewhat tenuous position, observed in the case studies of CFSS and TSA, which demonstrated some minor degree of incoherence between their stated mission and the perspectives of their staff. These two FBOs have resisted mission drift because they have avoided the patterns described in this chapter. The organisations in this study which did experience mission drift demonstrated greater incoherence among the messages of documents and staff at various levels. For example, although FWNZ had only recently asserted their new vision and values position, having removed all faith references, some staff members still considered the underlying values to be intrinsically correlated to the Christian faith, while managers claimed a clear separation from faith. Parenting Place holds a unique place in this study, as shown by the table below. During the period between the departure of the founder and the current CEO taking the role, the organisational characteristics were markedly different to what they are today. Consequently, Parenting Place has been included in this table twice, once to represent its historical position, and once to represent its current position.
### Table 9.1 FBO Characteristics and Evidence of Mission Drift

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<tr>
<th>FBO</th>
<th>Faith-based mission values overtly worded within policy statements</th>
<th>Leadership which strongly asserts and supports original mission values</th>
<th>Diverse revenue sources / Faith motivated stakeholders</th>
<th>Origin stories which are referenced and celebrated</th>
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<th>Mission Aligned</th>
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<td>Yes⁴</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ 6</td>
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Notes on Table 9.1:

1. Origin stories are known, particularly by senior personnel, and the connection to the mission of the church is emphasised, but there is little connection between origin stories and staff motivation on a daily basis.
2. The risk of mission drift is acknowledged, but senior leaders are proactive in resisting it and seem to be largely succeeding.
3. National and international leaders strongly assert mission values. At a local level, the individual site managers may not reflect this ethos, which influences the mission stability and clarity in the views of their subordinates.
4. Evidence of a continuous struggle with mission drift exists, but the overt mission, the close organisational ties with the church, and frequently stated origin stories make it unlikely that TSA will succumb to these powerful forces, at least in the near future.
5. This relates to the period between the departure of the founder and the current CEO taking the role.
6. The origin story which is being utilised is not that of the agency, but rather that of the role of Christian faith within a bi-cultural society. This story provides a sense of purpose and history for the organisation and its mission.
7. An argument could be made that there is still evidence of mission drift away from the original values, particularly among board members. However, the foundational values and mission of the agency are being reinstated and encouraged.
Mission Drift Analysis Consistent with Other Research

As noted at the opening of this chapter, due to the fact that the phenomenon of mission drift became a focus for this research only as a result of its emergence as a theme from the data, a review of the existing literature on the subject was not compiled prior to data collection. Nonetheless, the observations that I made in the course of data collection and analysis are consistent with the existing literature on the topic.

Mission drift has emerged as a theme in the research of NGOs and social service nonprofit agencies over the last fifteen years. The largest body of work on the topic relates to microfinance institutions, with the existing research often focusing on financial pressure and performance. In a quantitative analysis of 194 microfinance institutions, Italian business and economics researchers from the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (UNICATT) Matteo Pedrini and Laura Maria Ferri utilised the annual ratings data collected by MicroFinanza Rating, an international microfinance institutional rating agency. They looked at the correlation between financial performance and “outreach” – the fulfilment of their social goals – in an attempt to identify and measure mission drift. They found evidence for a causal relationship between these factors and conclude that “a trade-off exists between financial performance and outreach. Results show that mission drift positively impacts on financial performance but it reduces outreach.” Due to the fact that, in their research, mission drift related to organisations pursuing funding and financial security at the expense of their social mission, mission drift tended to accompany increased financial performance.

This emphasis on funding as a critical marker of mission drift is rightly a ubiquitous concept within the existing literature. However, within much of the research it is the only measure. This is so much the case, that an online search for a definition of mission drift reveals a management handbook which explains mission drift as, “An inadequate situation for a nonprofit organization (NGO), in which the trade-off, required by the need to generate its own revenue through social entrepreneurship, or secure the funding from external sources, compromises the initial organizational objectives and mission.”

Although the pressure of organisational funding is a significant influence on mission drift, this and other research

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demonstrates that funding is not the only factor that promotes divergence of nonprofit agencies from their foundational values and objectives.

A more holistic approach to the topic of microfinance mission drift is provided by Makonen Getu, the Director for Strategic Alliances for Opportunity International, a nonprofit agency targeting global poverty. He notes that the microfinance industry has been “going through an increasingly growing wave of commercialization” since 2006, when the prime promoter of the industry, Professor Muhammad Yunus, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Getu notes that with commercialisation comes a number of factors which promote mission drift: decreasing involvement of volunteer stakeholders “whose prime mission is maximizing social (transformation) objectives”; professionalisation of executives and board members to the exclusion of those who are the custodians of the mission; an emphasis on technology which may be at the expense of people; and increased profitability, larger numbers of clients, and a loss of personal contact with the end user, which in turn emphasises a focus on numbers rather than people. Although finances are a significant component of commercialisation, Getu is careful to highlight the multi-faceted nature of mission drift within the microfinance sector.

With regard to the existing literature that aligns more closely with my research on FBOs, both my findings and analysis of the factors influencing mission drift are consistent with the research of other scholars in this domain. In addition to the work of Greer and Horst outlined earlier in this chapter, Teresa Jeter carried out research for her doctoral dissertation in the field of public policy and administration, “Exploring Mission Drift and Tension in a Nonprofit Work Integration Social Enterprise.” She investigated the degree to which a work integrated social enterprise in Indiana had experienced and managed mission drift and what she calls “mission tension.” She summarises,

> The study revealed the organization has not experienced mission drift or mission tension because, (a) there was a strong mission and a commitment by the board and staff to the mission, (b) there was a constant balancing act between mission

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28 Teresa M. Jeter, “Exploring Mission Drift and Tension in a Nonprofit Work Integration Social Enterprise” (Ph.D. diss., Walden University, Minneapolis, MN, 2017), 1. A social enterprise is an organisation which is financially self-sustainable but which is concurrently focussed on addressing social problems. Jeter describes a work integrated social enterprise as an enterprise which focuses on integrating hard-to-employ individuals, such as ex-offenders, back into the workforce.
and income, (c) business goals aligned with mission, and (d) operating systems were in place for mission sustainability.\textsuperscript{30}

