Chapter 11
Short-Term Mission Voluntarism and the Postsecular Imaginary

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Introduction

Short-term mission (STM) has become an annual pursuit for more than 1.5 million American Christians, both mainline and evangelical, with the highest participation rates among evangelical Christians (Priest 2006, 2008; Wuthnow 2009, p. 171).[1] STM projects amalgamate leisure tourism, evangelism, and voluntary development work; the projects are sponsored and coordinated by denominational bodies and specialized para-church agencies with participants paying fees that vary with destination and covering their costs of travel, meals, and lodging (Bramadat 2000; Dearborn 2003; Hoke and Taylor 2009; Priest 2006, 2008; Stiles and Stiles 2000). Most projects are conducted in Christian communities, with only a minority carried out

[1] "Evangelical" is usually used to describe Protestant communities whose core tenets include conversionism, activism, Biblicism, and crucicentrism (Bebbington 1989). While such traditions are longstanding in the USA, following the second world war, evangelical Christians, in an effort to distinguish their concerns and orientations from Fundamentalist Protestants, established a network of nondenominational seminaries, parachurch organizations, and media outlets to develop a more activist, mission-oriented identity. This resulted in the expansion of nondenominational churches and other sorts of agencies. This growth, which was centered in the "Sunbelt" (western and southwestern US), was entwined with the development of suburban settlements and small-government conservatism and produced alliances between white evangelical Protestants and conservative political interests—a phenomenon that resulted in their identification in the 2000s as a crucial political base for the Republican Party and related formations such as the Tea Party and Libertarian movements (Luhr 2009; McGirr 2001). While whites are indeed overrepresented within evangelical communities, there are also self-identified liberal evangelicals, as well as evangelical bodies dominated by African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Latin-Americans (e.g., Walton 2009; Wolfe 2000, 2006). Following the US Religious Landscape Survey (2008, pp. 16–17), I use "evangelical" in this chapter to refer to communities who espouse the tenets of evangelicalism; these communities in the USA encompass nondenominational bodies as well as Baptist Pentecostal, Restorationist, Holiness, and Adventist denominational families. "Mainline" is used to refer to Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Anglican/Episcopal, and Congregational families.

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among non-Christians, often dubbed "unreached" or "least reached," among whom Muslims attract the greatest interest (see also Gallaher 2010).

Volunteers of all ages are recruited, though over the past two decades, STM has become a staple within evangelical youth ministry where it is valued for its ability to contribute to the development of Christian personhood, to world Christianization and to improving material conditions among the world's poor and disenfranchised masses. Its instrumental goals are framed colloquially as matters of personal transformation and personal relations with the divinity—of deepening faith by encountering god experientially, be it "seeing God" in the faces of orphaned children, "experiencing God's love" in fellowship with others, or "surrendering to God's will" through the personal sacrifices demanded in mission service (e.g., Hoke and Taylor 2009).

Its proponents value STM as a mission practice that, along with other new styles such as "reverse" mission, is adapted to an increasingly globalized world in which transportation and communication technologies enable denser and more frequent connections between geographically dispersed communities. Advocates contrast STM with colonial-era missions noting the latter's sharp, usually racialized, distinctions between the "home" church and the "foreign" mission field and the dependencies it fostered between home and mission. They regard STM's emphasis on the parallels, as well as organic connections, between work at "home" and that carried out abroad as signs of progressive change. More fundamentally, they present STM as the product of a theological paradigm—the "missional church"—that views the mission field as lying as much in one's immediate surroundings as in the distant worlds of non-Christian Others (Barth 1962; Bosch 1991; Guder and Barrett 1998; Newbigin 1989). While eschewing the colonial associations of "mission," they assert that STM, like other forms of contemporary mission, comprises practices at the center of Christian life, pointing to the centrality of notions such as "witness" (assertions of Christian principles through action), "fellowship" (relations of mutuality and support), and "servanthood" (emulation of Christ through self-sacrifice and service) in STM practices (see also, Fickert and Corbett 2009; Howell 2009; Koll 2010; Priest 2006, 2008; Priest et al. 2006). Assertions of the missional core of Christianity are hardly new but their expression through STM practices and institutions raises questions about how, why, and to what ends mission practices are transposed from "mission field" to "home." For STM volunteers and agencies, the answers to these questions lie in the extended and ever more durable networks, both national and transnational, that link communities and instantiate a "global Christendom".

As this brief sketch suggests, STM can be compared to other kinds of voluntarism, including that associated with secular institutions, inasmuch as it contributes to the thickening of social ties that sociologists describe as social capital (e.g., Putnam 1994). My interviews with STM leaders and volunteers, as well as my review of web site content, guidebooks, and theological works, revealed that some STM projects are indeed represented by their architects and participants as generators of social capital, with the enhancement of social capital glossed as the means by which missions contribute to a "holistic" form of development that addresses both spiritual

and material needs. I found that the projects that invoked social capital, or equivalent terms, in presenting their goals, were usually sponsored by mainline denominational bodies, such as those with Presbyterian, Lutheran, or Congregational orientations. The explicit valuation of social capital expressed by these groups, who also tended to downplay conversion in favor of more ecumenical approaches to mission outreach, contrasted with the more muted attention to social capital expressed by nondenominational evangelical groups, especially those who understood mission as having conversion as its ultimate goal. Regardless of specific religious orientation, however, respondents from all groups employed similar framing idioms to gloss the pro-social practices of STM and to ground them theologically. Idioms such as "relational ministry" (in which friendships are encouraged as vehicles of Christian action and communication) enabled them to present their work in ways that diminished distinctions between their activities and those of secular, voluntarist actors. At the same time, while some borrowed the analytic category of social capital to frame their operations, especially for secular audiences, all qualified the value of broader and/or denser social networks and relations, distinguishing those that promoted Christian values from others that did not (i.e., volunteer tourism or secular development work). For example, I encountered frequent expressions of skepticism about the effectiveness of sociopolitical institutions in effecting beneficial change with many respondents disavowing affiliations with the types of secular social and political institutions, such as the civic and sociopolitical associations that scholars associated with the generation of social capital. Continuing this theme, missionaries, especially those with nondenominational evangelical affiliations, placed secular societies of the US and western Europe alongside the "unreached" communities whom they targeted for Christianization. And, most strikingly, volunteers expressed admiration for the very public presence of religious discourse and practice in societies that were religiously Other, notably in Muslim-majority countries.

