

Expectations in Mission

Issue 15 Editor: Rob Hay

What are the expectations of twenty first century missionaries in training? Is it legitimate to have expectations?

Through a specially commissioned research study amongst missionaries in training, we have sought to explore how mission and missionaries are changing and in particular what are their hopes, fears, expectations and concerns as they prepare to enter mission.



We have six subject focused articles:

Where have all the heroes gone?

When workload takes its toll.

Maintaining discipleship on the mission field.

Wholly available - flexibility and service.

Supporting mission - multiple parties & many gaps.

Developing gifts and skills.

These articles examine the findings of the research and present dramatic, interesting and sometimes puzzling issues. The writers come from three different generations, the survey participants, from four - the views expressed are diverse and often the conclusions are too. This issue has the potential to ignite a debate and we hope it will, but more than that we hope it will help us all to understand that mission and missionaries are ever changing to meet appropriately the context of the day in which they live.

How well we understand the needs and expectations of missionaries will dictate how effective we are as stewards of the missionary endeavour in our lifetime.

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Expectations in Mission

New wine poses a challenge to the wineskins



Author: Rob Hay, Director of Research and Partnership Development, Redcliffe College

Many mission leaders have asked me if, having written and spoken extensively about Generation X, I have anything helpful to say about the millennial generation. Many are struggling to understand the mindset of new missionaries/applicants. They seem familiar and yet foreign - seeming to speak something like the same language but look different. I guess they have that slightly incongruous feeling that I had the first time I saw the Bisto® gravy advert where you hear a broad Yorkshire accent and then see a Sikh in a turban.

Given these kinds of feelings being so widespread amongst mission leaders, personnel managers and recruiters, we have wanted to respond constructively to these issues in *Encounters* for some time. The advent of a new year at Redcliffe finally gave us the opportunity. With 28 nationalities in the student body, it seemed we had a reasonable sample on which to explore these issues. However, there was always the issue that once they had been at Redcliffe we could be accused of having shaped their responses. This new year with 56 students starting, we had a big enough sample of new students to counter that bias. In their first few weeks at Redcliffe we conducted a survey across the entire student body. We wanted to explore what expectations they had of mission; what it would be like, how it might affect them and what their future ministry would look like. These results are representative of that group: namely people who are serious enough about mission to seek training.

The results were very surprising, really encouraging and slightly scary. Surprising because they painted a picture of a generation (perhaps cohort is a better word as their ages range from 18 - 51) that is seriously committed to long-term mission and this is different from the impression many mission agencies have. Encouraging because they show themselves to have a pragmatic, flexible approach that will find a way now, and probably continue to find a way as circumstances change and obstacles come, of fulfilling that call to mission. However, and there is a very clear 'however', the future is scary because they do present different needs, perhaps than the previous generation, certainly than many sending agencies (and arguably sending churches) have catered for to date.

A massive proportion of them will work part-time in paid employment if that is what it takes to do mission. You see the pragmatism that is so encouraging, and I would argue so appropriate, to the fast changing unpredictable world of 2006, means that if the organisations are not there to help them fulfil their calling, they will find a way to do it without them! Do not mistake this as some rampant individualism and entrepreneurial spirit that led to so many new agencies being created in the 60's and 70's, when boomer generation missionaries, frustrated with the staid and cautious 'old' missions, started new movements like YWAM and OM. This generation does not have the same gung-ho approach of the 60's. It is writ through with self-doubt and, if not an anti-hero movement, at least a strong desire to avoid a pedestal. It is a generation that would much prefer to go with others, to go with an organisation if they can, rather than re-invent the wheel, or - God forbid - make something in their own image.

And yet, uncertain as they are about their own abilities, they are not fearful - security and fear for their safety and that of their family ranked very low. They did have fears but these were more the fear of letting others down: their supporters, their colleagues and their churches.

Their greatest fear of all, I would suggest, was the fear of letting God down. They fear not measuring up to their own expectations or God's call on their life.

So what might this mean for the future of mission? Each of the six articles unpacks a specific area, but I would like to suggest a few key things:

1. We need to resolve the gap between what mission is really like in the twenty-first century and the nineteenth century image most churches and supporters still have of it. This generation cannot live long-term with that inconsistency.
2. Training institutions need to ensure they have a model that is seeking to prepare and shape broken people seeking to minister to a broken world and who need their skills and gifts drawn out and confidence built up, rather than taking perfect people and preparing them for heroic roles.
3. Agencies need to return to loyalty based not on an agency-centred model but a God-centred one, where they can constructively be the pragmatic partner for a leg of the journey. So that they can travel together for a time, wish each other well if the roads fork, but part on terms that mean should the paths converge again, a mutually supportive journey can re-commence.
4. Individuals (and I include here the individuals that make up the staff of organisations: churches and agencies alike) need to find ways of mutually supporting each other in fulfilling their call. That support needs to share fears, but it also needs to challenge. To say 'you do have talents, skills and gifts' - even perhaps leadership potential - 'I recognise that in you and think God wants you to use it.' That kind of support values the person, values the present, but calls the individual to step out and be courageous, even when something is scary.

This new cohort of missionaries does present to churches and mission agencies - the traditional senders, new challenges that demand a response. However, unlike the impression created by many that the end of mission (at least in the West and from the West) is nigh, perhaps we need to realise that it is not dead at all, it just looks different. It is not that mission is dead, just that we failed to recognise its new 21st century shape!

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Author: Rob Hay, Director of Research and Partnership Development, Redcliffe College.

Introduction

Mission has a history, at least in recent times of being heroic. Look at the books published on mission – biographies of people who dared great things for God. I was reading recently about a missionary woman who whilst she spent most of her time in Africa was greeted with huge public expectation when she returned home for a visit. People wanted to hear the latest daring, the latest adventures and yes, the latest victories in spreading the gospel worldwide. Missionaries were not “normal” Christians they were super-Christians who were courageous with their faith, who did not fear the unknown or arduous living. They were very spiritual, with unwavering faith in God, and had a greater awareness of Him and His presence than other people in “secular work”. I am conscious that I paint a picture that some missionaries from previous generations would be uncomfortable with but I would suggest that there was not enough of them that were uncomfortable enough to challenge it in the public arena.

Here we explore the area of expectations that people have of missionaries. What do people expect them to do and to be? How do supporters, churches and colleagues expect them to behave? How do missionaries perceive the expectations of others, for the perception and reality are often different as we shall explore. How do we measure success? What is fruitful? When we look at missionaries how do we measure their success and equally important if we are missionaries how do we measure success for ourselves?

Key findings¹

We asked over 60 students preparing at mission training college a series of questions about their expectations of mission.

We asked about their concerns as they entered into mission:

- 78% expressed concern about living an “observed lifestyle”
- 84% expressed concern about living up to the expectations of supporters
- 62% fear they will be a failure in their ministry
- 79% had some concern about the adequacy of their skills
- 73% were concerned about the inadequacy of their character
- 67% were concerned about compromising their principles and settling for surviving rather than thriving

We asked what they expected of their future role and ministry:

- 70% were concerned that others would have unrealistic expectations of them

We asked about their call and role:

- Only 8% of respondents expect to become heroic figures

¹ For a fuller explanation of the study see the Editorial.

Exploring the results

Is it surprising that only 8% of respondents expect to become hero figures? Possibly not – humility would tend to militate against this, however 61% said that they certainly don't expect to be hero figures and the other 31% think it unlikely. Perhaps even more convincing of an anti-hero sentiment is the fact that 78% expressed concern about living an "observed lifestyle". People who want to be heroes do not get concerned about such things. They relish the idea of someone watching them – just look at all the people that apply for reality TV shows knowing that many programmes sell themselves on making their contestants look foolish! However, what does this reticence for being the object of people's attention and scrutiny mean for the traditional view of witness as living before people to demonstrate an alternate lifestyle? Perhaps we would think this reflects Western individualism about both being scrutinised and seeking to challenge others through what we do or don't do (not a tolerant way of living). It may reflect that, but certainly some of those most concerned about this were not from the West.

This cohort is not seeking fame. They have a sense of call that they want to follow through on but if they make a big song and dance about it they raise expectations and 84% expressed concern about living up to the expectations of supporters with 48% being slightly concerned, 29% quite concerned and 6% very concerned. Why do they feel that supporters will have such high expectations? Perhaps because they are told to have such high expectations, in church sermons, missionary talks and mission publications. Perhaps because consciously or unconsciously we equate faith with achievement. This link is another of the many symptoms of the churches whole-scale acceptance of modernist values. Looking more widely 70% were concerned that others (generally not just supporters) would have unrealistic expectations of them with 57% being quite concerned and 13% very concerned.