Tommaso Ramus, director of the Center for Ethics, Business and Economics at the Catholic University of Portugal, and Antonino Vaccaro, a business ethicist, similarly carried out an inductive comparative study of two Italian social enterprises in order to assess how they addressed mission drift. They clarify that social enterprises hold the models of charity and business in “purposeful tension” and highlight that this balancing act is very challenging.\textsuperscript{31}

The nature of the social enterprises they studied thus possess greater similarities to the FBOs in this study than the microfinance institutions which have been the focus of much of the other literature on the topic. Ramus and Vaccaro conclude that “stakeholder engagement helps the internal actors of a social enterprise to rationalize and embody pro-social values previously abandoned.”\textsuperscript{32} Although they do not describe what they mean by “pro-social values,” these appear to relate to values which promote the social mission of the social enterprise. Conversely, they found that “strategies focused only on social accounting and without significant engagement of external stakeholders prove to be unsuccessful in counterbalancing mission drift because they fail to activate the necessary process of internal re-introduction and operationalization of pro-social values and objectives.”\textsuperscript{33} In other words, internal analysis of the social good which an organisation is achieving is useful as a means of resisting mission drift only if external stakeholders are engaged. This allows supporters to provide feedback to the agency on the way that it is fulfilling its social mission, thus completing the feedback loop. This finding closely mirrors the experience of Parenting Place and reinforces my analysis of the importance of engagement with grassroots level donors as stakeholders and custodians of the organisational mission.

The emphasis within existing research on the impact of sources of funding as a driver of mission drift is particularly noteworthy. Economist Burton Weisbrod uses the example of the YMCA to demonstrate the potential for mission drift inherent with the pursuit of for-profit activities conducted by social service organisations. He concludes that nonprofits should avoid unrelated business activities because of the risk of mission drift.\textsuperscript{34} Neural and behavioural scientist Marshall Jones challenges this conclusion, contending that “commercial

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} Jeter, “Exploring Mission Drift,” 4.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ramus and Vaccaro, “Stakeholders Matter.”
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ramus and Vaccaro, “Stakeholders Matter.”
\end{itemize}
ventures are only one among several paths to mission drift, and not the most threatening.”

Jones emphasises the fact that both too much and too little resource can lead to mission drift for nonprofits. He provides an example of a struggling organisation that sought to bolster its income. “Pressure on the bottom line brought about an unacknowledged and, to some extent, unrecognized change in mission and with it a change in the services provided and the persons served.” Conversely, in the example of a residential school for poor orphan boys and an associated trust, which were both founded by Milton S. Hershey, the chocolate mogul, the considerable endowment represented by the trust’s controlling share holding of Hershey’s food and entertainment empire brought with it alternative pressures. Jones found that a focus on “growing the endowment for its own sake quickly turns into mission drift because whatever a nonprofit’s mission may be, it is not simply to accumulate as much money as possible.”

Although Jones’s contention and broadening of Weisbrod’s proposal appears both valid and reasoned, his conclusion still focuses on the influence and control that financial resources can exert on a nonprofit. Ramus and Vaccaro take this theme further in their consideration of the influence of social enterprise stakeholders in promoting mission stability. Jeter identifies even more factors which contribute to mission coherence and mission drift, including the themes contained within the other aforementioned studies, but she also acknowledges the influence of governance structures and leadership. While there are slight variations in terminology, the factors described in all the research mentioned here parallel the findings in my case studies. However, there is one finding from my research which is represented only in the work of Greer and Horst, mentioned earlier in the chapter, and not in the additional research cited here. This is the role and influence of origin stories. The importance of organisational origin stories, particularly with a focus on ritualised remembering practices, could be an area for more in-depth study in the future. Nonetheless, the overall coherence of the findings from this research with the existing data on the subject of mission drift lends weight to the relevance and applicability of these findings for the nonprofit / social enterprise sector and reinforces the findings of previous research on the topic.

36 Jones, “The Multiple Sources of Mission Drift,” 305.
37 Greer and Horst, *Mission Drift*, 59. A number of examples are provided by Greer and Horst, who mention organisational rituals of remembering and celebrating the origin of the FBO, including the example of The Crowell Trust outlined earlier in this chapter.
Chapter 10. Conclusion

The biblical imperatives for Christians to love their neighbours (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31), care for widows and orphans (Jam 1:27), seek the good of the communities in which they are located (Jer 29:7), and respond to the basic needs of those around them (Matt 25:36-40) have resulted in a range of responses from Christian adherents. Some consider the mandate of the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20) to be the preeminent objective of the church, others consider social justice and contending for the oppressed to be the primary objective of the Christian faith, while others see the mission of the church as both evangelism and justice.¹ A number of mainstream Christian denominations within New Zealand, motivated by their faith, have sought to respond to needs within their communities, including the needs of families. They have institutionalised their responses, establishing organisations dedicated to carrying out these humanitarian endeavours on their behalf. A small number of independent faith-motivated individuals have similarly established agencies to respond to the social needs of families. All of these organisations were founded as a result of Christian faith-based convictions. However, in my past personal dealings with many of these FBOs, evidence of their foundational motivations were difficult to identify; I was unsure if Christian values still held any influence. This raised the question that guided this research: How does theology shape practice in faith-based organisations providing support to families in New Zealand?

This investigation will be helpful for both the church in New Zealand and the faith-based nonprofit sector. Faith communities which are determined to respond to social needs as an outworking of their Christian convictions are unlikely to want the core motivations of such an enterprise to wane. This investigation of the extent to which foundational organisational values remain pertinent in the operational practice of an FBO over time will assist these faith communities to evaluate some of the risks and opportunities of an institutionalised response to social needs. Similarly, many FBOs may be unaware of the variation between their espoused theological position and the theological values implicit within their operational practice. This survey of FBOs may provide both the organisations that have been investigated, and other FBOs in the sector, an insight into how theology shapes operational practices. It was this intersection of espoused and operant theology within FBOs supporting families in New Zealand which has been the locus of this study.