I argue that STM and the communicative practices it comprises, while generating social capital, are predicated on a radically different social imaginary than that which sustains the neo-Tocquevillean models of sociality and associational life implied by social capital (e.g., Lichterman 2005, pp. 23–30). In shifting focus from the relational outcomes of STM to the social imaginary that informs it, I adopt Charles Taylor's understanding of a social imaginary as a schema that is both conceptual and ethical in orientation and is

> much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode…[it is] rather…the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go one between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations (Taylor 2004. p. 23).

If a neo-Tocquevillean social imaginary, as held by both everyday actors and social scientists, frames sociality, and societal institutions as humanly authored and historically contingent—characterizations that themselves rest on a normative and historically specific conception of the secular (Asad 2003)—that which is invoked by STM treats the temporal world as a space in which divinity is immanent, if unrecognized, and expressed affectively and relationally, through experiences of

spirituality. For audiences of fellow Christians (e.g., when recruiting STM volunteers), STM's generation of social capital is framed within a social imaginary that is deeply theological, that understands human action and societal institutions as products of god's will and as the media through which it is expressed. The betterment of worldly conditions is understood to be contingent on divine agency and disclosed biblically and prophetically, rather than on the machinations of social and political institutions. STM practice, especially that targeting non-Christians, might be considered as a laboratory or improvisational stage for experimenting with this social imaginary. This experimentation is carried out through the communicative work of creating both bonds and boundaries among volunteers and between volunteers and local communities—it is the sort of "*communication about social ties* that… matters…for *creating social ties*" (Lichterman 2005, p. 16, italics original). This communicative work may involve learning and deploying techniques of outright conversion and/or relational ministry to create a body of believers; it can involve the discourses on spiritual experience that volunteers develop as they reflect on mission experience; it might also entail encounters with other critical discourses on secularity, such as are found in Islamic societies. The latter, while targets of conversionist practice, may also be recognized as exemplars of a postsecular way of life that mirrors that which evangelical Christians also desire.

My characterization of this social imaginary as postsecular is meant to signal the ways in which, for Christians committed to missional practice, it works both to critique the secular and to promise an alternative that will succeed it. It is such critiques that have occasioned recent scholarly debates on secularism (see, for example, Asad 2003; Connelly 1999; Gorski et al. 2012; Taylor 2007). Within scholarly discourse, "postsecular," while ambiguous, is valuable in signaling the presence of a variety of critiques of secularism, the thrusts of which are both normative and descriptive, as well as the social arrangements and imaginaries in which these critiques are lived out. It suggests the limits of the secularization thesis and indexes the complexities of a world in which the constitutional underpinnings of secularity (i.e., formal separation of church and state in the USA) exist alongside the growing presence and significance of plural religiosities and faith commitments in social action and institutions (Beaumont 2010, p. 6; see also Casanova 1994; Connelly 1999; Habermas 2008; Milbank 2006; Taylor 2007). STM, and the socio-moral imaginaries that it sustains, can help us think through the formation and significance of postsecularity in these domains. The postsecular world that evangelical Christians imagine is one in which the political apparatus of the secular state is modified or eliminated and replaced by institutions and rule-making practices based on theological norms. For some US evangelicals, this world can only be made if gay marriages are prohibited and reproductive choice narrowed. For others, this world rests on immigrant rights and environmental stewardship. Rather than treating those who advocate these positions as residues of "premodern" or traditional lifeways, these positions can be framed in relation to the historical and cultural contingency of secular institutions. Moreover, the secularity that may incite resistance or invite adherence is not an abstract matter of constitutional provisions, legislation, or policy regulations, but is lived and felt, as the "sensed context" in which beliefs are developed (Taylor 2007,

p. 13; see also Bender and McRoberts 2012). This includes bodily comportment, body modification and embellishment, dress and accoutrements, and speech norms and idioms; through all of these, it is expressed in everyday social practices. It is in these same domains, therefore, that postsecular social imaginaries may take shape.

In the pages that follow, I discuss how STM volunteers with three para-church agencies framed and negotiated both boundaries and bonds among themselves and between themselves and non-Christian, predominantly Muslim, Others. Projects in Muslim-majority regions, while constituting a minority within STM overall, are the settings in which volunteers are themselves prompted to evaluate the secular norms of the USA through a process of comparison and contrast, and to re-imagine the boundaries of the secular. The further comparison of agencies reveals a gradient of theologically inflected differences in the ways that they both expressed their goals and related them to notions of "social capital." Of the three agencies, one (International Mission Project and Cross-Cultural Training, IMPACT) is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA), while two (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, IVCF and Campus Crusade for Christ International, Cru) have ties to nondenominational, evangelical bodies. IMPACT's goals and methods are closer to the ecumenical style of mainline denominations; Cru and IVCF, by contrast, are more overtly conversionist in aim and tend to draw participants who are more theologically conservative. This qualitative analysis of the ways that volunteers from each agency framed and engaged with Muslims allows me to compare their different understandings and usages of the notion of social capital, while also showing how, in both mainline and evangelical projects, a postsecular imaginary arises from the activities and discourses of STM.