In the editorial I said that whilst this cohort was pragmatic enough to cope, they were far from rampant individualists. In fact they are a very self-doubting group with 62% saying they fear they will be a failure in their ministry. I guess this means there are 38% that are not concerned about being a failure in their ministry but with 56% slightly concerned, 5% quite concerned and 2% very concerned we do have a picture of a group that is far from believing they are God's gift for any particular situation! However, the more I ponder that result, the less I am worried by it. We have often been criticised in history as Christians for having no self-doubt and thinking we had all the answers, and so perhaps it is helpful and healthy that we are conscious of our own humanness and frailty? Whilst we worship, serve and seek to declare a glorious and perfect God, we do so as broken vessels limited by the brokenness of our lives and the world around us. Indeed perhaps if we can overcome our reticence to be observed, showing we are imperfect and revealing our struggles may communicate more to the world around us. It does seem to be a world which after all seems positively enthralled by the struggles in people's lives and able to forgive and indeed go on respecting people in spite of their failings. More so perhaps than a perfect life that seems too good to be true and hides the failures in private. Certainly scripture suggests that the Holy Spirit can use the weaknesses we have to display the power and glory of God at work.

The nature of possible failings seems to cover many areas. A significant number were concerned about their skills being inadequate (this is discussed in detail in one of the other papers). 73% were concerned that their character would prove inadequate with 53% slightly concerned, 16% quite concerned and 3% very concerned. This reflects a concern I saw in some focus group work amongst a similar group a few years ago. I had asked them how long they felt called to serve in mission and then how long they would commit to at interview. The difference was huge: the length of service was 20 years to lifetime and yet they would, almost without exception, only commit to 3 years service with an organisation. When I asked

them to explain it became clear that it was not a commitment issue but rather an integrity issue. They wanted to commit to something that they would see through. They knew they might not cope with culture shock, they may not cope with the role, their family might not cope or there could be a hundred other unexpected reasons. They knew all that, they were not naïve, and yet they wanted to honour their commitment – their main concern was to fail to honour their word. Linked to the other concern, namely that 67% were concerned about compromising their principles and settling for surviving rather than thriving, it would seem that contrary to the valueless, uncommitted picture often painted of Gen X and Millennials, they are actually very principled and want to strive to live to those principles out.

Reflection, Considerations and Challenges

There are some significant issues here for us to consider. How do these things impact our current pattern and practice of mission?

What might this reticence to be the centre of attention mean for the current style and ethos of mission magazines who present the regular pattern of missionary challenge, missionary profile, and missionary success story? How different is the tone of our mission magazines and the publicity we use from your tabloid reality TV show? Are we guilty of hyping it up?

Is there a reality gap that we need to do more to address? If the mission organisations are aware that mission at the start of the twenty-first century is on the whole different to the pioneering picture of 100 years ago, what are we doing to change the picture that supporters have? Mission is largely assisting others to do, rather than doing yourself. It is allowing others to make decisions and limiting your input to offering advice and support. This approach takes more time and it requires people who are both able to walk with and follow, rather than lead.

In the focus group we conducted for this study, it was clear that this cohort were deeply unhappy about communicating a picture of mission that did not match their lived reality and yet what if we do communicate the true picture? Will supporters stop giving? Do we dare not challenge that unrealistic and outdated image that many supporters have in case the modern reality is not as lucrative as the imagined one? Perhaps the lack of support from younger Christians (say under 45) to traditional mission agencies is because they do not feel what they are being asked to support is real enough! It is a very difficult one because if the expectations are so different of what mission is, you will struggle and probably never succeed to meet the expectations of both parties – the gap is just too wide.

The concern expressed in several places in the results about meeting expectations of others is, I would suggest, rooted in this reality gap.

Conclusions

The problem with all research is that it may give you some answers but it always gives dozens more questions. However, I do think we have one very clear picture. I started by asking where have all the heroes gone? A hero is defined:

1. In mythology and legend, a man, often of divine ancestry, who is endowed with great courage and strength, celebrated for his bold exploits, and favoured by the gods.

2. A person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life²

Compare that to the definition of servant:

1. One who expresses submission, recognizance³, or debt to another

It would seem that the heroes are not to be found. But it would seem that there are many seeking to be servants, recognising that they may struggle and fail but seeking to serve nevertheless. Perhaps what this lack of heroes means practically is that supporters need to become just that – supporters and not spectators. People who rather than just gasping in awe, seek to empathise with and encourage. To help those they support to step out in greater faith.

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² www.thefreedictionary.com

³ An obligation of record that is entered into before a court or magistrate, containing a condition to perform a particular act, such as making a court appearance

Stress and Mission

When workload takes its toll

Author: Sarah Hay, Personnel Specialist, Generating Change.

Stress is a common word in the language of the 21st century. Many people are suffering from stress and its side effects. It hardly needs defining because we have heard the word bandied about so often. Stress is really a physical, mental or emotional pressure which affects the way in which we function if it is allowed to remain unchecked. Kelly O'Donnell, a key writer and thinker on missionary member care has said 'Stress affects us all. It is an inevitable and normal part of life. Too much accumulated stress, though, will sideline even the most robust missionaries'. It is too much accumulated stress which causes a problem and on the mission field there are many stresses, including that of workload.

It should come as no surprise that stress is a major factor in the mission world. Anyone involved in mission is likely to have personal examples of times when they have been stressed and quite possibly will have come across people who found the stress too much, resulting in them returning home or even requiring long-term counselling or medication to help them de-stress. A common misconception about stress is that stress is a bad thing. Too much stress is obviously a negative thing, but for many people a little stress is helpful for them in terms of creativity and achievement. Likewise, when selecting a mission candidate it is fine to accept someone who may get stressed but what needs to be assessed is how stressed the individual gets and how they manage and cope with that stress. It is the coping ability that is key.

It is interesting to read the results of this survey. A number of the questions related to stress and it seems that the survey participants are well aware of the issue and are actually expecting to feel it at some point during their ministry. As it is often said, moulding expectations is a vital part in preparing a person for mission service – if expectations are grounded in reality, there is less distance to fall when things don't work well and people are more prepared to cope with the issues. It is hoped that if people are expecting to be stressed, they will think in advance of ways in which they may cope with such a situation, putting into place practical steps to reduce stress before it builds up.

77% of those surveyed felt that demands on their life would be conflicting and overwhelming. This does not surprise me as the students are taught about factors involved in cross-cultural mission. They learn about differences with other cultures and the difficulties of working in a cross-cultural team. During college life there is a conflict of time between study, community interaction, church involvement, maintaining a personal spiritual walk and so on. Thus they are already beginning to experience what conflicts they may face in the future. They also meet individuals who have already worked in mission and so their eyes are open to the dangers. I think that this is also reflected in the fact that 56% thought it quite likely that they would have an unmanageable amount of work to do. From my experience, it would be fair to say that owing to lack of human and other resources, mission partners are often expected to do more than one job. There also seems to be a personality trait that makes many of us perfectionists and, because of a desire to do the best for God, we probably make our roles bigger than they need to be! This is highlighted in the fact that 84% thought they would put too much pressure on themselves!! This seems a rather high percentage but may reflect that the students are aware of some of the dangers and during their study there is a tendency to want to strive for good results and hence put pressure on themselves. Thus current pressures may have affected this answer. It may also reflect the fact that part of the course is related to personal development and helping the student to become more self-aware. In

addition to individuals feeling that they put too much pressure on themselves, 57% felt it quite likely that others would have unrealistic expectations of them and again this can lead to stress where someone may feel that they are not 'up to scratch'. Is your best good enough for your manager? If the manager leads by an example of working long, hard hours and always striving for perfection, this will often cause the team member to try and match these characteristics, regardless of how necessary or healthy that may be. Likewise, 84% expressed some concern that they would not be able to live up to the expectations of their supporters. Whilst this may not be a stressor related to workload, it shows that people are very aware of their supporters and the fact that they would not be on the field without them. This naturally leads to a desire to do the best for them, to show a return on investment. But this kind of stress is not helpful, adding to the burden of performance when in fact it is only God who needs to be served.

61% felt it quite likely that there would be demands on their skills/gifts /experience for which they would be inadequate. This picks out the issue that, again owing to lack of personnel, individuals are often required to fulfil a role for which they have no experience or training. I can think of several examples, from my own experience, where someone has had to take on a role in this way, for example having to lead a field team because the leader has left and yet they have never led before or been trained to do it. This usually results in intense personal stress and often a dysfunctional team!

Alongside this result, 79% expressed some degree of concern that they would prove inadequate in terms of the necessary skills. I think that this reflects a general self-doubt that many people feel about whether they really have anything to offer. In the Christian world, to be self-confident is often viewed as being "all of self and none of God". It is deemed a trap for the arrogant and something to be avoided. As humans, many of us naturally play down our strengths. When training someone in C.V writing and interview preparation, I nearly always have to encourage people to make more of their achievements and successes and rarely need to ask someone to tone things down!