¹ See “Supporting Families as a Component of the Christian Social Justice Ethic” discussion in Chapter 2.
The process of selecting participant organisations necessitated creating boundaries for the scope of the project. Only those FBOs with national reach and some degree of centralised governance or influence were considered. Once five FBOs were selected as case studies for the project, the field work investigation was limited to their offices in the Waikato and Auckland regions in New Zealand. Two of the five organisations were selected as major case studies and were analysed in more detail than the remainder. The Salvation Army was the largest FBO in the study and Parenting Place has a unique history and focuses exclusively on supporting families, unlike the other FBOs, which include a range of other services that support families as a secondary and implicit objective. Consequently, these two FBOs were the major case study investigations, while the Open Home Foundation, Catholic Family Support Services, and Family Works New Zealand were the other organisations investigated. Having selected five participant FBOs with national reach, I began the research by investigating the theological principles relating to family and social justice ethics. Despite Neil Darragh’s assertion that practical theology “begins not from Christian beliefs but from contemporary living,”\(^2\) I felt that those working with FBOs to support families would be influenced by their understanding of the biblical perspectives of marriage and family as well as the social gospel. This assumption was incorrect. The data collected from the participant FBOs was taken from their websites and other forms of online presence, as well as trust deeds and other publicly available documents. The subsequent interviews with staff members and managers revealed the degree to which the mission and values presented in the documents and online material were expressed by the personnel and their operational practices.

**Summary of Findings**

The major findings within the collected data related to the relationships between the FBOs and the church, and mission drift. There was minor evidence that the prayer practices of FBO staff members with clients may be influenced by an attempt to mitigate power imbalances in the client-FBO relationship. The theology of family held by those working in this faith-based sector was also noteworthy due to how little the staff members had considered the theology and biblical principles that undergirded their work. However, for many of those working in FBOs providing support to families, motivations of love and compassion were grounded in their awareness of Jesus’ care for the vulnerable and God’s call to show love following the model of Jesus. For some, their work was an expression of their obedience to God. Although a

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theology of family failed to shape practice, there was still evidence of theology related to
God’s love and compassion that shaped practice for many of the participants within this study.

Despite the variety of relationships that the participant FBOs had with churches, there were
three main factors that appeared to influence these relationships: money, ministry, and
management. Resource dependence on external sources that are not related to the church,
most notably in the provision of finances, made FBOs beholden to these funders and reduced
the sense of ownership that the church community had for the agency and their social aid
initiatives. The extent to which the FBO considered its activity and mission to be a ministry of
the church also impacted on the relationship with the church. An espoused theological
motivation appeared to promote closer relationships with the church, and an increased level of
investment and ownership from that faith community. The risk of parishioners being
unwittingly disempowered from personal engagement with social needs as a result of the
establishment of a corporate institutionalised response was a challenge that was noted among
those FBOs with particularly close ties to a church. The governance structures –
“management” – of the FBOs also influenced their relationship with the church. Trust deeds
and rules which require governmental representation from church members formalise the
connection between church and FBO and can help them stay connected. Money, ministry, and
management do not exclusively control the relationship between FBOs and churches.
Relationships are complex and other elements may also play a role. However, each of these
three factors possesses significant influence and may strengthen or weaken these ties.

The data from the participating organisations also revealed evidence of the pressures of
mission drift. This is a pervasive phenomenon which influences FBOs to change subtly and
unintentionally over time, drifting in their purpose and practice without consciously choosing
to do so. Organisational evolution and mission drift are not the same thing. They both relate to
organisational change, but evolution occurs intentionally, often in response to a changing
environment. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a faith-based organisation to
formally sever ties with its faith-based roots. However, such an organisational evolution ought
to be carried out intentionally and with awareness of the process that is occurring.

In Chapter 3, I explained the conceptual framework of formal, normative, operant and
espoused theology. I commented that “just as an espoused theology influences operant
theology, operant theology — the practices of the organisation — in turn influences espoused
theology over time, at least the way in which that espoused theology is understood.” In
reflection, this is a slight misunderstanding of the Theological Action Research framework, which acknowledges the complex interplay between the modes of theology, but views practice as an articulation of theological positions. However, my initial analysis, that operant theology influences espoused theology over time, was more correct than I realised at the time of writing it. More than simply being an outward expression of inner beliefs and values, the practice of the organisation may influence and change those inner values over time, at least within the wider organisational context. The authors of Theological Action Research state that “the forms of theology articulated by practices have a critical role in informing and forming both formal and, ultimately, normative theologies.” The results of this research suggest that “the forms of theology articulated by practices” also have a critical role in informing espoused theology within FBOs that experience mission drift. Each of the FBOs in this study had been subject to the pressures of mission drift. Some had been aware of the forces at work and had taken intentional action in order to remain aligned to their foundational mission and values. Others became aware of the drift only after it had occurred and were forced to respond to this revelation.

Four consistent factors appeared to influence the process of mission drift. These were: the clarity of wording in mission and values policy statements; the degree to which leaders strongly asserted and supported the original mission values; the diversity of revenue sources and support from faith motivated stakeholders; and the culture of the FBO and its connection to, and celebration of, the organisation’s origin story. Consequently, vulnerability to mission drift was affected by culture, policies, stakeholders, and leadership of the FBO. While the implications and utility of these findings for leaders of FBOs is apparent, the extent to which it is of value to churches and faith communities needs further explanation.

**The Implications of this Research for Church Leaders**

The lessons learned from this research, particularly surrounding mission drift and the way that faith-based organisations engage with societal needs, have implications for the faith community. The findings may influence how churches partner with existing social service agencies and how they engage in their own social service initiatives. If a church has an FBO that they are associated with, this research ought to encourage them to take increasing interest and ownership in the FBO and its mission.

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3 Cameron, et al., *Talking About God in Practice*, 56.
For a church wanting to engage with their community by meeting social needs, defining what that looks like within the mission of the church is critical. A manager at Parenting Place stated that he didn’t want to try to understand what the purpose of God was for New Zealand, but rather focus more narrowly on God’s purpose for Parenting Place. Similarly, the leaders of a local church must determine what the specific mission is for them within their social context. They will be unlikely to be able to provide a clearly articulated mission with measurable objectives unless they can contextualise their social service aspirations within their wider mission as a faith community. This process may help to define and strengthen the identity of the church. Leaders and congregants may contemplate what “God is calling us to do” or “God’s plan for us,” in the context of discussing, “What is our mission?” This necessitates an “us,” promoting a degree of corporate identity which may provide purpose for those who belong to the church. Defining and sharing a mission in practical terms, and asserting that mission as something that motivates practice, is likely to consolidate a group by creating common purpose and identity.