Data and Methods

Research was conducted in southern California between 2009 and 2012. It included participant observation at events sponsored by evangelical churches and para-church organizations (STM recruitment and planning meetings, prayer and bible study sessions, and worship services). Besides the interviews and informal conversations with local church members, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 STM trip leaders, 29 volunteers, and 9 prospective volunteers. These 59 respondents, representing both nondenominational and mainline communities, participated in mission projects sponsored by 27 sending agencies and all respondents quoted are referred to with pseudonyms. Among the respondents was a subset of 18 individuals (5 trip leaders and 13 participants) who had participated in mission projects with non-Christian—predominantly Muslim—communities in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, sponsored by three agencies. Four interviewees were recruited from IMPACT, a mainline agency affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA); 14 others were recruited from agencies with nondenominational evangelical affiliations, 6 from the IVCF and 8 from the Cru.

The three agencies discussed here, like most other STM sending organizations, designed short-term projects meant to support the efforts of career missionaries, the in-country staff of organizations, and/or local Christians. Their respective organizational structures differed, however. Cru and IVCF recruit participants through chapters based on college and university campuses, sponsoring hundreds of volunteers annually on projects that mix evangelization with service. While both have core agendas that are centrally controlled, flexibility in operations is built-in by allowing decentralized specialized ministries to implement agency goals. IMPACT recruits five to seven teams of volunteers annually through a regionally based board; its agenda is not set by the church's national governing body but by trip leaders, local ministers, and volunteers.

A Brief Overview and History of Short-Term Mission in the USA

The operations of STM exemplify what Robert Wuthnow (2009) calls "boundless faith." Along with church partnerships and pastoral exchanges, they are enabled by, and participate in, contemporary processes of economic globalization, such as travel and migration, transnational flows of capital and commodities, and the global circulation of information and images. The globalization of national political economies during the past few decades has enabled mission growth while also contributing to the patterns of deprivation that mission may seek to ameliorate (Han 2010; Velho 2009; Wuthnow 2009). Equally important are the cultural exchanges, interactions, and debates that accompany and often mediate the economic changes of globalization. Mission transmits forms of life, objects, and ideas across geopolitical boundaries, while also embodying and reproducing globalization's dialectical tension "of engagement and alienation" (Mazzarella 2004, p. 361) in its efforts to engage with Christian and non-Christian Others while necessarily distinguishing itself from those Others. STM demonstrates this in its complex relations with the burgeoning and ever-diversifying tourism industry. Although STM's proponents contrast their own aims with those of leisure tourism, tourism's expansion has yielded various niche styles, marketed by a raft of agencies that include NGOs, and includes critical and reflective practices (e.g., alternative, poverty and volunteer vacations) that overlap with STM. Also, some STM sponsors deliberately incorporate elements of leisure tourism, such as recreational sports and day trips to tourist sites and entertainment venues.

Although its growth has paralleled and been entwined with tourism, STM originated in the reconfiguration of evangelical institutions that followed World War II (Balmer 1989). It emerged in the 1960s, with the founding of the nondenominational agency, Youth with a Mission (YWAM). Soon after, Cru added STM to its ministries, as did IVCF. STM's place in the new postwar wave of evangelical institution building reflects the changing value of mission for evangelicals. While interests in mission waned among many mainline denominational bodies in the

1950s, new para-church ministries (e.g., IVCF, Young Life International) and seminaries (e.g., Fuller Theological Seminary) made mission a cornerstone of evangelical praxis. Underwritten, in some cases, by millennialist theological principles and by conservative interpretations of missionary Christianity, new evangelical bodies stressed the urgency of the conversion of non-Christians. The short-term model, buoyed by the renewed embrace of mission among evangelicals and sustained by the new styles of missiological training and theory provided in evangelical institutions, steadily gained popularity in the decades following its founding, thereby increasing its participation rates and spawning scores of sending agencies (Priest et al. 2010; Wuthnow 2009).

This growth has been further fueled with the incorporation of STM projects within the US government-sponsored development projects that Christian faith based organizations (FBOs) have pursued since the early 2000s (Bornstein 2003; Clarke 2006, 2007; Hancock 2013; Hearn 2002; Thomas 2005). These shifts in development and foreign policy frameworks began with the private sector ventures that burgeoned in the 1980s and grew following the 2002 adoption of policies supporting faith-based initiatives in domestic social services and international development. Although the US Agency for International Development prohibits use of public monies and goods for religious proselytization, by framing their activities as "holistic development" with no sectarian restrictions on beneficiaries, Christian para-church bodies have successfully expanded mission practice within the context of economic development (Shah and Grigsby 2011; see also Bornstein 2003. p. 65).

With the wider adoption of STM, its theological emphases have diversified. STM operations now rest on principles that range from the overt conversionist goals embraced by its original adopters to more ecumenical forms of engagement, with a broad middle ground amalgamating elements of both. Although Cru is mostly allied with conversionist goals and the direct forms of evangelism that accompany them, some of its programs, like those of IVCF, also advocate "relational" forms of ministry, by training volunteers to seek friendships through informal interactions and, within the context of those friendships, to introduce non-Christians to Christian principles. Both agencies also sponsored service projects in which efforts to convert were downplayed in favor of Christian witnessing and fellowship. Even less emphasis on conversion exists among those, like IMPACT, with mainline denominational affiliations, which emphasize humanitarian service, yoked to Christian witness, during the mission period and work in partnership with local Christian churches.

Engaging Others in Short-Term Mission

The now-standardized format for STM begins with volunteers assembling prior to travel for preparatory activities that may include trust exercises, training in communications, and personality assessments. Participants are also coached on fundraising strategies—usually the solicitation of donations from family, friends,

and fellow church members—and brief tutorials on destinations that include basic socio-demographic information and cultural etiquette are offered. Volunteers travel, live, and work together during the period of mission service, carrying out assigned duties (e.g., construction projects, Vacation Bible School) on behalf of host communities and participating in local liturgy. They also gather regularly for prayer and reflection, and prepare web journals or maintain Facebook pages to share their experiences with family, friends, and home churches. Service in the field is followed by one or more days of debriefing, during which they are guided in reflecting on how god has revealed himself in the course of their work. They are expected to continue this reflection in the weeks and months that follow by sharing their stories with home audiences and by maintaining contacts with fellow participants and communities in mission locales, through social media, web logs, and email.

