

GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

A MULTICULTURAL LEARNING COMMUNITY:
FACILITATING FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS WITH EAST
ASIAN STUDENTS ON AN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE CAMPUS

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	3
The Problem of Faculty Relationships with East Asian Students on an American Christian College Campus	
2. THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN COMMUNITY SEEN IN CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY	11
Examples of Relationships in the Old Testament	12
Examples of Relationships in the New Testament	20
Biblical Instructions on Cross-cultural Relationships With “Strangers”	25
The Theme of Relationship-in-Community In Christian Theology	29
3. THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN COMMUNITY SEEN IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY	40
Spiritual Direction	40
Spiritual Community	52
Partnership in Mission	54
4. LEARNING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	64
Multiculturalism	64
Culture & Cultural Variability	70

Cultural Profiles	86
Cross-cultural Communication	104
Cross-cultural Relationships	114
5. FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS WITH EAST ASIAN STUDENTS	122
International Students	123
International Student Adjustments	124
A Multicultural Learning Community	133
International Student Advising	147
Interview	153
Faculty Relationships with International Students	155
Focus Group	161
6. ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS WITH EAST ASIAN STUDENTS ON AN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE CAMPUS: A PROPOSAL	167
Case Study	170
Facilitating Relationships with East Asian Students: A Handbook for Faculty	175
WORKS CITED	212

ABSTRACT

A MULTICULTURAL LEARNING COMMUNITY: FACILITATING FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS WITH EAST ASIAN STUDENTS ON AN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE CAMPUS

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the cross-cultural challenges faced by teachers and East Asian students on an American Christian college campus, and to seek effective ways of facilitating relationships between them. How could I effectively facilitate meaningful cross-cultural relationships between members of the faculty and East Asian students? How is it possible for a Christian college campus to become a multicultural learning community?

My claim is that it is possible to facilitate faculty relationships with East Asian students if a high priority is placed on the Christian value of relationships in community and cultural learning, i.e. learning cross-cultural communication and relationship skills, takes place.

In chapter one I will present the problem with a real-life story. I will then summarize my support for the claim.

In order to support the Christian value placed upon relationships in community chapter two will explore examples and themes from Christian Scripture and theology. Relationships in both Old and New Testaments will be presented, as well as an examination of Scriptural references to “strangers.” The theme of relationship-in-community in Christian theology will also be reviewed. Chapter three will continue that

support by examining the various traditions of relationships in community in Christian history. Having spiritual friends and spiritual directors in the context of spiritual community will be presented as an historical ideal.

The task of culture learning will begin in chapter four. Specific issues of culture, cultural variability, as well as cross-cultural communication and relationships will be outlined. Specific application for communication and relationships between East Asian and American cultures will also be a focus.

Chapter five will survey literature concerning teacher-international student relationships on American college campuses, including cross-cultural educational issues. The idea of building a multicultural learning community will be presented.

Finally, chapter six will suggest principles and practices for facilitating faculty relationships with East Asian students on an American Christian college campus with a proposal for a possible faculty handbook.

CHAPTER ONE

**THE PROBLEM OF FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS WITH EAST
ASIAN STUDENTS ON AN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE CAMPUS:
INTRODUCTION**

I was asked to meet with him at least once a month during the semester. Every faculty member had been given the assignment of finding meaningful ways to connect personally with the new incoming students, including those from other cultures. As faculty advisers we were to be open to any level of relationship that might be desired or needed by a student.

As is true on many American college campuses, we have had steady and significant growth in the number of international students. At one time as many as 28% of our students were from other countries. Some come for the unique opportunities presented by our Music Department. Some come for specific kinds of Christian ministry training. Others come simply to earn an American degree or even to experience American culture.

On this particular day I found myself sitting opposite a first year student from an East Asian culture. He was very quiet and respectful. He hesitated when he spoke, apparently due to the fact that English was still difficult for him. However, there were also cultural obstacles. In his culture, the older a person is, the more respect they are automatically given. If someone has a certain kind of function in the culture, like a teacher, they are held in very high esteem. It would be presumptuous to attempt anything

like a personal relationship with them, or even to address them in a familiar fashion. It seemed unlikely for me to have anything approaching a personal relationship with a student from an East Asian culture. In fact, missionaries on our faculty said it would be impossible.