The results of this research may discourage church leaders from considering establishing an independent organisation through which to enact their social mission. The risks of mission drift and challenging relationships between themselves and the new FBO are clear. However, it is likely that a dedicated agency will be able to meet the objectives of their social mission more effectively than ad hoc volunteer efforts. The inherent vulnerabilities of FBOs can be mitigated with careful planning, management, and intentionality. Due to the nature of mission drift as an unrecognised process, simply by becoming more aware of it, church leaders are immediately more equipped to address the risk of it occurring. Fear of the unknown should not preclude them from considering an FBO as a tool for achieving their mission, but vigilance is critical.

**Future Research Opportunities**

As a collective case study, the findings of this research are based on observations of the participant organisations. In such a study, the degree to which the findings are transferable to other agencies is always a point of contention. However, most of the results pertaining to mission drift in particular are consistent with a growing body of research on the topic. Evidence of the influence of resource dependence is well established and the observations here are likely to reflect other FBOs. Similarly, the influences of leadership on mission drift and the consequences of carefully worded vision and mission statements and policy, are emerging as consistent themes within academic research. However, the role of organisational
origin stories in relation to mission drift is an observation which is reported only in one other publication that I am aware of. This is a topic that could be the subject of more focused research in the future, particularly with an emphasis on ritualised remembering practices.

The way that staff members at times perceived praying with clients to be an act which reinforced their role as a proxy for the agency in the FBO-client relationship was an observation that left more questions than answers. The analysis of the observations was tentative and could be developed much further. To determine if the perceptions of Christian staff members of a power imbalance in the staff-client relationship had a causal effect on their willingness to pray with clients, a larger, more focused data set would be required.

Two FBOs that were omitted from the research would also be worthy of future study. The near absolute autonomy held by the regional representatives of The Methodist Alliance and Anglican Care is unusual within the sector of FBOs supporting families in New Zealand. Where the other FBOs have varying degrees of centralised control and influence, the results of my initial investigation of The Methodist Alliance and Anglican Care suggested only nominal national cohesion. Consequently, it is likely that the personalities within the regional bodies of these two organisations would have a significant influence on operant theology and potentially on espoused theology also. Such a study would require an in depth investigation of these two FBOs, and each of their regional sites would have to be investigated as sub-cases. The focus of such an investigation was beyond the scope of this study, which sought to investigate more broadly held positions, practices, and challenges of the intersection of theology and practice. However, there would be value in pursuing an investigation of these two FBOs as a future research project both for the field of practical theology, and for the Christian social service sector as a way of comparing and contrasting the practical and theological implications of decentralised organisational models with the more centralised structures of the FBOs included in this study. A similar comparative study could also be made with nonprofit social service agencies that do not have any faith affiliation or background.

Based on this research, it is difficult to determine exactly what impact the formation of an FBO to respond to a social need on behalf of a faith community has on individual and congregational ownership and engagement in that work. A number of interviewees from different FBOs within the study reference the challenge of “ministry by proxy,” and some commented on the guilt felt by congregants who were not personally involved in the social services but who received kudos as a member of the church because of the social service
activities carried out by the FBO. Although it is clear from this study that increasing separation between the church and the agency is likely to both affect and be affected by these complex attitudes, the way in which this occurs is not at all clear. Moreover, as I was concluding this research I became aware of an FBO involved primarily in the education sector that had a close connection to the founding church. In this case, the agency had become financially successful and the direction of funding had reversed; the FBO now financially supported the church. During a discussion on my research, a former CEO of this FBO commented that he felt that the church had experienced mission drift as a result of their resource dependence on the FBO. This situation introduces another dynamic in the church-FBO relationship which was not explored in this study. An investigation of the impact that an FBO has on the theology, practice, and motivations of the church and its congregants could be another area for further research.

A Typology for Mission Drift

Given the pervasive nature of mission drift, it is a phenomenon which is of concern for leaders of all FBOs. This is not to suggest that an evolving or changing mission is necessarily a negative concept. However, most leaders of FBOs are likely to want to control the direction of the organisation and the mission that it pursues rather than simply “drifting.” For those responsible for providing strategic direction and guidance to an organisation, understanding the nature of mission drift, as well as their agency’s vulnerability with regard to it, could provide valuable guidance in their role. Although Sider and Unrah’s typology highlights attributes which are helpful in determining the extent to which an FBO is motivated by a faith position, it essentially provides a means by which to make a static, snap-shot assessment of the FBO. As mission drift is a process which, by definition, includes change, a more dynamic model of assessment could be useful in order to determine the likelihood of an FBO experiencing mission drift.

Based on the findings from this study and its coherence with the wider body of research, I believe that there is sufficient consistent data to enable a typology to be developed in order to measure an organisation’s risk of mission drift. The four major factors influencing mission drift that were identified in this project could provide the basic direction for such a framework, with more specific, objective assessments being identified, measured, and collated to provide an overall risk factor assessment. A framework of this nature would be a very useful tool for leaders of FBOs, in order to allow them to assess the health of their organisation with regard to its vulnerability to mission drift. The process would also enable
them to identify specific areas to address in order to reduce this risk. Although this and similar research contains data which may allow leaders of FBOs to assess their agencies in such a way, the systematic nature of an analysing framework would be likely to make this process much more simple and accessible.