Another interesting result was that 78% expressed some level of concern that living under scrutiny would be a cause of stress. I thought that this result was a little high. Whilst people would naturally consider living in a different culture to be stressful, owing to the huge differences between cultures and being away from familiar support networks and so on, I would not have considered so many to have thought about the concept of being scrutinised by others (especially the local people). This is often something which only strikes you once you are in situ.

I have picked out a number of the results which I believe relate to stress on the mission field. It is true to say that there are many stressors, particularly relating to culture, being away from familiar support networks, safety, health issues and so on. But a notable stressor, as we have seen, is in people's expectations and the realities of heavy workload. As I have already mentioned, a serious problem in the mission world is a lack of people to fulfil the great vision of many organisations. There is a vast need for God throughout the world. Whilst this is a tremendous motivator for mission partners to do the most they can and the best that they can, the results show that this is a great concern and my experience and reading tells me that these concerns are well founded. There are too many people in stressful environments, away from home, with huge roles and inadequate preparation and training.

How can an individual help to reduce their stress? One key way is to ensure people take the holiday that they are entitled to. Annual leave and home assignments are provided for a reason – to enable people to take time out, rest, re-energise and re-focus. These times are important in allowing space from a busy workload. Managers should also lead by example: if you are chained to your desk, you cannot expect your team members to do differently.

Mission partners also need to try to maintain a healthy balance between family life, spiritual growth, church and work. This is not easy but it is vital. I don't believe that God calls mission partners to work so hard that they neglect their families. If this is an issue for people, then it is important that they try to find a mentor to whom they can be accountable and who can provide them with assistance in keeping the scales balanced.

Mission organisations have a huge role to play in ensuring that their mission partners do not get too stressed by workload. It is important first for organisations to have robust recruitment procedures which ensure, as much as possible, that the right people are being selected. It will be necessary for them to undergo psychological assessments by trained experts, to try to establish an individual's ability to cope with stress and tough decisions will need to be made to only select people who are thought able to do that. Likewise, people should only be selected who have the right skills and experience. Good recruitment practice says never to compromise on selection. Preparation and orientation is then key to helping people mould their expectations and be as well prepared as possible for the issues ahead of them.

It is also important for organisations to place people in roles that they are suitable for, leaving posts vacant if need be rather than forcing the wrong person into it. We have all heard of the square peg in the round hole. Or was it the round peg in the square hole? Anyway, the greatest danger for a mission organisation is to put someone into a job, because the job is there, when that person is not suitable. This is asking for trouble, not just for the organisation but in particular for that individual, to whom the organisation has a duty of care. Organisations also need to look to mentoring systems, member care and spiritual input to assist an individual in handling the stressors that they face daily.

There is an awful lot more that could be said here. It has been stressful trying to decide what to say when there is so much more that could be said! It is important for people going into mission to acknowledge that there will be stresses ahead of them and they need to be armed with strategies to fend these off when they arise. But organisations also need to accept that such stresses do occur and that they are best placed to try to eliminate them.

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Maintaining Discipleship on the Mission Field



Author: Tim Davy, Web Marketing Officer and Visiting Lecturer, Redcliffe College.

Introduction

Christian discipleship (that is, growing in our relationship with and likeness to Jesus) is a messy, difficult, and necessary business. Even in the most conducive of circumstances it is not easy to maintain one's walk with God.⁴ There are always distractions, things to be done, needs to be met, and so the list goes on. But what about those in ministry, and particularly those in a different cultural context to their own?

This article reflects on the issue of maintaining discipleship on the mission field, with particular reference to the survey results reported in this edition of Encounters. I write this not as an 'expert' in the subject of discipleship, but as a fellow-traveller on the journey, who has struggled in my home context and overseas to maintain my own relationship with Christ.

Super Christians?

How much damage has been done to the work of the gospel by the erroneous perception that missionaries and other leaders are somehow in a different class of Christian spirituality?

Surely, so the thinking goes, they do not struggle with the basic disciplines of the faith such as prayer and bible reading? Surely they glide effortlessly through their lengthy early morning devotionals, unhindered by the distractions of this world and the pressures of life?

Perhaps this is a caricature of the perception of missionaries; perhaps it is not. Whatever the case, I do think there is a sense in which it is assumed that those in Christian leadership have somehow 'arrived' spiritually. God has selected these advanced learners in the school of Christ and prepared them for the ministry that now lies before them; they are now ready to 'spend and be spent'.

Survey results

There were a number of questions in the survey that relate to the issue of discipleship. However, because of space and overlap with other articles, I will highlight just a few of the most relevant results.

1. 75% of all respondents showed some level of concern that they would struggle to maintain their own discipleship (5% were very concerned, 21% were quite concerned and 49% were slightly concerned).
2. 73% expressed some level of concern that their character would be inadequate for their ministry (3% were 'very concerned', 16% were 'quite concerned' and 53% were 'slightly concerned').

⁴ This was evidenced by one student's remark that she struggled to maintain her personal devotions in the midst of community life at college.

3. 67% expressed some level of concern that they would end up compromising their principles and settle for surviving rather than thriving (5% were 'very concerned', 20% were 'quite concerned' and 47% were 'slightly concerned').

Of particular interest were the results for 'Goals in the area of personal growth'. In this section students were asked to rank in order of importance the following goals: 'An increased sense of personal identity', 'An ability to identify my true 'home'', 'Maintaining my spiritual life through spiritual disciplines', 'Maintaining my spiritual life through supportive colleagues', and 'Finding someone with whom to share when I am struggling'.

The results are replicated here for ease of reference.

Goals in the area of spiritual growth include: (1=top priority; 5=lowest)	Rated 1 or 2	Rated 1	Rated 2	Rated 3	Rated 4	Rated 5	Rated 4 or 5
An increased sense of personal identity	31%	13%	17%	19%	29%	21%	50%
An ability to identify my true 'home'	19%	10%	10%	13%	21%	46%	67%
Maintaining my spiritual life through spiritual disciplines	65%	42%	23%	19%	10%	6%	15%
Maintaining my spiritual life through supportive colleagues	29%	6%	23%	29%	23%	19%	42%
Finding someone with whom to share when I am struggling	56%	29%	27%	19%	17%	8%	25%

From this table we see that students place a high priority on maintaining their spiritual life, with 65% placing 'Maintaining my spiritual life through spiritual disciplines' either first or second in their priorities. Less than half of this figure (29%) saw the support of colleagues as either top or second priority in their discipleship. Nevertheless, 56% wanted to prioritise finding someone with whom to share their struggles.

Initial reactions

I have had a few initial responses to the results of the survey:

1. Discipleship is an acknowledged issue.

If the above caricature of the super-Christian is anything like true, at least the students themselves aren't buying in to it. They are well aware that they are not the finished product, but a work in progress.

2. Discipleship is a significant concern.

Students seem to expect that a life involved in Christian ministry will be tough. That 56% would prioritise finding someone with whom to share when they are struggling implies not only that they expect to struggle, but also that they cannot go through it on their own.

3. A desire for authenticity in life and ministry.

Throughout the survey and the focus group on which the questions were based, I have been surprised by the sense of inadequacy and insecurity felt by the students. In terms of discipleship perhaps this is best illustrated by the concern expressed by students that their character won't be up to the job. Is this a reflection of the self-perception of their discipleship?

The same could be said of their fear that, once in their ministry context, they will end up losing their ideals and settling for just getting by. Is survival all some of them are hoping for? How many missionaries labour under the fear of being 'found out'? How many feel like frauds as they find their idealism slowly ebbing away?

4. The need for personal and partnership responsibility

Having acknowledged that they are not experts, students seem intent on making their discipleship a priority. They recognise that this necessitates personal responsibility, as exemplified in the high priority assigned to the spiritual disciplines.

In addition to this, students are very aware of the need to work these things out in community. They expect to find others with whom to share their lives; they acknowledge their sense of dependence on those around them.

Interestingly, they do not necessarily expect this kind of relationship to come from their colleagues. This is surprising in that, for many, team mates will officially at least be designated as fulfilling this primary supporting role. What is this saying about their expectations about working in teams?

Reflections

So how can students deal with the fears of failure, overwork, conflict and compromise? How can their ministry be an authentic expression of who they are and who they are becoming, rather than a detached and formulaic 'professionalism'?

As I said in the introduction, I am no expert in the field of discipleship, but a fellow-struggler. What follows are a few reflective suggestions on how students can cultivate rather than compromise their discipleship now and in future ministry.