"Getting Out of the Comfort Zone": Preparing for Short-Term Mission

The training sessions that precede STM projects may start as early as several months prior to travel. The training contexts are, on the one hand, spaces of bonding, constituting volunteers as "teams" through various exercises and spiritual practices. This anticipates the field experience and is meant to create relational ties that can persist after its conclusion. On the other hand, training is intended to impress upon volunteers the distance, cultural, and geographic, between mission fields and home. Prospective volunteers learn that STM will take them "out of their comfort zone," a phrase that recurs in respondents' narratives, as well as in guidebooks and marketing materials and signals the perceived privation the mission field brings (regardless of actual socioeconomic characteristics) and its "foreignness," in the form of linguistic and cultural barriers (e.g., Howell 2009, 2012). Agencies gleaned much of the socio-demographic and geographic information that they presented about mission destinations from encyclopedic works, especially the Joshua Project (http://www.joshuaproject.net, January 30, 2013) and *Operation World* (Mandryk 2010), both of which are published by evangelical Christian organizations having millennialist theological orientations.[2] These sources compile data retrieved from a variety of sources, including CIA Factbooks and Human Relations Area Files as well as mission agency databases (e.g., Barrett et al. 2007) and use that information to categorize ethno-linguistic, sectarian, and regional populations according to their

[2] Both organizations draw on the theology of the "10/40 Window" and the "AD 2000" (later renamed "AD 2000 and Beyond") movements founded in late 1980s, and their cartographic media, databases, and image archives are used by mission agencies (Han 2010). Collectively, these groups are rooted in premillennial dispensationalist theology, with its expectation that Old Testament covenants will be fulfilled in the near future with the Christianization of the world's population understood as a condition that precedes the fulfillment of these covenants. Populations targeted for mission are located between the tenth and fortieth northern latitudes and defined as "least reached" by Christianity and most in the grip of poverty, illiteracy, disease, and other societal problems.

exposure to and acceptance of Christianity. Muslims are consistently identified as most resistant to and thus least "reached" by evangelization; indeed, Muslims are depicted not only as "unreached" but as hostile toward Christianity. While vividly depicting the worlds that lay beyond volunteers' "comfort zones," these materials also suggest that the de-familiarization of STM is virtuous, that the feeling of dislocation and disorientation in the face of difference is also a space of connection with divinity, and that the sacrificial demands of mission will create and deepen volunteers' experience of being (in their words) "in a relationship with God."[3]

All agencies treated Joshua Project databases and *Operation World* as objective representations of religious diversity but they differed in the degrees to which they incorporated the date of those sources in STM training. Cru relied most extensively on data from the Joshua Project and *Operation World* in representing boundaries between Christian Selves and non-Christian Others, and its visual and textual representations of Islam depict it in terms of the threats it poses to Christianity. IVCF and IMPACT, by contrast, did not emphasize sectarian or cultural boundaries as consistently as Cru in representations of STM projects. Their web sites foreground bonding with images of mission fields emphasizing affective relationships. Missionaries are shown working and worshiping with local community members, caring for children, providing medical assistance, playing soccer, or sightseeing. These visual vocabularies were consistent with the textual glosses for "relational mission" on the sites, as exemplified in the IVCF's focus on the "lingua-cultural work" of language acquisition and training and the creation of friendships through "sharing world views" (http://gp.intervarsity.org/projects/china-silk-road, 21 January 2012).

The different treatments of geographic and cultural boundaries by agencies are also found in the ways that their training programs seek to move volunteers beyond their "comfort zones." Cru's training for summer mission trips began with meetings scheduled several months ahead, during which volunteers chose destinations and formed mission teams, each of which was expected to train (incorporating prayer and bible study) and to carry out fundraising together. In seminars, volunteers were introduced to Cru's ranking of destination countries according to their "openness" to Christianity. Japan, Kuwait, Pakistan, and China, for example, were less open than Thailand, Mongolia, or Australia. Rudimentary information about regional history and society were offered, but with a focus on developing strategies for engaging non-Christians in interactions that would open the door to effective forms of evangelization. Some volunteers chose to participate in the Jesus Film Project, a ministry organized around screening and distribution of "Jesus," a 1978 film based on the gospel narrative of Luke and since translated into thousands of languages (http://www.jesusfilm.org, 30 January 2013). All were expected to distribute and discuss a pamphlet, *Four Spiritual Laws*, published by the Campus Crusade for Christ and long used in its proselytization (http://www.campuscrusade.com/fourlawseng.htm, 30 January 2013). Volunteers were also introduced to their roles in helping generate data for Cru's own databases: They were taught to administer various Cru-produced surveys on religious composition, as well as to record the numbers of persons with

[3] See Hancock (Forthcoming) for a more extended discussion of these materials.

whom they "shared" their faith and, of those, how many "accepted Jesus." A more intensive team orientation took place just before the scheduled trip, comprising trust- and team-building exercises along with spiritual preparation. The practices and routines in which they were trained were all explained as vehicles for god's agency, as a veteran Cru volunteer put it: "God is what makes things happen on a trip." Volunteers, in other words, learned to see themselves as the means of divine intervention in temporal worlds.

IVCF- and IMPACT-sponsored trips were preceded by training sessions that began months prior to travel and concluded with several days of intensive training immediately preceding departure. In the early sessions, volunteers formed teams and usually initiated some kind of regular interaction, such as Bible study. They also were introduced to information about regional society and history. Closer to travel, logistical preparations and team-building exercises were pursued. Idioms of relationality, such as "friendship," "relational ministry," "servanthood," were stressed, as was attention to vulnerability and self-disclosure, all of which were presented as the means by which volunteers' own relations with divinity would grow.