Final Word

Families matter. Both sociologically and biblically, a strong argument can be made that stable families provide a context in which adults and children have the greatest chance to thrive. Although the biblical perspective of marriage and family is not as simplistic as many may assume, and children from alternative family make-ups can achieve exemplary outcomes, the traditional nuclear family is worthy of promotion. In addition, all families are worthy of support. Most people I have spoken to over the last three years who work to support families in New Zealand would agree with this statement. However, although the majority of my interviewees were Christians, and many were motivated by a faith-based sense of love, compassion, and obedience to God, most were unclear about why they support families in theological, biblical, or sociological terms. Similarly, while each of the FBOs in this research espoused certain values and some had stated faith-based positions, many of them demonstrated a lack of coherence between their espoused theological position and what their operant theology revealed. Although these observations of the dissonance between faith and practice differ between organisations and the individual staff members represented in this study, they are symptoms with a similar cause. For both the agencies and the individuals within them, a lack of critical thought about why they do what they do and the role that faith plays in motivating them was a defining characteristic.

As Christians continue to take seriously the biblical mandate to care for the vulnerable in society, some will inevitably found organisations through which to fulfil this objective. However, it behoves those who claim to be motivated by Christian convictions to deeply consider why they hold those convictions. For those who seek to support families, this consideration must include the foundation of what they believe about families and why. Likewise, although their espoused theological position should reflect these convictions, the actions of those in ministry often reveal a differing theology; organisations must do all they can to avoid incoherence by encouraging discussion of operant and espoused theology.

As a result of faith-motivated responses to social needs, Christian FBOs are here to stay; so are the dangers and vulnerabilities that accompany them. However, the growing collection of
data on the nature and risks of nonprofit FBOs can assist in mitigating the potential liabilities. Founders of new organisations can create governance structures, rules and succession plans, and they can work hard to promote cultural characteristics which reinforce the missional objectives and motivations of the FBO. They can encourage healthy relationships with supporting faith communities. Similarly, leaders of existing FBOs increasingly have the tools available to them to identify organisational risk factors within their agency in order to protect against mission drift. For some FBOs, a departure from the foundational mission of the agency may be appropriate. However, no responsible leader intends for their organisation to evolve involuntarily and without guidance. The findings from this research, and the body of data to which it contributes, will assist FBOs and those responsible for their governance to navigate changing and challenging times, while remaining faithful to their original mission.
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Ignatius, *Letter to Polycarp*.


Appendix A: Participant Consent Form

How Theology Shapes Practice in Faith-based Organisations Supporting Families in New Zealand

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:
1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information in audio recording may be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes personal and organisational positions of faith and questions surrounding practice. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. I will not receive any reimbursement or payment for my interview.
6. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand). There are aspects within the research that make it preferable to attribute contributions to individual participants. For this to occur I would need to be identifiable. However, should I choose to remain anonymous, every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity. It is my choice which of these options I prefer.
7. I, as the participant:  
   a) agree to being named in the research,  
   OR  
   b) would rather remain anonymous

I agree to take part in this project.

..........................................................  ..........................................................
(Signature of participant)  (Date)

..........................................................
(Printed Name)

Name of person taking consent

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

Attachments
1) Consent form for Participant Organisations
2) Consent form for Participants
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANT ORGANISATIONS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.
I know that:
1. My organisation’s participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. We are free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information in audio recording may be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes personal and organisational positions of faith and questions surrounding practice. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that participants from within our organisation feel hesitant or uncomfortable, they may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. Neither the organisation nor the individual participants will receive any reimbursement or payment for participation in this research.
6. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand). Due to the very small number of faith-based organisation supporting families in New Zealand, assuring anonymity for the organisation would be very difficult. However, should we choose to remain anonymous, every attempt will be made to preserve the organisation’s anonymity.
7. I, as an authorised representative of the organisation:

   a) agree to the organisation being named in the research,  

   OR

   b) would rather remain anonymous

I agree to the organisation taking part in this project and I am authorised to give this consent on behalf of the organisation.

.............................................................................
(Name of Organisation)

.............................................................................
(Signature of authoriser)  ..................................................  (Date)

.............................................................................
(Printed Name)

.............................................................................
(Position)

Name of person taking consent

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +64 3 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:
1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information in audio recording may be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes personal and organisational positions of faith and questions surrounding practice. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
6. I will not receive any reimbursement or payment for my interview.

6. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand). There are aspects within the research that make it preferable to attribute contributions to individual participants. For this to occur I would need to be identifiable. However, should I choose to remain anonymous, every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity. It is my choice which of these options I prefer.
7. I, as the participant:  
a) agree to being named in the research,  
b) would rather remain anonymous  

OR

I agree to take part in this project.

.................................................................  .................................................................
(Signature of participant)  (Date)

.................................................................
(Printed Name)

Name of person taking consent

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph +643 479 8256 or email gary.witte@otago.ac.nz). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Semi-structured interview script

Introduction -
“First of all, thank you for being willing to have a talk to me as part of the research that I am conducting. I know that we have briefly spoken to each other before, but let me tell you a little about myself. I am married to Jessica and we have four boys. The oldest is nine and the youngest is four. I am a children’s pastor in my local church, I really enjoy research that is practical and I love families! That’s really why I am doing this and why I am here today.

“As we have a chat I hope that we can be relaxed with each other. I do have some questions and prompts that I may use as we talk just to make sure that we cover all the material that I need to address, but please don’t feel restrained by the questions that I may ask. This isn’t about right or wrong answers. You know that I am researching how theology shapes practice in faith-based organisations like (Organisational name). But what I want you to understand and be comfortable with is that I am not trying to look at how theology should shape practice; I’m interested in how it does shape practice. I’m not trying to define or enforce an ideal. I just want to know how it works. Pretty simple, aye? So really, I just want to hear about your experiences and hear your opinions and your thoughts. Is that OK?”

Q1 - What is the history of the organisation?
   - When did the organisation begin?
   - Where was it set up? (location and influence)
   - Who was involved in the beginning?
   - Factors driving its inception. (Why?)
   - Collaborations with other agencies or individuals?

Q2 - What was the primary purpose of the organisation?
   - Original mission?
   - Original values?
   - Has that changed or evolved? (What is the primary purpose now?)

Q3 - Tell me about the beliefs and values of the organisation and how you fit into it.

“Theology” - Theology is sometimes referred to as the study of God, or faith seeking understanding. When I say “theology” here, I am talking about Christian beliefs, values and convictions.

MQ - Ask additional Managers Questions here.