1. Who is changing whom?

Perhaps the first stage in approaching ministry (indeed, in approaching life itself!) is the fundamental conviction that God has brought us to it in order to change us.

I recently overheard two students discussing how much they were enjoying their 'Developing Spirituality' course. They were agreeing that we are all too willing to change the world, but give little thought to how God might want to change us.

They are on to something. I don't think this is a self-centred view of mission or ministry; rather, it is a healthy realisation that God is inviting us into the work he is already doing. Of course this is for the furthering of his kingdom in the world; but it is also for the growing of his lordship and likeness in us. If this overarching view of ministry – of life! – begins to take hold in us, we start to find that our security and identity begin to revolve around a different sphere. The silent, assumed questions that anchor our sense of worth and 'success' change from 'Who am I?', 'What am I good at?', 'What do others think of me?', to 'Whose am I?' and 'What is God choosing to do in me and in this situation?'.

2. Entering a strange world

The 'strange world' I am talking about here is not the alien culture in which the students might find themselves in the future. Rather, I am referring to what Karl Barth described as the 'strange world' of the Bible. I remember vividly a point at which I was really struggling while working overseas. We were in a pressured environment and out of our depth in an isolated place; but the real issue for me was the intense vulnerability I felt about my faith. How do

you encourage someone in that situation? The minister of my sending church sent me an email in which he urged me to keep paying attention to the Bible and to immerse myself in the strange world that lay within.

When I teach Old Testament or Hebrew to prospective missionaries I am painfully aware that I must connect academic necessity with pastoral urgency. When they are in the midst of ministry will they turn to their Bibles expecting the living God to speak to them and into their situations? Do they attend to the Word of God for information or for transformation? Is it just the raw material for the next sermon or Bible study, or is it a strange yet living world in which they encounter God and are comforted, unsettled and nourished?

3. Praying and ceasing

It is clear from the survey results that the students expect to be busy – perhaps, too busy. They will have demands on them both in the quantity of workload and the complexity of their tasks. They will be pushed and pulled, stretched and squeezed.

These issues will be covered in detail elsewhere by other contributors, but how will these pressures affect discipleship? If my life is anything to go by, it is far too easy for prayer and rest to give way. How can I sit still when my mind is racing? How can I allow myself to rest when there is so much to do? How can I devote time to myself when there are so many in need?

There are numerous issues at play here: How do I best pray? How do I best recharge? What are the expectations of working and resting amongst my team mates and the people amongst whom I am working? Praying and Sabbath are about attending to God and acknowledging that, yes, the world does indeed keep turning when I stop. It is a decision to turn away from the arrogance that assumes that I am in control. It is a chance to reorient our dependence from self to God.

4. The importance of others

The final aspect of discipleship I want to highlight is the role played by those around us in our growing in and like Jesus. Students clearly see those who will be around them as occupying a very influential role in their experience of mission. Students expect colleagues and senders to be the cause of both difficulty and help. This is a healthy and realistic sign; sin and mess is in and around us all – but isn't this why we are involved in mission in the first place?! I hope the students will consider how they can include others in the process of discipleship. I certainly wish I had done this more in my own cross-cultural experience.

Conclusions: The Shape of missional integrity

I want to finish with some reflections by one of today's most important writers on ministry. In his breathtaking book *Working the Angles*, Eugene Peterson sets out what he sees as the shape of pastoral integrity.⁵

Ministers, he says "are abandoning their posts, left and right, and at an alarming rate. They are not leaving their churches and getting other job. Congregations still pay their salaries. Their names remain on the church stationary and they continue to appear in pulpits on Sundays. But they are abandoning their posts, their *calling*" (p.1).

He then outlines the three basic tasks of pastoral ministry: praying, reading Scripture, and giving spiritual direction. Each act is a cultivating of attention to God and what he has done

⁵ E.H. Peterson, *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

and is doing in us, in his people across the millennia, and in the people we are ministering to now. These acts determine the shape of everything else. But, says Peterson, “these three acts are quiet. They do not call attention to themselves and so are often not attended to. In the clamorous world of pastoral work nobody yells at us to engage in these acts. It is possible to do pastoral work to the satisfaction of the people who judge our competence and pay our salaries without being either diligent or skilled in them” (p.2).

The point Peterson is making is that, often, the really important things in ministry are the things that others do not see and so will not miss if we do not attend to them.

Peterson’s comments are not just for those ministering in their own context. I am convinced that missionaries present and future would benefit from heeding his warnings. We do ill service to the furthering of God’s kingdom if we do not attend to his work in us and in others.

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Wholly Available?

Flexibility and service

Author: Rosemary Foster, Lecturer in Biblical Studies and Director of Placements, Redcliffe College.

'Here I am, wholly available! As for me, I will serve the Lord.' (Bowater, 1981) So we sing, sometimes sincerely, sometimes almost glibly – but the results of this survey make me wonder whether in reality, the prospective missionary sings such words with some underlying pre-suppositions ... Is the missionary-in training 'wholly available' or is it their gifts, experience and skills which are available for use? 'Here I am – as a trained linguist... as a teacher ... as one who has a heart for the poor, as a builder, as a trained and experienced youth worker ... of course, Lord, you understand that's the way in which I am available. That's who I am and those are the gifts you have given me.' And in case it seems that I am maligning our students – where does such a concept come from? I fear many of us who have been involved in mission for several years may be to blame!

The skills, experiences and giftedness of the new worker can cause the mission agencies to make certain assumptions and to have specific expectations of them

I was at missionary training college with a student who was trained as both a nurse and a teacher. Her strong desire was to be involved in teaching and discipleship – but her fear was that the needs in the mission hospital would mean that the mission agency would place her as a nurse there. In former days, under the more traditional and hierarchically-structured mission agencies, this could be a genuine concern. However, I wonder if we have now swung to on opposite extreme. Could it be that Ted Ward's words, written 7 years ago, are still all too true: 'In selecting missionaries, agencies have shifted from literal biblical criteria to measurable competencies.' (IBMR October 1999) Granted, such a comment raises many more questions which cannot be dealt with here, but the thrust is clear. Agencies seem to look for certain skills and competencies. The corollary to this then surely is that potential new recruits feel this is what they need to demonstrate and to offer.

A little more than 50% of respondents were 'somewhat confident' that the organisations would choose their role according to who they were and not just what the organisation needed. Only 29% felt that was certainly true, leaving a worryingly large minority (14%) who felt it would not be true. Is this a legitimate concern on the part of the prospective missionary? Where does such a concern originate? Is it based on stories of by-gone missionary ages when the expectation was that you accepted meekly whatever assignment was given you, whether you felt it 'fitted' you or not? Is it based on stories heard from other missionaries? Or is it the result of previous experience in the ever-changing work-place? Whatever the reason for the perception (fear?), this is a matter which should cause concern amongst sending agencies. Do we convey the sense that we see the gaps and then seek to 'plug' them with suitably skilled workers, irrespective of other considerations? Further, are we taking on board the increasing desire on the part of new workers coming to the field to have the opportunity for more 'on-the-job' training? (This is a subject dealt with elsewhere.)

Other missionaries make assumptions and have certain expectations based on their colleagues' skills, experiences and giftedness

How easy it is to put our colleagues into a box, based on what we see as their particular skills! In my role as a lay-trainer in one country I obviously had to use my teaching skills, but when I moved to another country and my main ministry became teaching I was never asked,

and it was never considered that I might also have skills or experience in other areas as well! I was placed in the 'teacher' box, and there I had to stay!

Yet I also have been guilty in my assumptions about others! We desperately needed a trained English teacher in the British programme I was heading up in a school for missionaries children. I remember feeling very annoyed when a missionary colleague, a trained English teacher but whose ministry involved church planting and lay-training, said to me most emphatically 'Teaching in the MK school is something I will not do'. 'Is that fair?' I thought, 'with the skills he has'? I looked at our 'gap' saw his skills – and wanted to 'plug' him in!

For our students, commitment to a particular role is seen as important as a commitment to an organisation (for 38% somewhat true, for 48% certainly true). This conclusion may not sit well with the older long-established missionary for whom the organisation has assumed a far greater importance, for whom the greater 'good' is to fit into the over-all thrust of the ministry and for whom individual roles may not seem to be so important.

The prospective missionary makes assumptions and has certain expectations based on their skills, experience and giftedness

It is encouraging to note (but should not come as a surprise) that students at a college for cross-cultural mission training overwhelmingly feel called to the concept and life-style of mission (98%). But what does that concept look like?

There is a correlation between the 61% who expressed some level of concern that they will not have the opportunity to use their gifts fully and the 69% who, when thinking of their call and role, stated that it was somewhat or certainly true to say that they were concerned that their skills, gifts and experiences will not be used enough. Is it being over-dramatic to ask: Is the potential new worker merely looking for a group or agency which can use their gifts? In certain cases it can be that the ethos of the agency itself, or even the areas of the world in which it works are felt to be less important than the need to find a niche for the skills offered. Mission agencies may need to be more aware that the new candidate is approaching them with this mind-set.