IVCF training for volunteers on its Bosnia and Herzegovina trips emphasized the region's religious composition and its history of ethno-religious conflict. Strategies for "relational ministry" appropriate to this setting were introduced. These strategies essentially involved volunteers' seizing opportunities to "share" their faith in the context of the English-language classes that they led and the informal conversations that they pursued. Furthermore, the approaches rested on the vulnerable personas that volunteers were enjoined to assume: They were allowed only limited amounts of clothing, personal goods, and money and were counseled to be ready for an "extreme cross-cultural friendship" (http://gp.intervarsity.org/, 30 January 2013).

IMPACT's volunteers were trained to be "learners, storytellers, and servants" (http://www.impact-sbp.org, 30 January 2013). Some groups began preparations months beforehand by studying the Bible or other theological works and devising devotional exercises. More intensive preparation came with "cross-training," a 5-day camping trip scheduled shortly before departure. "Cross-training" was meant to cultivate bonds between team members, to orient them to the kind of work they would do, as "servants," and to prepare them for the adaptability that would be required as "learners." They also learned to create a "story," a short narrative about themselves and their faith appropriate for cross-cultural interaction. Those traveling to Turkey acquired some basic information about Islam, though participants' sense of Muslim Otherness was a by-product of the agency's main goal of extending support to a small Christian community, based in Antalya. James, an Anglo-American trip leader in his fifties explained that because Islam had displaced Christianity in the region he felt "this grief for Anatolia…it was the most significant Christian community in the first four hundred years. That was the strongest, most imbedded part of the Roman Empire, where Christianity flourished and [now] it's just all relics." James related this historical decline to the current minority status of Christians, including their difficulties in competing for jobs and in school: "just your presence there as believers from another country is encouraging…to them because they are an extreme minority

in this Islamic country." At the same time, he hoped that volunteers' presence might open Muslims' "hearts" to Christianity and hoped that their presence, as Christians—even without direct evangelization—could bridge those gaps.

In recruitment and training, therefore, volunteers with all agencies were introduced to various kinds of boundaries between Christian Selves and non-Christian Others and urged to move "out of their comfort zones" in engaging with those Others. What STM promised, through this experience of defamiliarization, moreover, was the volunteers' own closer relationship with god. The types of boundaries emphasized, and the corresponding strategies for mission outreach, differed among the agencies, however. Cru emphasized the antagonisms between Christians and the world's "unreached," Muslims, in particular. Volunteers were challenged to step out of their "comfort zones" by entering worlds whose inhabitants were hostile toward Christianity and conversionary strategies were developed to deflect or overcome this perceived hostility. IVCF, while also aiming for Christian conversion, emphasized the possibilities for connection across sectarian difference with idioms of relationality and openness. It trained volunteers to achieve this goal through "relational ministry"—engagements with non-Christian Others through "friendship"—rather than direct evangelization. IMPACT, while abandoning the goal of conversion, also urged volunteers to step "out of their comfort zones" through training that emphasized the cultivation of vulnerability through engaging with difference—in this case, by adopting the tripartite persona of "learner, storyteller, servant" rather than "missionary." For all volunteers, regardless of the instrumental goals or methods of mission, being "out of the comfort zone" was a prelude to the "relationship with God" that mission practice promised.

"It's cool to see God in another place…": Mission Practice

Mission practice often centered on service and yielded practical benefits such as repaired buildings, sewage trenches, and vaccinations. Service was predicated, however, on affective ties both with the Others (Christian and non-Christian) of the mission field and among the volunteers themselves (see also Bramadat 2000; Howell 2012). These connections were glossed with terms like "heart," "love," and "sharing" which is understood as conduits of divine agency. That is, affective orientations were framed as expressions of what STM discourse calls "God's global heart" and portended new, unexpected encounters with god. For example, after telling me that ordinary tourist travel had given her "a heart for the world," 24-year-old Denise, an Anglo-American volunteer with Cru, explained that STM involved "learning about what the people are about and where their hearts are" and further, "sharing with them why you're there and what your heart is about." Again, mission and the sacrifices it demanded were meant to deepen volunteers' relations with god. Kim, a 21-year-old Asian-American volunteer with Cru, put it this way: "I was able to see people's lives changed, not through me, really, but because I sacrificed myself to do that."

When in the field, STM volunteers usually lived together in houses or apartments provided by agencies and local affiliates. Their days usually began with group prayer and Bible reading, and each day included time to "share" what god had "told" them in the course of their activities and interactions. They carried out service and educational projects as teams. Meals were taken together and, because participants were rarely competent in local languages, they communicated in English and relied on translators. Their stays included visits to tourist sites, but they avoided poorer areas and other sites deemed dangerous. Most STM trips, therefore, were experiences of enclavement for volunteers; while generating within-group dependencies, these arrangements also contributed to their sense of the mission field as a space of difference, risk, and vulnerability.

Efforts to bridge the differences between Christian Selves and the non-Christian Others took varying forms. While IVCF and IMPACT volunteers emphasized that they were honest about their desires to share their faith, Cru volunteers, like 20-year-old Peter, characterized their work as "mission on the down low," meaning that it was covertly carried out. Teams in Muslim-majority areas usually participated in educational or cultural exchange programs, for example, by enrolling in university-sponsored classes. These strategies enabled them to interact with a variety of local residents with whom they might engage in conversionary discourse. Twenty-three-year-old Adriana (Anglo-American) explained that Cru's volunteers were expected to "meet as many new friends as possible, get their [telephone] numbers" and follow up with them. She outlined several typical encounters in which conversational gambits, such as requests for directions, could be used to initiate more extended interactions. Volunteers also relied on Cru's established technique of using written surveys as ice-breakers (see Ingram 1989). Pearl, a 21-year-old Asian-American volunteer, described the survey that she used in a Muslim-majority area as including questions about respondents' sectarian affiliations which would then, as she put it "slide into Christianity," by asking them what they knew about it, and finally offering to teach them more about it. The survey and other techniques, however, were only means to create opportunities for more targeted conversations using Cru's pamphlet, *Four Spiritual Laws,* as the guide. In the evenings, the students re-assembled to talk about their day's activities—what they accomplished and failed to accomplish, what they learned; on some nights, they held worship sessions to which local Christians might be invited.