Q4 - As a faith-based organisation, tell me about the theology of the agency. What does it believe?
   - How do you know how significant or insignificant this theology is in the organisation?
   - How important is the theology?
Where does that theology come from?

Q5 - Does the organisational theology shape its practice?
- How does it shape practice?
Let them answer first, but follow up. What impact does it have on:

- the organisation?
- the worker?
- the recipient?
- funders?

Q6 - Can you think of ways that the organisations theology is clearly outworked in policy or practice?
- Are there any organised religious practices of staff (eg prayer or devotions)?
- I noticed on the website: (See interview checklist for individualised questions).

Q7 - What religious content is there in your programmes?
- How important is any religious content?
- Is it available as an optional extra, integrated, implied (like a background thing)...?

Q8 - Other than theology, what factors influence organisational practice?
- Are there forces (factors) outside of the organisation that impact on its values, mission, and every day activities?
  - Funding?
  - Policies?
  - Other agencies?
- How significant are these factors?
- Do these motivating factors ever collide with the organisations theology? If so, in what ways?

Q9 - Can you think of ways that the organisations policy or practices do not match its theology?

Q10 - How does the personal theology of staff relate to the organisations theology?
- Imagine that you disagreed with a theological position that the organisation held.
  What would happen in that situation?
- Can you think of a time that that has happened?
Q11 - How does the organisation respond if you come across support recipients with lifestyle choices that do not align with your theological position?¹

Q12 - Why do you think families are important?
   - What is a “family?”
   - Does a “biblical perspective” of family differ from this definition in any way?
   - If that is what a “family” is, is there an ideal family structure? (what is it?)
   - Are you aware of any of the research that investigates outcome of children from various family structures?
   - Is the ideal family structure that you espouse (and therefore presumably advocate for, if only covertly, in the course of their care for individuals and families) reflective of a structure which provides the optimal degree of security and beneficial outcomes for children and relationships (sociological data)?

Q13 - Why do you do this job?
   - Is caring for and supporting families viewed at all by the organisation, some of the staff, or yourself, as a platform for evangelism?
   - Is it seen as a way to make sure the “biblical family values” are supported?
   - Is it a way to care for people in need; as a form of working for social justice?

Q14 - What Christian values do you think are being threatened by society right now?
   - What are you most anxious about these days related to Christian Values?

Q15 - Is there anything you would like to add?

Additional Managers Questions:

MQ1 - I recently read an advertisement for a job which stated that the successful applicant would have “a strong empathy with the organisation’s Christian Values.” I am interested in the appointment and hiring process. What role does faith play in that for you?
   - What role does faith play in selection of board members?
   - What role does faith play in selection of senior managers?
   - What role does faith play in selection of staff?

MQ2 - To what extent do you intentionally cultivate support — both financial and non-financial — from the religious community?

¹ I may formulate a vignette to employ if required for this question.
MQ3 - What pressures do you get from supporters, funders, and compliance bodies in the area of policy and theology (and how they are outworked)?
### Appendix C: Locating the FBO in Sider and Unruh’s Framework

**Agency:** Open Home Foundation (OHF)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Organisational Characteristic</th>
<th>Data sourced</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Introduction to the charitable purposes list contained in the constitution: “OHF is a professional non-denominational Christian organisation which exists to give and bring glory to God through providing Christian social services to Children, young persons and their families within New Zealand.” |
|                                               | Webpage analysis and reflected consistently in answers to interview Q1 and Q2.                | Website and document analysis                   | Faith-permeated |
| Founding                                      | “Open Home Foundation of New Zealand was established in 1977 by Ewen and Gillian Laurenson. Following their difficult experience in running a Social Welfare family home, they began to develop a network of Christian Foster families as an alternative for children and young people placed in Department of Social Welfare care.” |
|                                               | Website analysis and reflected consistently in answers to interview Q1 and Q2.                | Website and document analysis                   | Faith-permeated |
| Affiliated with external religious entity     | OHF is explicitly non-denominational. However, their constitution also requires that “all Board Directors, Foster Parents, Mentors and other volunteers will be Christians.” |
|                                               | Constitution                                                                                  | Constitution                                    | Faith-affiliated |
| Selection of controlling board                | An election panel made up of a manager, the CEO, two directors, and an additional appointed person from outside of OHF may vote on board nominees who meet the criteria detailed within the constitution. One of these criteria is that directors are Christians. |
|                                               | Constitution                                                                                  | Constitution                                    | Faith-permeated |
| Selection of senior management                | The board identifies and appoints the CEO. One of the criteria is that all staff, including the CEO, must be Christians. |
|                                               | Constitution                                                                                  | Constitution                                    | Faith-permeated |

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1 Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, “Typology of Religious Characteristics of Social Service Educational Organizations and Programs,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (March 2004): 109-134. The FBOs appear in the order that their cases are presented within the thesis.
2 Where definitions are identical across categories, the classification closest to the “faith-permeated” end of the continuum was identified.
3 Open Home Foundation, “About Us.”
5 Open Home Foundation, “About Us.”
7 The Open Home Foundation, “The Constitution of the Open Home Foundation of New Zealand,” Sec. 4.3.
8 The Open Home Foundation, “The Constitution of the Open Home Foundation of New Zealand,” Sec. 4.3 and 9.8.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Organisational Characteristic</th>
<th>Data sourced</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of other staff</td>
<td>Staff selected by management. Although faith is not stated as an explicit requirement for applicants, faith is an explicit consideration in hiring and is instantiated within the constitution.</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions MQ1 and constitution.</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support and non-financial resources (cultivated from religious community)</td>
<td>Funding primarily through government contracts. Donations from the religious community is minimal. Human resources (volunteers) are exclusively made up of Christian volunteers.</td>
<td>Summary of annual return. Constitution.</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised religious practices of personnel (eg prayer or devotions)</td>
<td>Meetings are started with prayer, regular devotions are conducted, and prayer for specific needs as required is a common occurrence.</td>
<td>Interview Q6</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious environment (building, name, symbols)</td>
<td>Values and Beliefs displayed on the wall within the Hamilton service centre.</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious content in programmes. Significance and integration of that content.</td>
<td>Religious content within the Foster Parent Manual is prolific and essential to the content. Foster care services contain religious content only indirectly via the Christian families who provide foster homes for children.</td>
<td>Interview Q7</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FBO classification:**
Given the results above, Open Home Foundation is considered a “faith-permeated” agency on Sider and Unruh’s schema.