An overwhelming 97% of those surveyed said that their general approach to the future is flexible and creative.⁶ But this in itself raises a question. Where will that flexibility be when agencies and / or other colleagues want to put them in another role? Within traditional mission organisations how will such a person 'fit', where (rigid?) structures are in place, decision-making can seem to be a long-drawn out process, and where a less-well informed 'home-side' may be making decisions concerning field situations which they are not able fully to understand? Sometimes the opportunities on the field are not as the home-side has understood and represented it. So the missionary finds ministries in line with his gifts which are fulfilling and helpful to others, only to be told that these are not in line with the home-side goals and strategy for the field. What about the situation where the worker feels called and is accepted to fulfil a certain role, and then finds that the field has changed its ministry focus and their role no longer clearly 'fits'?

As well as having to cope with the apparent inflexibilities of mission structure, what happens when the new worker's flexibility and creativity faces the limitations imposed by governments, or by the colleague who finds new ideas and creativity threatening?

⁶ This came under the heading of 'Call and role' so one assumes they are thinking in terms of mission – but could it be to 'life' in general?)

Year after year, here at Redcliffe when we have carried out a poll of the class as to which attribute they consider the most to be desired in missionaries, the answer that always tops the list is 'Flexibility'. The students seem to understand that this will be required of them – but how willing are they to 'go with the flow' of organisations and colleagues who may seem, to them, to want to stifle that very flexibility and creativity (of which they are so proud) in the carrying out of their ministry? Is there an inflexibility in the desire to be flexible?! Is the potential new worker demanding a flexibility from others (fellow-missionaries and their agencies) which cannot be offered?

It should also be noted that 79% of respondents expressed some level of concern that they might prove inadequate in terms of their necessary skills (though for just over 20% this was not a concern at all.) Are some of our 'missionaries in training' concerned that they will be placed in situations without the necessary skills? Is this a lack of self-confidence or is this too based on past experiences in the secular or even Christian world? Whatever the reasoning, it seems clear that new workers come with considerable fears that they might prove to be inadequate. This may be why often they want to have a firm job-description before they can agree to 'sign up' to the agency's designation for them. (This is particularly true of certain personalities.) Increasingly, too, sending churches seem these days to be demanding this kind of specificity from the organisation before they will agree to their member going out. Could it be that a justifiable desire for accountability on the part of their member results in a rigidity of expectation which can create difficulties for all concerned - the senders (be it an agency or the church), the receivers and the one sent?

A further question is 'How flexible is the missionary in training right now? In my role as Director of Placements I am encouraged by the willingness of the majority of students to serve and to move out of their comfort zone in their placements. Yet there will always be some who will say 'I cannot do that' / 'I don't want to do this'. This may well be because of a realistic assessment of their own capabilities – or is it in fact an indication of an unwillingness to be flexible?

Reflection

Trawling through the results of the questionnaire, I do find a glaring omission. I have no doubt that the notions of 'service' / 'the willingness to serve' are assumed in this questionnaire, as a driving force behind much mission work. But with the frequent stress on skills and giftedness, have we fallen into the trap of thinking that the possession of these alone is what makes us effective missionaries? Are we all somewhat to blame for this mind-set?

- Agencies offer specific openings which demand certain skills... e.g. "Needed: someone able to teach handicapped children." Can it be assumed that the skills acquired in the sending country by the new worker will automatically be transferable to another culture? Might the new worker need to go rather with a willingness to learn, maybe even to be 'deskilled' in order to learn fresh skills?
- The prospective missionary feels he or she needs to offer a particular skill before the agency will consider them. But how does one define unquantifiable skills such as the ability to come alongside others to help and support with compassion and empathy? Is it not true that the 'receivers' are not wanting our skills so much as 'us' – those who can walk with them, who can come alongside in a spirit of service and a continued willingness to learn rather than coming as a ready made product to be used?

Are we merely following the ethos of our consumer society with our emphasis on skills, gifts and experience? Prospective missionaries could be in danger of becoming like consumers, trying to find the 'best fit' on their own terms ...Or is it in fact the other way round, that the mission agencies themselves are looking for 'the best fit' for their work – so the candidate tailor-makes himself accordingly? These may be chicken-and-egg questions, but none the less they should give us pause for reflection and to re-evaluate our emphasis, both as those involved in mobilising and sending as well as those who are preparing to go.

After all those questions and challenges let me finish with a recent encouragement on this issue. It was a reflection from one of our Redcliffe students who demonstrates how placements are an important part of helping students find out about themselves, and how they fit into the 'big picture' of mission. This student went to work with a small church in France...

"Something I hadn't really considered before is that I had often thought of mission as going somewhere to bring my gifts and knowledge to help people and churches in need...It is so easy to see myself as the important one, and to forget that the aim is to bring the people I am working with to a point where they don't need me any more. My ultimate aim should be to help the churches to grow and become strong and stable enough to support themselves; to survive and thrive without the support of missionaries."

Now there's a challenge for us all!

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Supporting Mission:

The relationship between missionary, sending organisation, sending church & individual supporters.



Author: Mike Frith, Director of OSCAR, The UK Information Service for World Mission.

When Paul & Barnabas were sent out by their church in Antioch (Acts 13), things seemed so simple. They were released from their duties and sent on their way. There was no 'sending organisation' and one can assume that the majority of their 'individual supporters' would have been part of their sending church. How much finance played a part in the sending out isn't clear, but their income was obviously supplemented by their own work along the way (making tents!). However, support is much more than finance and, judging by the content of letters that went between Paul and the churches that he built up connections with, there was a lot of support, encouragement and care going on.

With the advent of the modern missionary movement, the situation became more complex. Organisations were formed to do for the sending church what they couldn't do for themselves. In the modern world of mission, these organisations improved and facilitated the link between the sending church and the receiving location.

As the sending organisation's role grew, many of the tasks that the sending church traditionally had were catered for. This meant that the sending church stepped back from its responsibilities and allowed the sending organisation to take on more and more of the church's role. The result has been that many sending organisations stand on their own and have a very tenuous link with the local church.

Over the years, church and social communities became fragmented and this further diminished the sense of belonging and involvement from both the church and the missionary. As the direct involvement of churches diminished, their sense of ownership decreased along with their support for the missionaries. To compensate, many missionaries felt the need to spread their support net much wider to include supporting churches and individuals from a much wider area.

So we arrive at today's situation where a missionary's support network consists of a diverse and complex group of organisations, churches and individual supporters who play different support roles at different times. How do students feel about the involvement of these different parties in mission, and what issues do they face as these diverse group members seek to relate to each other?

Expectations and Concerns

- 84% expressed some level of concern about living up to the expectations of their supporters with over one third (35%) being quite or very concerned
- 7% were very concerned that they would be misunderstood by their sending church, with 66% expressing some degree of concern about this
- 67% expressed some degree of concern that they would be misunderstood by their supporters
- 55% expressed no concern that they would be misunderstood by their sending organisation

Generally, a large number of students seem concerned about meeting the expectations of the other parties (sending church, sending organisation and supporters) and not being

misunderstood. This initially indicates that they have a fairly strong sense of responsibility to others and already see their role as being somewhat integrated with, and accountable to, these others. This is a healthy attitude to mission and I feel that the foundation of good teamwork and relationships is a respect for, and desire to involve, other parties who share, or have an interest in, the work. Often the criticism of a younger generation is that they 'do their own thing' regardless of the advice of their elders. Post-modern generations seem to be reversing this trend and have a stronger sense of relational identity than those who grew up in a modernist time when the individual was king and society respected and fuelled a certain amount of selfish ambition (even in, dare I say it, Christian circles).

Maybe these concerns are founded in the students observations that the relationships between missionaries, sending organisations and sending churches have often been strained in the past. Part of the concern seems to stem from their desire to make amends for previous times when different parties have fallen out over seemingly trivial issues of doctrine or behaviour. This reinforces the now widely accepted thought that for today's generation, relationship (belonging) is more important than behaviour or beliefs. This may be a challenge to organisations and churches whose very foundation has been built around a certain theology or practice that has defined them in Christian society and become their identity. In order to continue to be involved in mobilising, equipping and sending today's generation into mission, they might have to become more inclusive and tolerant than ever before.