Although Cru's web site materials suggested antagonism between Christianity and Islam, volunteers' actual experiences were more nuanced. Some suggested that Muslims' past and present experiences with European imperialism generated antagonisms toward Christianity, but felt that the relationships that they had established, even if not leading to conversion, might eventually overcome that hostility. Denise, quoted above, recognized the presence of resistance but insisted that the field situation could be framed by "love": "I would love our team to become unified with one another, to just grow and lean on each other and love on each other. I would love for our team to honestly and earnestly love on the people there." (Her colloquial usage of the preposition "on" after the verb, "love," is common among American youth.) Volunteers saw the willingness of Muslim youth to engage in conversations

on spiritual matters as another sign of how hostilities might be overcome. As Peter, quoted above, offered:

> They definitely are more hospitable than we are and that is like hands down…one of my favorite parts. I think they, they know how to treat people well. They know how to welcome people well. …as far as spiritual life, goes, I think they are a more spiritual people, at least they identify more with Islam than Americans would with Christianity or Judaism or Islam over here…

The spirituality that volunteers attributed to Muslims contrasted with Americans' reticence when approached in a similar manner. Americans, they felt, adhered to behavioral norms of secular society, such as the avoidance of professing one's own religious identity or seeking the identifications of others in casual conversations. This, which some coined as "apatheticism," was sometimes described as a more significant hurdle to Christianization than Islam. Cru volunteers, whose STM practice began with the recognition of boundaries between Christian Selves and non-Christian Others and who sought to overcome boundaries through conversion, found themselves in the unexpected position of recognizing, in that non-Christian Other, a shared critique of secular society as well as a model for inter-religious dialogue.

The possibility that conversionist encounters could work, both as polemical exchanges and as a discovery of shared critiques of secular society, was recognized among volunteers with other agencies. IVCF's volunteers were coached to interact in ways similar to Cru, though without the props of pamphlets, scripts, or videos. IVCF volunteers traveled to Muslim-majority areas in China and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and I interviewed individuals who had participated in the latter. At 4 weeks, those trips were longer than the typical STM project. Their goals were described by Liz, an Anglo-American trip leader in her mid-twenties, as follows: "So we teach conversational English. We're very up front about [saying] 'We're Christians, we want to serve you. We want to teach you English, and we would love to talk to you more about God if you want to'…. We're not, like, doing any shady business, but we develop relationships because that's how you share." This brief quote reiterates the idioms of social connectivity that recur in volunteers' discourse while investing these connections with theological significance.

The daily schedule of volunteers included 2–3 h of English conversation classes, coupled with much lengthier, and less structured, interactions usually over coffee. Like their Cru counterparts, IVCF volunteers were also excited by Muslim youths' willingness to engage them on spiritual matters. Liz's description of her experience with a young Muslim man captures this dynamic:

> I had a really, really powerful conversation with one of our friends. He was involved in kind of an equivalent to InterVarsity, but a Muslim student organization…. I think he wanted to improve his English too. He basically told us like, "I'm trying to convert you." And we were like, "Great! We are trying to convert you!"… And we would joke about it and that's what I love about over there is, like, it's not taboo. In the United States people are, like, "Don't push your religion on me." But there, I mean, he felt strong enough in his faith that he could talk about it, you know? I'm like "Great." And we just had this deep trust and relationship with him that it was, like, "Let's get into it."

These conversations often reached an impasse, though volunteers still found the opportunity to engage encouraging. Liz explained that one of their conversations had turned to the subject of justice and that her friend had stressed that "God is just, therefore he has to keep track of all the good I do and all the bad I do because, since he's just he can't let these bad things go unnoticed, and God is constantly recording it. And then when I die I'll find out if the good outweighed the bad." Liz admitted to him that his account of god's punitive (and unpredictable) authority was "scary," and went on to explain her own notion of god's justice, telling him: "I think God is just also…and let me tell you why, because of Jesus. Jesus was justice; he did pay the price, so now God doesn't have to keep track because that is justice." She described his reaction: "And he's, like, 'Uhhhh.' And he didn't like what he heard… He didn't have a rebuttal." For Liz, this exchange was one of "sharing" and the impasse with which the conversation ended confirmed to her that she had conveyed something important and potentially transformative to her friend. And, although it appeared to involve an exchange of doctrinal principles, it also confirmed her own notion of Christianity's more encompassing "truth" and her own sense of mission's ability to solidify her own "relationship" with god.

Contrasting with Cru and IVCF, IMPACT projects did not involve evangelization, although engagement, formal and informal, with Muslims was anticipated. The agency's program in Turkey developed out of a two-decade-long partnership between the presbytery and a small Christian church in Antalya, and it operated out of a cultural center. Consistent with the relational and familial themes of its web site, IMPACT's projects in Turkey centered on parenting classes. Trip leader James explained that such projects were devised with the goal of enhancing "social capital," the only reference to social capital that any of my interviews yielded. The classes were not represented as "Christian," nor were they restricted to Christians. Instead, they incorporated Christian principles in ways that IMPACT's leadership considered generally applicable to family life, regardless of sectarian affiliation and attendees included both Muslims and Christians. James elaborated:

> [In the classes] I'm not preaching the Gospel directly, but I'm teaching parenting principles that reflect the parenting nature and character of how God, in a sense, parents us. But I'm not saying that. And by doing that, I'm helping families raise their children in a healthier way, so they're gonna be more receptive and able to understand that there is a God who loves them, and I'm creating harmony in homes, or helping to facilitate harmony in homes, and I'm giving the church a tool to connect with the community in a way that doesn't feel religiously threatening. Because everybody wants to be a good parent, and [the community] says, "Wow, they're doing this. That's a good thing." So it gives the church a good rapport in the community and I believe that's missional—meeting a real need, you know, of people.