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10 The Open Home Foundation, “The Constitution of the Open Home Foundation of New Zealand.” Sec 4.3.
11 The Open Home Foundation of New Zealand, “Annual Return Summary.”
12 The Open Home Foundation, “The Constitution of the Open Home Foundation of New Zealand,” Sec. 4.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Organisational Characteristic</th>
<th>Data sourced</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founding</td>
<td>The Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton established CFSS following the establishment of the diocese in 1980. Its establishment wasn’t to meet specific needs, but rather due to the requirement of the Catholic church to have a capability to meet social needs. CFSS was established as a vehicle to provide this service.</td>
<td>Interview Q1 and Q2</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliated with external religious entity</td>
<td>Yes, the Bishop remains the proprietor of the trust.</td>
<td>Interview Q1 and Q2 and trust rules</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of controlling board</td>
<td>The board members are selected by the Bishop.</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions MQ1</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of senior management</td>
<td>The Board approves all senior staff appointments. The Bishop indicated that if the director resigned he would get involved in the hiring process and look for someone with a strong faith (not necessarily Catholic, but with an acceptance of the church’s position and teaching).</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions MQ1</td>
<td>Faith-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of other staff</td>
<td>The agency manager selects staff and looks for people who share values consistent with Christian values and a desire to care for people from the heart.</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions MQ1 and trust rules</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support and non-financial resources (cultivated from religious community)</td>
<td>Resources are not requested from the religious community in any meaningful way, although prayer may be requested.</td>
<td>Interview Q5 and managers questions MQ2.</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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13 Where definitions are identical across categories, the classification closest to the “faith-permeated” end of the continuum was identified.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Organisational Characteristic</th>
<th>Data sourced</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organised religious practices of personnel (eg prayer or devotions)</td>
<td>Start meetings with a prayer. There is a chapel time at the start of each week.</td>
<td>Interview Q6</td>
<td>Faith-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious environment (building, name, symbols)</td>
<td>Few religious icons apart from some small personal items. There is a shared chapel facility on site.</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious content in programmes. Significance and integration of that content.</td>
<td>Religious content is intentionally absent from programmes.</td>
<td>Interview Q7</td>
<td>Secular</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FBO classification:**
Given the results above, Catholic Family Support Services is considered a “faith-centered” agency on Sider and Unruh’s schema.
### Organisational Characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Organisational Characteristic</th>
<th>Data sourced</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission Statement</td>
<td>“Caring for people, transforming lives and transforming society through God in Christ by the Holy Spirit’s power.”(^{18}) This mission is ubiquitous within the messaging of the online and written material.</td>
<td>Website and document analysis</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding</td>
<td>William and Catherine Booth began the organisation in 1865 in East London where William Booth would preach in “dance halls, bowling alleys, and outdoors” to those who had been rejected by the traditional churches. (^{19}) Named “The Salvation Army” in 1878, the military metaphor inspired its role in “fighting the injustices of society and in bringing people to understand God.”(^{20})</td>
<td>Website analysis and reflected consistently in answers to interview Q1 and Q2.</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliated with external religious entity</td>
<td>TSA is both legally and operationally a single entity which operates social service activities and also comprises faith communities.</td>
<td>Constitution, trust documents, and interview responses.</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of controlling board</td>
<td>Board consists of two senior Territorial Officers. Functionally, the concept of a controlling board is subordinate to the command structure of TSA. However, officer positions are ministry posts and provide leadership to the church and the Community Ministries as a single entity.</td>
<td>Charities register and website analysis.</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of senior management</td>
<td>Senior management positions are classified as “ministry positions” and a successful applicant is required to be a “committed soldier of The Salvation Army... with relevant ministry experience and experience in some level of Corps leadership.”(^{21})</td>
<td>Website analysis</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{17}\) Where definitions are identical across categories, the classification closest to the “faith-permeated” end of the continuum was identified.


\(^{20}\) The Salvation Army International, “Introduction”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Organisational Characteristic</th>
<th>Data sourced</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of other staff</td>
<td>“Our workplaces are based on our Christian mission of caring for people, transforming lives and reforming society. Applicants should therefore show an ability to identify with the mission and values of The Salvation Army.” This principle was reflected in the managers’ responses.</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions MQ1 and Website analysis.</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support and non-financial resources (cultivated from religious community)</td>
<td>35% of annual income comes via the provision of goods and services, 24% from donations and grants, 27% from non-exchange transaction, and the remainder of their income comes from investments and other exchange transactions.</td>
<td>Annual return. Interview questions.</td>
<td>Faith-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised religious practices of personnel (eg prayer or devotions)</td>
<td>Interviewees noted that meetings are often started in prayer, but that specific religious practices were site-specific. Generalisations of other practices are not possible.</td>
<td>Interview Q6</td>
<td>Faith-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious environment (building, name, symbols)</td>
<td>Religious values and mission statement are displayed in most centres I visited. Some service centres are collocated with the church.</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious content in programmes. Significance and integration of that content.</td>
<td>While some of the programmes provided by TSA contain religious content, such as chaplains being available within employment programmes, TSA’s practice promotes care which is offered without ulterior motive to clients. Consequently, interviewees implied that it was primarily through the relationships that staff built with clients that faith was integrated into their services.</td>
<td>Interview questions.</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FBO classification:**