Even putting aside their sending church and organisation, students still seem to feel a strong sense of responsibility toward their supporters. I believe a large part of this comes from the relational accountability described above, but we also live in a time where we can be highly informed and involved in the things we support. On an organisational level, the Charity Commission of England and Wales has an increasing desire for charities to be transparent and accountable to their supporters. This pattern is echoed in the individual supporter who often has similar demands on the missionary they are supporting. For the missionary, this requires a fairly high level of openness and information exchange with supporters which, with modern communication methods, creates a fair amount of work and stress on a day-to-day basis. Hence, I believe this is why many have concern about doing the right thing with their supporters. This concern isn't just about keeping supporters content by satisfactorily demonstrating where their money is being spent – it's more of a genuine desire to involve them in the work and seek their participation through interest, encouragement and prayer as well as finance.

Calling & Commitment

- 98% felt called to the concept and lifestyle of mission, with 56% saying that they have a definite life-long call to mission
- 93% said that the level of commitment to the organisation depends on their knowledge of the organisation

It's interesting to see that a high number of students feel a strong sense of calling to mission. It's also interesting to see how they view this calling. Not so many years ago, and it was certainly true with a number of our compatriots on the mission field, people would have said that it was part of their calling to work with a certain organisation. Perhaps this came from a strong desire to identify with a group of people who shared a similar calling. Denominationalism in the church followed a similar pattern where people would often have said they were a Baptist or Methodist before they would have said that they were a Christian. Even in secular culture, loyalty to institutions was once so much more prevalent than it is today. Now, perhaps following similar trends in society, our Christian culture has changed and the denominational labels have diminished considerably. A similar pattern seems to

have been followed with individuals identifying with organisations. The organisation missionaries work with has much less importance in their calling than it might have done for previous generations. Sometimes a sending organisation doesn't even feature at all as missionaries seek to go independently.

Sending churches and organisations have often interpreted this reticence to identify with an institution or organisation as a lack of commitment on the part of the missionary. It might often be because those in positions of leadership in these institutions are still influenced by their traditional view. This creates a tension between the generations that can strain the relationships between sending church, sending organisation and missionary. Good relationships take time and it's important to get to know the real person and not make assumptions too early. Too often we judge people with our own yardstick – a measure that's often limited by our own pre-conceptions and hang-ups.

For students I have many times reiterated the cliché 'God is more concerned with who you are than with what you do or where you do it'. Many have given this lip service but our society has been strongly shaped by the modernist notion that 'you are what you do'. The result of this has been generations of 'doers' whose identity is in doing and not in being. If we as Christians were to redress this imbalance we would want to emphasise that it's important for us to discover our true identity in Christ before we then seek how He might have us move out in action. I, for one, am pleased to see that these students have a more holistic view of mission as being a life-long lifestyle and not just something they 'do' for a period in their life. If we are to be true missionaries and bring God's transforming grace to the situations we find ourselves in, it really doesn't matter whether we're church planting in a remote part of Africa ... or having a cup of tea with our neighbour in some leafy UK suburb!

Finance

- 93% were very flexible as to how their mission might be financed
- 79% said they were happy to work part time if they could not raise enough support. 21% said they would certainly not want to do this

There were just two questions about financial support in the survey. Whilst one of these recognised the diverse way in which missions (and missionaries) are financed, neither question expressed the continual concerns that students have about finance.

Raising ones own financial support has always been a bigger issue for some than for others. Some people dread the idea of deputation, whereas others who have skills in this area or are gifted in communication often see it as more of a privilege than a duty. The fact that 79% indicated that they would be happy to work part time to supplement their support could demonstrate one of several things:

1. That they lack the faith to trust in God's complete provision
2. That they already struggle with finance at college, possibly working part-time to fund studies, and can't see how it will be any different in mission
3. That they see this as a reality in today's society where loans are more prevalent than grants

If we were going to look deeper at attitudes to financial support, I would want to ask a few more questions to get behind students' thinking. However, we are aware from just these two questions that finance is still a big issue and is likely to continue to play a large role in the relationship between missionary, sending church, sending organisation and individual supporters. One can assume that as the western church decreases in number, the pot for finance will get smaller and competition for the donor's pound will become even greater. The

pressure for finding personal support is usually put on the individual. Many sending organisations still give little help in raising support. Some provide the initial connection with potential supporting churches, others leave everything up to the missionary. Likewise, sending churches often neglect their responsibilities in this area forcing the missionary to look much further afield for their financial support. It's a sad fact that 'mission', and in particular 'non local mission', is off the agenda of many churches and the lack of funds for both missionaries and mission organisations reflects this.

This doesn't negate the fact that we, as a team, are still God's chosen instrument for mission and we need to make it work. For God's resources to be released into the areas where He wants to work, we need to be willing to both give and receive. This applies to all four parties concerned. Any one of these, by slipping into a narrow donor or recipient mentality, could become the blockage. Whatever role we play in mission, it's important for us to remain open to God's leading and be willing to step out in faith with a will resigned to His purposes.

I've always felt that part of the missionary's role has been to engage and involve the supporters in mission. Deputation is an opportunity not just for fund raising but also for the mobilisation, equipping and sending of others. As a missionary, there's nothing more satisfying than to see others encouraged into mission involvement because of our example or invitation. As for me having to raise my own support, in hindsight I wouldn't have wanted it any other way!

Membercare

- 68% thought it would be quite likely or very likely that they would be adequately cared for by their sending organisation, although only 13% thought this very likely
- 75% thought it would be quite likely or very likely that they would be adequately cared for by their supporters, although only 10% thought this very likely
- 82% thought it would be quite likely or very likely that they would be adequately cared for by their colleagues, although only 10% thought this very likely

The answers to these questions seem to indicate that students are confused as to who should be providing the primary care for them when they are 'on the field'. The low percentage of folk who put 'very likely' on each of these questions also indicates that a large proportion of students suspect that they 'very likely' won't be cared for adequately by the other parties involved. It's not surprising as the support network (and, hence, care network) for current missionaries 'on the field' varies greatly from one person to the next. Who really should be the primary carer for missionaries?

Our biblical example from Paul & Barnabas shows the church as being the prime sending authority, and therefore should have the primary responsibility for care. However, as we've already explored, the arrival of the sending organisation to take on specialist roles has meant that this task has been, in part, passed to (or taken by!) the sending organisation. Perhaps this is because they have felt in a much better position to give this care. The organisation then has it's own combination of specialised personnel and pastoral staff, along with local team members who, between them, provide some structured form of care. The problem with this agency based system is that pastoral care is often better done by someone who is:

1. Somewhat removed from the day to day workings of the organisation
2. Someone who the missionary already feels comfortable with

It's no surprise to see that these conditions are rarely met by the organisation. Often the missionary receives care from a combination of sources including family & friends from

home, local friends outside the organisation, other specialists who are accessible to them (from other organisations or even their home church). In this complex situation with no one in overall responsibility, pastoral issues that missionaries face often fall through the cracks and they don't get the care they really need.

The recent growth in membercare by the sending agencies is a response by them to provide a better level of care for their missionaries. One concern with this is, if only the staff of the agency are involved, they may face a conflict of interest between providing what's best for the missionary and what's best for the agency. For membercare to really make headway, it needs to involve more than just one party. It would be great to see sending agencies, sending churches and missionaries getting together to talk about how they are going to make sure that the missionary is cared for. If this means utilising other folk in the missionary's own network then so be it. There is a tendency nowadays for individuals to build their own care networks and maybe the sending agency and church should empower them and allow them to do this. The important thing is that there are no gaps and each party (including the missionary) understands who is responsible for the care in any given situation. Ideally, this communication needs to continue throughout the missionary's service, keeping each party accountable to each other for the welfare of the missionary.

Conclusions

Communication

Due to the complex support network that now exists and the level of confusion as to who expects what and who provides what, clear and open communication has to be paramount. For the missionary, it's often hard to know what questions to ask so those with experience can often be useful in helping them determine the issues. Many of these would also come up in a training environment so I would hope that students pick much of this up during their time in mission training and orientation.

Generational thinking

It's clear that there are significantly different attitudes to mission across today's generations. This shows up here in how calling and commitment is portrayed by the newer generations. It's important for those coming into mission to realise that they could be viewed very differently through the eyes of someone from a previous generation, and they should strive to articulate their motivation. Likewise, it's important for those in positions of organisation and church leadership (who are generally from a previous generation, but not always) to realise that today's missionary may be just as sure of their calling and just as committed, but will express that in quite a different way.

Empowerment & resourcing

In today's society, the individual has so much control over their every day situation. This isn't just about choice but also the means (technology and resources) to do what previously was done by a specialist agent. For missionaries, this not only includes the practical things like booking flights and communicating across the world, but also arranging support and pastoral care. I think it's therefore important to empower missionaries to manage and control their own situation, perhaps under the help and guidance of 'experts'. It might be more appropriate for sending organisations to become more like resourcing agencies rather than controlling institutions.