I had been in pastoral ministry for sixteen years before becoming a college teacher. I was highly motivated to have more than classroom exposure to my students. I had a personal vision for their potential and for their future, and I very much wanted to be a part of that.

In this situation all I knew to do was to try to find out this student's story. I asked him what his goals were in coming to our college. How did he hear about us in the first place? What were his expectations during the first few weeks of his college experience? What difficulties was he already experiencing?

Other than an obvious language barrier we did fairly well with the abstract, objective issues. But he was very hesitant to discuss anything of a personal nature. He seemed uncomfortable with me even asking him those kinds of questions.

Our college is 37 years old, established in the 60's by a non-denominational local church with a vision to train a new generation of young people for ministry and leadership. We are a Christian college, and specifically, a Bible college. Most of the faculty members are former pastors. The college as a whole has a clear pastoral philosophy of education and ministry training. Connecting personally with the students is a core value. However, it is certainly more easily stated as an objective than it is accomplished, especially in the case of international students.

I was beginning to feel uncomfortable with my attempt to connect with this East Asian student. What could I say or do that might have the possibility of breaking down the barriers to effective personal communication? I explained the nature of our commitment as faculty. I assured him that I would be readily available to him at anytime during his studies at the college. I committed myself to him personally and told him to let me know if there was ever anything I might do to serve him. We prayed together and he went his way.

But he never initiated a personal contact with me. Some of my American students initiated contacts on a regular basis. None of my Asian students ever did. I made periodic appointments with them to check up on them, assure them of my commitment to them, and pray for them. Rarely were they willing to discuss issues of a personal nature.

As an undergraduate program, most of our students are between the ages of 18 and 23. The average age of the international students is 3 to 5 years older than those from the U.S. That means most of them are more motivated and more focused as students. It has usually taken them several years to raise the money and make the necessary arrangements to come to the United States. They are excellent, diligent students. But they find it very difficult to develop personal relationships with their teachers. Some of them come with serious personal needs that might not ever come to light until several years into the program, if ever. They feel it would be inappropriate to discuss personal issues with their teachers.

In the classroom our international students tend to sit together and on the outer edges of the room. They never ask a question or respond to a question asked by the teacher. They have difficulty fulfilling certain kinds of assignments. There seems to be a

problem with plagiarism for some of them. Communication is fraught with difficulties and meaningful relationships seem improbable.

Our students from East Asian countries in particular find relationships, even with American students, to be very difficult. They eat together in the cafeteria. They sit together in chapel. They speak English only when absolutely necessary. They are quiet, respectful, and disciplined. But very few of them make long-term relationships while on campus.

These cross-cultural challenges do not change the commitment of the faculty and the college community as a whole to offer more than lecture material and class assignments. As a Christian college we are committed to Christian values. We are committed to every dimension of our students' training and future effectiveness. We are committed to the development of personal relationships in the context of Christian community.

At the same time there are significant challenges for our American teachers. Although they have a sincere desire to effectively connect with international students they are largely puzzled as to how to do so. They confess they simply do not know where to begin. They would like to have more meaningful relationships with their international students, both inside and outside of the classroom. At times they may even wonder if such relationships are possible. I am convinced faculty relationships with East Asian students are possible and desirable, and I have a personal desire to do everything I can to facilitate those relationships.

Is it possible for faculty members on an American Christian college campus to have a meaningful personal relationship with students from East Asian cultures? Is it

possible to break through cross-cultural barriers so that these students can receive the full benefit of their educational experience? Can a Christian college campus become a multicultural learning community in which these relationships can exist? Specifically, what could I do to effectively facilitate meaningful cross-cultural relationships between members of the faculty and East Asian students?

My claim is that it is possible to facilitate faculty relationships with East Asian students if a high priority is placed on the Christian value of relationships in community and if cultural learning, i.e., the learning of cross-cultural communication and relationship skills, takes place. While these relationships may function differently than the usual experience faculty have with American students, they can nonetheless be meaningful, committed, helping relationships.