Given the results above, The Salvation Army is considered a “faith-centered” agency on Sider and Unruh’s schema.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Organisational Characteristic</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission Statement</td>
<td>“We want all children/tamariki to flourish so we work to support them and their families and whānau, and to champion their cause in our communities.” Helping Kiwi families stay safe, strong, and connected.</td>
<td>Website and document analysis</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presbyterian Support mission statement included commitment to “actively supporting the community initiatives of Presbyterian Parishes, Presbyterian Schools, Te Aka Puaho, the Pacific Synod, and others.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding</td>
<td>The founder was known for “his forthright personality, exceptional energy and determination to help those in need – based on his fiercely-held humanitarian beliefs and his Christian faith.”</td>
<td>Website analysis</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliated with external religious entity</td>
<td>Regional Family Works agencies are governed by their local Presbyterian Support organisation. In turn, Presbyterian Support’s constitutional document requires ongoing co-operation with the ministers and parishes of the church. Additionally, at least eight of the eleven board members are required to be members of the Presbyterian Church. However, this connection is being intentionally distanced in the latest iterations of policy and identity statements, and in the responses of many of the interviewees.</td>
<td>Constitution, document analysis, interviews.</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of controlling board</td>
<td>At least eight of the eleven board members are required to be members of the Presbyterian Church.</td>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 Where definitions are identical across categories, the classification closest to the “faith-permeated” end of the continuum was identified.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Organisational Characteristic</th>
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<th>Classification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of senior management</td>
<td>The current GM of Family Works did not identify as a Presbyterian or a Christian more broadly. This was not considered relevant, although adherence to the values of the agency was essential.</td>
<td>Interview with GM</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of other staff</td>
<td>Staff selected by management. Values, rather than faith, were a consideration in hiring.</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support and non-financial resources (cultivated from religious community)</td>
<td>Funding primarily through government contracts. Donations from the religious community is minimal. Church congregations may be encouraged to support Family Works at times, such as in the example of the “Justice &amp; Action” book produced by PresCare.</td>
<td>Summary of annual return. Constitution.</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised religious practices of personnel (eg prayer or devotions)</td>
<td>Although meetings are at times opened in prayer, the “prayers” are not always religious in nature. Interviewees noted the absence of faith practices.</td>
<td>Interview Q6</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious environment (building, name, symbols)</td>
<td>Nil.</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Secular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious content in programmes. Significance and integration of that content.</td>
<td>No explicitly religious content formally included in programmes, although during counselling discussions of faith may arise.</td>
<td>Interview Q7</td>
<td>Secular</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FBO classification:**

Given the results above, Family Works New Zealand is considered a “faith-background” agency on Sider and Unruh’s schema.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Data sourced</th>
<th>Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission Statement</td>
<td>“Supporting whānau to thrive.” 35 “To undertake, encourage and assist in the development of parenting and relationship skills.” “To develop Christian character in parents in the context of their culture, community, and family.” “To develop communication, humour, commitment, and positive attributes to all family members.” 36</td>
<td>Website and document analysis</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding</td>
<td>“Parenting with Confidence was founded in 1993 by Ian and Mary Grant who were compelled by their deep Christian faith. They sought to outwork this desire to love others and leave the world a better place than they found it by equipping and encouraging parents to grow great family relationships. In all Parenting with Confidence did there was a heart of humility, love, generosity and service.” 37</td>
<td>Strategic Plan and reflected consistently in answers to interview Q1 and Q2.</td>
<td>Faith-permeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliated with external religious entity</td>
<td>Parenting Place was founded without any affiliation to a particular religious entity. This was instantiated in an earlier rendering of its charity rules, which states: “PARENTS INC calls upon its member and supporters to honour its stated policy that it is interchurch, non political and non sectarian.” 38 However, courses were often delivered in partnership with local churches.</td>
<td>Interview Q1 and Q2 and charity rules</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of controlling board</td>
<td>The board nominates and appoints board members. In the last decade “it has been very corporate driven and led.”</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions MQ1</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34 Where definitions are identical across categories, the classification closest to the “faith-permeated” end of the continuum was identified.


37 The Parenting Place, “Deed of Amendment to Trust Deed,” 2008, Sec. 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of senior management</td>
<td>The board identifies and appoints the CEO. Although the board has become increasingly corporately focused over the past 10 years, the current CEO was identified and recruited by a Christian board member who felt that his faith conviction, as well as his sector experience, would serve the agency well. The remainder of the board supported this appointment.</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions MQ1</td>
<td>Faith-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of other staff</td>
<td>Staff selected by management. Although faith is not an explicit requirement in hiring, due to the increasing emphasis on faith as a motivator, “it draws people who have faith.”</td>
<td>Interview - managers questions MQ1</td>
<td>Faith-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support and non-financial resources (cultivated from religious community)</td>
<td>Funding primarily through corporate sponsors, Christian philanthropists/philanthropic trusts, and non-Christian, values driven foundations. There is a stated objective of cultivating support from the non-partisan Christian community. Human resources (volunteers) are disproportionately but not exclusively made up of religious volunteers.</td>
<td>Interview Q5 and managers questions MQ2.</td>
<td>Faith-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised religious practices of personnel (eg prayer or devotions)</td>
<td>Meetings are started with prayer and sometimes include singing Christian songs.</td>
<td>Interview Q6</td>
<td>Faith-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious environment (building, name, symbols)</td>
<td>No visible religious icons or references. Interviewees commented that there used to be values statements displayed, but they had been removed. Programme delivery in the community often partners with local churches.</td>
<td>Observation and Interview Q6</td>
<td>Faith-affiliated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious content in programmes. Significance and integration of that content.</td>
<td>The religious content within programmes is limited to Māori prayer and values based material with no overt faith affiliation. The religious component is seen primarily as the motivation of individual staff members or volunteers.</td>
<td>Interview Q7</td>
<td>Faith-background</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FBO classification:**

Given the results above, Parenting Place is difficult to classify, currently considered a “faith-affiliated” agency on Sider and Unruh’s schema.
## Appendix D: FBO Website Word Frequency Analysis

### Open Home Foundation Website Text Word Frequency Query – Top 20 words with synonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Weighted Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Similar Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>home</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>based, families, families’, family, habits, home, home’, ‘home, homes, house, internally, international, nation, national, place, placed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>aid, care, cared, caring, concern, concerned, concerns, like, likely, likes, manage, manager, tend, wish, worried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>assist, assistance, assisting, assists, back, documentation, encourage, encourages, endorsed, friends, fund, funding, funds, help, helping, helps, holds, keep, keeps, live, lives, living, reinforce, reinforces, sponsor, sponsors, support, supported, supporters, supporting, supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whānau</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>whānau</td>
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