Some of the volunteers understood this sort of outreach as being consistent with American political values of free enterprise and of freedom of speech and religion, as this excerpt from an interview with 67-year-old Anglo-American, Alicia, indicates:

> I believe so strongly that the church will grow because of God working through us…we're not doing good deeds to get into heaven; we're just doing it because we believe so firmly that people should have the freedom of choice in everything they do. …Freedom of worshiping God as they would like. Freedom of being able to have maybe some alternative ideas of how they can support and sustain themselves and their kids and their church.

While ideas about the virtues of social capital and other American values underwrote the formal programs, many interactions were casual and serendipitous, arising from everyday commercial and recreational activities. Alicia asserted:

> You don't want to convert them or anything, but just discuss things.… In different careers that I've had…I can work with everybody. So, believe it or not, they would sit me down, they would have a discussion on religion. They said, "Are you a missionary?" I said, "No, no, no, no. I'm here as an assistant teacher for parenting over at [the cultural center]"…. So we got into religion every day with different men.

As was the case with Cru and IVCF, then, IMPACT projects created opportunities for dialogue that surprised and gratified volunteers like Alicia. Indeed, the idea that god was present in culturally unfamiliar surroundings was a mainstay in all STM discourse. The possibility of god "showing up" in another, very different circumstance—a different country, a different style of worship—is a draw of mission and it is predicated on the notion of divine immanence, that god is already present, incarnate, in these multifarious places and activities. STM works though this possibility, even as it recognizes boundaries, that there are "unreached" who form the targets of conversionist outreach. The placement and permeability of these boundaries are indicative of the theological distinctions played out in mission practice. At the same time, the possibility of god's presence in the quotidian and strategies for recognizing that presence arise from a postsecular imaginary, shared across these theologically distinct projects, that engages and interrogates everyday norms of secularity and assumptions about the boundaries between secular and religious institutions. How volunteers try to bring mission home speaks to this imaginary.

Bringing Mission Home

Mainline projects, such as IMPACT's, often accommodate the norms and practices of social capital. They explicitly sought to work across linguistic, cultural, and sectarian boundaries to impart skills (e.g., parenting) that would strengthen communities. In a similar vein, some respondents ventured that mission trips offered lessons for living in multicultural society and enlarged their capacity for tolerance. Although these volunteers would insist that their actions arose from motivations associated with Christian faith, they did not necessarily seek to spread that faith. This approach accorded with the principles of secularism (privatization of religion, the separation of church and state, and freedom of religious expression) that are nominally endorsed in the USA. The perceived relation between these values and "free enterprise" as expressed by Alicia further underscored this as an accommodation to such principles and the socioeconomic and political landscapes that they shaped.

Nevertheless, even projects that included enhancements of social capital among their aims, rested on theological (rather than sociological) grounds, as James' analysis of IMPACT's role in Turkey confirms:

> In Antalya, there were people sent from a church in the UK, from Russia, from Switzerland, from the Netherlands. And I'm realizing, Oh my gosh, the Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts and minds of people everywhere, like this giant chessboard, moving pieces, where there is a need and where God calls us. And there's this moving back and forth…. God is this international traffic cop, you know, saying, "Ok, go here. Wait a minute…." And just directing the traffic of his followers that are open and are responding to his leading.

It was the perception of divine agency and intent, such as voiced by James, that constituted a common thread among STM projects. If some conceded that social capital might be enhanced, with corresponding benefits for community welfare, all understood the capacity to undertake mission and the experience of vulnerability and sacrifice as disclosures of divine agency. By embracing the spiritual and bodily risks of travel to a different place, one might gain an experiential connection with god's power. "People have been blessed when we go. I've seen it with my own eyes, people getting healed, people having churches built up for them, people's lives being changed…in front of my eyes because we were there," declared Cru volunteer Cindy. Liz learned that "God could answer prayers" when she traveled to Bosnia with an IVCF team; Adriana, working with Cru in the Middle East, described her experience as a "test" imposed by God, and "nothing of myself." Some described the process of choosing a mission travel site as one of experiencing god's agency: Cru volunteer, Pearl, described how her original intention to travel to Australia was overturned by god, who engineered a series of coincidences that resulted in her traveling to a region classified as "less open" to Christianity. These perspectives were accompanied by the devaluation of political institutions and affiliations. The majority of respondents, and all who self-identified as "evangelical" or "nondenominational." participated minimally in formal or informal political institutions and often described themselves as "apolitical" or simply "undecided." Even Jerry, a 30-year-old IMPACT volunteer who distanced himself from the conversionist goals of organizations like Cru, maintained, "I am not an American Christian, I am a Christian who lives in America, an ambassador."

These experiences set the stage for developing "boldness" in faith, by which they meant a willingness to witness and proselytize at home. STM provided a space in which to practice various techniques for communicating with and about their faith. It also offered models of a social world in which such speech styles were acceptable. In particular, they encountered in their relations with Muslim Others, a model for engagement, whether pluralist, dialogical, or polemical, that departed from the secular norms that consigned spirituality to private realms of the home and religious institutions.