The Sending Church

With the decreasing involvement of sending organisations in mission, maybe it's time that the sending church rediscovered its role as the prime sending authority in mission. Many people are doing mission without the need of a sending organisation, but I can't see that they can do

it without a sending church (or sending churches). It's important for the missionary to get a good grounding in their local church before they leave for the field, and even before they ask the church to be their sending church.

Healthy relationships are formed when we have spent time in each others company, respected each others views and got to know the people behind the roles. There are no short-cuts to this sort of investment but there are huge rewards for all those who see it and live it as a priority.

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Author: Dr Jonathan Ingleby, Editor of Encounters.

Today's missionaries in training expect their future experience to reflect and develop their gifts and skills, and to produce personal growth.

In this section I plan to look at the ways that potential missionaries expect their future service to develop their skills and gifts and to widen their experience, so that they can grow in personal effectiveness. I also want to determine whether they expect to develop professionally and if so how strong that expectation is. Are they expecting not just to be better people but also more employable when they return from the mission field? Furthermore, I want to explore the questions that these issues raise for mission agencies. What, for example, about the need for ongoing training? Does the agency have a responsibility (whether this is understood by missionary personnel or not) to ensure, not simply that people on the job are given the chance to use their gifts and skills, but also to develop them? Can we now see missionary service as part of a 'career path'.

As a preliminary response to these questions I contend that the questions themselves demand a considerable re-think on the part of our agencies (including the training agencies). In the past we have not thought about missionary service as a 'career', indeed we have often treated the idea as suspicious. (I will look at this again when we come to conclusions.) But one recent trend at least will force us to think through this issue more carefully. We are training and sending out today a host of what we might call, 'hybrid' Christian workers. These are 'tentmakers', people involved in 'business as mission', professionals with development agencies and the like. For these a 'career path' is by no means an irrelevance. They need to hang on to the idea of developing *professional* skills as part of their calling to an effective ministry. For them this is not a matter of vague aspiration, but urgent necessity.

The results of the questionnaire issued give us some idea of how a group of students, training for mission, saw their future 'careers', though it has to be admitted that it would have taken a larger and more representative sample, together with more specific questions (e.g. about the *sort* of ministry that respondents are hoping to go into) to answer all the questions posed in our opening paragraph.

Here are the results in brief:

- There was some concern that gifts would not be fully utilised in the future (over half of the respondents expressed this anxiety) but considerable confidence was expressed by the respondents that the sending agencies could find suitable roles for them.
- Most were confident that they had a 'flexible and creative' approach to the future. This confidence was expressed particularly in the context of their role when actually involved in missionary service. I think that this implies that some *development* of role would be expected and welcomed.
- At a more specific level a significant majority would be prepared to work part time (i.e. at a 'secular' occupation) if they were required to do so. This was linked to the issue of funding. This adds to the impression of a flexible approach, but gives less clear signals about seeing missionary service as a 'career'.

- A large percentage of respondents thought it likely that they would be able to *develop* (i.e. not just use) their skills and 'skills' here seems to be referring to vocational skills specifically.

I found these results genuinely encouraging. The respondents put a high value on flexibility, and in most cases this went as far as being willing to take non-traditional pathways such as 'keeping going' with a part time job if circumstances demanded it. They were also confident that once they had selected the right mission agency (they felt they needed to do this rather than vice versa!) they would be reasonably well looked after in terms of being matched to the right service opportunities. On the other hand they had a healthy desire that their gifts would be used and developed. Whether the answers reveal specific thinking about 'career pathways', I doubt. My guess is that students in training know that they should maintain and even enhance their professional skills while in active service, but it is not something they are thinking about very deeply while they are preparing to set out. Actively demanding opportunities for professional advancement may come later.

Overall it was also encouraging that there seemed to be what might be called an 'holistic' approach to mission service. 'I will get out there into the action and do what needs to be done to be effective' was the idea. It was not felt necessary to define the activity too closely as 'missionary work' or something else. This links with answers on the questionnaire (dealt with elsewhere) that suggest that current candidates have a sense of call to mission as a life-long life-style rather than to a specific task or place. While this 'flexible and creative' approach (see above) is admirable, there are obviously dangers as well. Does it turn the missionaries into 'amateurs' when, in fact they have valuable and specific skills and training which, unless there are very strong indications to the contrary, they should be using? Are they open to exploitation by agencies who want to use them for their programmes without due consideration of the needs of the individual? Are missionaries with professional qualifications aware that they may be falling behind their peers 'at home' so that they might find it difficult, or even impossible, to find suitable employment when they return?

In this respect, I would like the respondents to have higher expectations. Or perhaps a better word is 'wider'. There is no need for them to feel that joining a mission agency means necessarily discarding years of training and proven skills based on recognised gifts. What the call to mission gives, we hope, is a new focus whereby this training and these gifts and skills can be re-focussed on a new area of need. Of course, this re-focussing may in itself involve fresh training – in theological explanation, cultural understanding communication theory and other disciplines – but this will be in addition to, and not instead of, what the candidate already possesses. (Hence the word 'wider'.) I am not really happy about the concept of discarding *anything*, certainly not at the training stage. How do we know what opportunities may arise?

I wonder also whether training agencies have taken the needed width of legitimate expectations into consideration. There is considerable demand at the moment for courses on 'business as mission' or ones which have 'tentmaking' as part of the content. Similarly, Development Studies is increasingly popular as a subject, perhaps because it has the feel of preparing people to be missionaries and yet missionaries with an identifiable 'career'. As we have seen, answers to the questionnaire suggest that many students are simply abandoning the old-style missionary profile which might be characterised as a long-term evangelist or church-planter, working overseas in a 'foreign' culture with an identifiable mission agency, fully supported by the gifts of God's people. (Alternatively, all of the above, but a medical professional or teacher – agriculturists and engineers are also sometimes admitted to the club – working in a missionary run hospital, school etc.) Obviously, I am stereotyping here, but that is the point. Yet, as we have seen, this profile does not by any means fulfil the expectations of those going into mission today. The bullet points above suggest something

quite different. Training agencies need to make the adjustment. How can they equip prospective missionaries who, though deeply committed to mission, have a much less focussed idea of the task ahead? The same sort of question needs to be asked by mission agencies. How do we get *these people* into the action and support them in it?

Mission agencies also need to take another look at the issue of professional development. Let us assume that many young people are indeed going into mission today as tentmakers, or as business people or as development experts and of course are expecting to use their professional skills in their work. Do they not need, in a good sense, to see this as a career with all the usual expectations that go with a career – widening experience, on-the-job training, increasing responsibility, opportunities to confer with people in the same field, study leaves, sabbaticals, financial capital to develop new initiatives and so on. Have we really sorted this out? Or does it all still come under the heading ‘pastoral care’ with the promise of prayer and an occasional visit from a sympathetic senior missionary. (Again, this is a deliberate stereotype.) I was touched that one of the answers on the questionnaire suggested that the prospective missionaries have considerable confidence that mission agencies will look after them in matching their gifts and skills to the appropriate opportunities. I hope they are right. I sense a residual suspicion among mission leaders about any idea that people need to develop their professional skills, or ‘deserve’ better working conditions, or indeed are owed anything that will enable them to ‘get on’ in life.

In conclusion, I would like to make a couple of recommendations, one of them a ‘bee-in-my-bonnet’ no doubt very familiar to those who know me. Much of our training in mission has followed the pattern of theological training. Theological training has as its attendant disciplines subjects such as philosophy, religions, history, linguistics, and ethics. Mission training has the same allies, only (all being well) an additional component of cross cultural studies, the basic academic discipline in this case being anthropology. My question is: what about sociology, politics, economics, business, leadership, postcolonialism, global studies and perhaps some others? Mission workers, we are assured, are expecting to go out into situations where they will be working outside the Christian or mission sub-culture – setting up a business in Jordan, perhaps, or advising an agricultural programme in Kirghizstan. Are we preparing them for *that*? Can we send them to *that* and support them in *that*? My recommendation is a very simple one. We must be more people centred. We must ask, as realistically as we can, what sort of work are our future missionaries likely to be involved in, and how can we prepare them for it? It sounds easy enough, but in my experience, these are questions not asked sufficiently often.

My second recommendation may seem contradictory to what I have just said. It is that we all need to relax a little. The truth is that, as the textual scholars say, ‘the critical hermeneutical principle is the context’ and we never know what that context might be. We need to go on encouraging our expectant missionaries to be always setting out, but in the understanding that they will never arrive. In this respect, as I have said, the questionnaire results are encouraging. But we all need to accept this. God has already given these people gifts and abilities, and as long as we don’t get in the way, he will find ways to use them. The appropriate response to new situations is simply to be ‘flexible and creative’. How we get to our goals is in any case much less important than who we become in getting there. Growth is good but it will happen ‘naturally’, that is to say in God’s way, as long as we allow it to do so.