The same agencies that sponsored trips also played crucial roles in channeling these impulses and ways of imagining the social into concrete practices. IMPACT, working through the presbytery, provided opportunities for volunteers to participate in other church-based networks, domestic and international, and thereby deepen and sustain the ties between local churches and their partners (secular and faith-based). Through their campus-based chapters, Cru- and IVCF-sponsored Bible study, worship, and prayer groups; they also helped members establish co-housing arrangements, such as shared apartment or house rentals. Veteran volunteers with all agencies coached others in methods of "sharing faith" closer to home (e.g., with fellow students and co-workers), while also retaining within their everyday speech

the idioms and speech styles that characterized mission discourse, such as references to being "in a relationship with god," "seeing god show up" in unexpected places, and "having a heart" for various causes and communities. Moreover, those who adopted conversionist approaches often re-framed the secular spaces of home as "unreached" and devised mission projects for engaging that world. In the course of my research, I learned that at least one southern California nondenominational church, the Seaview Church (pseudonym), traces its origins to STM. Its co-founder, Gwen (now married to its pastor, Les) described the church as a divinely directed outcome of a STM experience in Zimbabwe that had been sponsored by an organization with ties to IVCF. She explained its origin using the same idioms that other STM volunteers employed to characterize the kinds of sociality that mission prompted: "During our debriefing…the Lord spoke to me and told me that…my ministry would be at [the university that borders Sea View]." She continued: "It was not enough to have only one or two believers focus on the lost. We needed a radical community of believers loving one another supernaturally and loving the city with that same love. Only then could a whole city be saved." While further discussion of Seaview Church is beyond the scope of this chapter, it serves as a telling example of how missional idioms may re-circulate at home and, in that context, serve to anchor a postsecular imaginary through embodied practices of prayer and the "love" engendered and expressed through those practices.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a comparative analysis of how three Christian STM agencies engaged with non-Christians in the context of international projects that mixed service, evangelism, and tourism. I examined how volunteers with each agency employed theological idioms to frame both boundaries and bonds among themselves and between themselves and non-Christian Others. STM's contribution to thicker, more durable relational networks suggests that STM might be understood in terms of social capital and some agencies, especially those affiliated with mainline denominational bodies, borrowed this analytic category to describe their aims and operations. I discovered, however, that although the paradigm of social capital may suggest ways to explain the functions and social effects of STM, it does not capture the social imaginary from which STM arises nor the critique of secular norms, practices, and institutions that it promulgates.

My approach in this chapter, therefore, has not begun with assumptions about the normative status of social capital as an outcome of STM but with the aims and aspirations voiced by its proponents, analyzing whether and how STM achieves those ends and on those bases considering what it tells us about postsecular moral imaginaries. Although STM can easily be placed among the forms of voluntary action that sociologists have categorized as "plug-in" because of their coordination by service agencies and recruitment of participants for specific tasks, it is not my aim to explicate its contributions to voluntarism in functionalist terms. Nor are my

concerns aligned with those of STM practitioners, who aim to identify the benefits, spiritual and quotidian, of STM in order to pursue those goals more effectively. Instead, I am interested in how STM's postsecular imaginary, the world of global Christendom that it both assumes and anticipates, is felt and understood in counterpoint to the everyday secular institutions and practices

Both the experience in "mission field" and the way that that experience is framed and extended at home show how STM may work as a node for cultivating a postsecular imaginary—a mode of understanding and experiencing the temporal world as the space of immanent divinity. By placing STM within the context of the postsecular, I am proposing that it be interpreted among other contemporary phenomena that indicate the limits of the secularization thesis and that attend to the existence of plural spiritualities and faith commitments in social action and institutions. Geographer Justin Beaumont (2010) explains:

> I use the term to indicate that within secularized social structures of modern late capitalism, religions, referring both to religious actors and organizations are very much present and will not disappear irrespective of widespread aversion to the idea among certain liberal and secularist commentators. In other words, postsecular refers to the limits of the secularization thesis and the ever-growing realization of radically plural societies in terms of religion, faith and belief within and between diverse urban societies. (Beaumont 2010, p. 6)

This critique and re-framing of secularity has attracted scholars' attention in recent years. It can unfold in the consequences, intended and unintended, of the projects of urban development, gentrification, or beautification and of their own relations to property by religious actors (e.g., McRoberts 2003; Elisha 2011). It may arise in debates about the presence and influence of religious norms, bodies and practices in institutions, and spaces that make up the public realm (e.g., Habermas 2008). It can also emerge in the insertion of signifiers (material, embodied, pragmatic) in ways that conform to codes and conventions of secular spaces, such as the guarantees of free speech that allow crosses or menorahs to be displayed, and thereby blur the boundaries of publicity and privacy. This, in overly simplified terms, is the phenomenon that Matthew Engelke (2012) described as "ambient" religion, a locution deliberately meant to parallel the phenomenon of ambience in advertising and thus to place religious action and expression within the landscape of consumer society.

I want to draw on the example of STM and its effects to posit a third option for the critique of secularity, one that is less concerned about the categorical boundary between "religion" and the "secular," but instead focuses on the affective and experiential qualities of spirituality as media that put "inner worlds" in conversation with material and political realities, rather than "cordoning off…inner spiritual states from external publics." (Bender and McRoberts 2012, p. 20) STM, especially projects carried out in Muslim-majority areas, offered volunteers new models for thinking about the boundaries of the secular. Although many STM projects, regardless of destination, were pitched as training grounds for volunteers growing in "boldness" in professing and sharing their faith, volunteers working in Muslim-majority sites discovered in these social spaces new, non-Christian styles for the expression of this "boldness." These styles, manifest in public spaces, were

expressed acoustically in calls to prayer and amplified sermons, in dress and in murals and posters. They also existed in interactional norms, notably Muslims' willingness to engage in conversations and debates on spiritual topics and in the perceptions, voiced by some, that Muslims were more "spiritual" than Americans. Ironically, it was in the worlds of non-Christian Others that they found models for critiquing everyday norms of secularity in the USA that favor discretion and treat religion and spirituality as private concerns to be shared with family and like-minded others rather than co-workers or casual acquaintances (see Connelly 1999). It suggests how STM may work as an anchor for a postsecular imaginary in which social spaces of everyday life are treated as spaces of moral experimentation, and in which diverse faith commitments may confront one another, both as polemical opponents and as converging imaginaries.

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