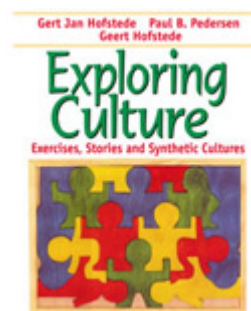
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Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories, and Synthetic Cultures

By Gert Jan Hofstede, Paul B. Pedersen & Geert Hofstede

Review by: Dr Jonathan Ingleby, Editor of Encounters and Former Head of Mission Studies, Redcliffe College.



I am sure that many of us who have taught cross cultural courses have used *Geert Hofstede's Culture and Organizations* [1] (published now more than a decade ago) and this book, *Exploring Culture*, is a follow up and companion to that volume. Its principal author is *Geert Hofstede's* son, *Gert Jan*, but the name of a fellow scholar, *Paul Pederson*, and of father as well as son are on the cover. This is significant because the book works with *Hofstede* senior's research on national cultures, and adds to it *Pederson's* concept of 'synthetic cultures'. *Hofstede* junior's major contribution is to widen *Pederson's* taxonomy and then to turn the material as a whole into a book which is as much about practice as theory, with plenty of illustrations and exercises. (Part I and Part III consist almost entirely of this sort of material.)

Hofstede junior also claims that he is adding a global dimension to his predecessors' studies but to some extent this book assumes that globalisation is not as important as it has often been made out to be. The authors emphatically do not think that the world is a global village, that it would be better if we had some sort of uniform global culture, that it is no longer necessary to learn other cultures, or that cultures are converging. Of course, one could be cynical and take a 'they would say that, wouldn't they?' approach, given that they are committed to teaching and enabling cross cultural communication, and have all written books on the subject. Indeed, I wonder whether they do tend to underrate the power of the new 'global culture' whereby, for example, youngsters in New York, Mumbai and Tokyo are all listening to the same music and wearing the same sort of clothes.

Nevertheless, I feel that the authors' central thesis stands, and I say this partly from personal experience. I worked in a College for many years where there were always people from many different nationalities and it was impossible to ignore national differences. Quite recently, we had to make an extra effort to include 'team work' as a discrete aspect of the curriculum. This was because our clients – international mission agencies – complained that multicultural teams, while increasingly a feature of the missions scene, were not working well. On that evidence, at least, it seems that we still have to give national cultural differences our careful attention.

To return to the book, however: the chief building blocks of the authors' cultural analysis are fivefold – identity, hierarchy, gender, truth and virtue.

I am not sure that these are very good headings, perhaps because they are shorthand for longer ones (familiar from *Culture and Organizations*) namely: individualism and collectivism, power distance, masculine and feminine, uncertainty avoidance and uncertainty tolerance, and finally short and long-term orientation. These concepts are supported by a huge amount of research and have stood the test of time; I have used all of them in my teaching and found them most helpful. My only (slight) criticism is that the list of five is slightly reductive. *Fons Trompenaars* and *Christopher Hampden-Turner* in another excellent book about cultural differences, *Riding the Waves of Culture* [2] suggest a number of other possible antinomies, such as neutral and affective (whether we separate and/or exhibit emotion in public discourse) or specific and diffuse (whether we interact with people at one, clearly defined,

level or whether our interactions with others are complex and diffuse), and these seem to me equally useful.

In any case, as I have said, the strength of *Exploring Culture* is its wealth of illustrations and proposed activities. If it is theory you want try *Cultures and Organizations* and *Riding the Waves of Culture*. But if you want to make theory stick, this is the book. In my experience, finding good role plays, simulations, small-group exercises and the like is the hardest part of preparing for teaching. This book is a huge help in that area.

Buy *Exploring Culture* from [St Andrew's Bookshop](#).

Author: Gert Jan Hofstede, Paul B. Pedersen & Geert Hofstede

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[1] Hofstede G. *Cultures and Organizations* London: HarperCollins, 1994

[2] Trompenaars, F. & Hampden-Turner, C. *Riding the Waves of Culture* (Second Edition) London: Nicholas Brealey, 1997

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Monsoon Wedding

Directed by Mira Nair

Reviewed by Claire (from the UK) and Shemil (from India), both Degree students at Redcliffe College.



What are the things you enjoyed?

C: I enjoyed the colourfulness of this film and I found the parts about the Westernisation of India really interesting.

S: I found the mockery of Indian upper class society, especially the ladies very amusing. Being brought up in a rather small city it was amusing to see how different living is in a big city.

What are the issues discussed in the film?

C: The main issues I saw in the film were the tension between two different cultures, attitudes of and towards young Indian people my sort of age, and the idea of love or arranged marriage. It was also interesting to see how they handled inappropriate sexual behaviour.

S: We are experiencing a big generation gap. My parents didn't have a TV until 1994 but now they have 150 channels. A normal Indian household consists of three generations. But as we see in the movie these three generations operates in three different levels of understanding of being an Indian.

This movie starts with the father of the bride welcoming the extended family; however in the end we see the same person distinguishing his immediate family and their interests from the rest of the family

What is your opinion of scattered families?

C: I don't think much about it; it is almost normal. I myself have family in New Zealand, Australia, and Egypt and friends all around the world. It is exciting to have family members in different places and I do not perceive it as a negative thing at all.

S: "Computer engineers are the biggest exports of India". India is facing a lot of brain drain. As we do not have enough jobs for all the educated people in India we have to go out of the country to work. But at the same time we try to meet each other at least every year if possible. We often need to plan the date of the wedding so early that every one in the family can arrive from around the world.

What do you think about the theme of hybridity of cultures?

C: In this film we see the clash of two cultures. Things like smoking, consummation of alcohol, Cosmopolitan magazine, Western clothing, and mobile phones were mixed in with traditional Indian aspects of culture. There was a really interesting scene where two ladies of the same age were pictured, one wearing traditional Indian clothing and one wearing revealing Western clothing. I found myself feeling sorry for the young people; they seemed to have a lot of pressure on them to conform to Indian ways, yet living out of the country they

had been exposed to Western ideas. It seemed a real confusion between Indian and Western cultures.

The man who ran the wedding business was a perfect example of the tension; he ran the business almost with a hierarchy (like Western businesses), was constantly attached to his mobile phone, yet also lived under the pressure of his mother wanting him to give him a grandson!

S: This movie shows a very realistic picture of India. We are caught between a hi-tech culture and a bullock cart culture. We still have the bullock carts side by side with the most advanced cars. In the same way we have not got rid of any of our traditions or values, but we have adopted and absorbed western values and culture.

This often forces people to lead a double life, one with western value judgements and one with eastern traditions.

If parents introduced us or we met in a night-club, what difference does it make?

C: A lot of difference! It interested me in the film to see that they portrayed the couple in the arranged marriage as 'falling in love'. I don't know whether this really happens today, but it seemed to be exactly like so many modern, Western, romantic movies.

That aside, to me there seems a huge difference between meeting someone, starting a relationship, developing love for one another and getting married; and you're parents deciding the person you will marry (maybe even from the time you are children). A big difference is that you may not even meet the person until you get married! But also the involvement of the whole family, fulfilling their expectations, and the whole 'unknown' aspect seems to make it very different to me. It is almost out of your control.

S: I still like the idea of arranged marriage, especially because it offers support from both families to the new couple. However this movie made me think about some of the issues that we are facing today. In a collective society like India, joint family character and the emotional makeup of a boy or a girl could have been judged by the collective character and emotional makeup of the family. But this movie depicts clearly the difference of character between the young people within a family. This brings in a new conflict in our society. Young people in our society would like to obey our parents; however now it seems that our parents cannot make guarantees regarding the character or mental makeup of the person they find.

What attitudes to family are evident in the film?

C: There seems to be constant tension in the film between what individual people want (especially the children) and what the parents want. At one point the main character says 'I just want to get away from this damned place' - she obviously longed for a greater freedom. I think that in the West we expect, once we hit a certain age, to be treated as responsible adults with our own minds and opinions, and that our elders will appreciate that. Maybe we are more individualistic. It seemed in the film they were not allowed to make their own decisions, but on the other hand really wanted to be obedient to the family. The concept of such a huge extended family is alien to me as well; we often do not live anywhere near, let alone with, our extended family any more.

S: As Indians we cannot live without our families. However we see in the movie that the definition of the term family is changing in India. It used to mean, uncles, aunties, cousins,

even servants. However we see in the movie this concept falling apart with the betrayal of one of the family members. The culprit is punished by being asked to leave the wedding and at the same time it was also a realisation to the whole family that they cannot really trust each other.

Film: Monsoon Wedding
Director: Mira Nair

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