I will begin the support of my claim in chapter two from the background of Christian Scripture and theology. My purpose will be to reinforce the Christian value placed on relationships in community. I will examine examples of relationships from both the Old and New Testaments. From the Old Testament the relationship between Moses and Joshua and Elijah and Elisha will be considered as well as the relationship between Paul and Timothy in the New Testament.

The relationship of Jesus and the Twelve will be considered, focusing on the testimony of the book of Matthew. The article by Terrence Donaldson, "Making Disciples: Discipleship in Matthew's Narrative Strategy" included in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* provided key insights. I will then examine the biblical injunctions to care for the "stranger" or foreigner in our midst.

From Christian theology I will present the importance placed on relationship-in-community, focusing on the Lutheran, Wesleyan and postmodern perspectives. The Lutheran perspective will be represented by the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Contemporary students of the Wesleyan tradition, including Stanley Hauerwas and Thomas Oden, will be reviewed. Postmodern theology's emphasis on community, especially in the works of Ray Anderson and Stanley Grenz, will also be considered.

In chapter three I will continue to establish the Christian value of relationships in community by studying examples in Christian history. The central model will be that of spiritual direction, seen in the ancient Desert Fathers and Mothers, in Eastern Christianity, Western and Celtic Christianity. *Soul Friend* by Kenneth Leech will be an important resource. Modern writers on spiritual direction, especially Jeannette Bakke (*Holy Invitations*) will also be examined.

The historical tradition and current emphasis on spiritual community will be emphasized. *The Safest Place on Earth* by Larry Crabb will be central to this study. The ancient role of spiritual community in Celtic Christianity will be presented by George Hunter, III, in *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*. The historical challenge of cross-cultural relationships in the context of Christian missions will then be presented with a focus on mission partnerships.

After attempting to establish the value of relationship in the context of Christian community I will move on to the work of cross-cultural training. The exploration of cross-cultural communication and relationships will be presented in chapter four. I will begin by presenting "multiculturalism" and "pluralism" as values and as contemporary challenges. After I survey the various definitions of "culture" I will examine the

dimensions of culture and cultural variability. The works of David Hesselgrave, Paul Hiebert, Geert Hofstede, Sherwood Lingenfelter, Duane Elmer, and William Gudykunst, among others, will be surveyed. Special attention will be given to the differences between Western and Eastern cultural variations. I will then outline the cultural profiles of U.S.A. culture, East Asian cultures in general, and Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cultures in particular.

This survey will provide the background for a presentation of cross-cultural communication, including communication variables and the dimensions of cross-cultural communication. The various communication patterns represented by Eastern and Western cultures will be summarized. This will lead to a discussion of cross-cultural relationships, including the dimension of interpersonal relationships and the specific nature of East-West relationships. My purpose will be to show that meaningful personal relationships between people from the U.S. and those from East Asian nations are possible, and to show how they might be developed.

My “culture training” will continue in chapter five as I examine issues pertaining to relationships with East Asian students on an American college campus. I will begin with a survey of the phenomenon of international students attending American colleges and universities, including their unique cultural adjustment challenges. The experience of “culture shock” as well as other dimensions of cultural adaptation will be described.

Ultimately the goal of building a multicultural learning community will be presented. This will include an examination of the “hidden culture” of any classroom as well as the unique perspective of East Asian classrooms. The cultural nature of learning styles and teaching styles will be outlined. The work of Kenneth Cushner and Judith

Lingenfelter will be particularly helpful. I will then examine the unique challenges presented by East Asian students participating in an American classroom, including issues of academic disciplines and academic honesty.

The specifics of forming a multicultural learning community will be presented, with an examination of the role of the International Student Adviser (ISA), and the potential role of the faculty. In chapter five I will also report on an interview I conducted with an ISA, as well as a Focus Group made up of East Asian students.

Finally, in chapter six I will make a specific proposal in the form of a proposed Faculty Handbook. Before doing so I will present a case study of a relationship I have had with a Chinese student. The proposed Handbook will summarize the issues and findings of my project. It will also make specific recommendations for faculty, concluding with a recommended reading list. The purpose of the proposed Handbook is to facilitate faculty relationships with East Asian students on a Christian college campus.

CHAPTER TWO

THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN COMMUNITY SEEN IN CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY

In this chapter I will attempt to facilitate faculty relationships with East Asian students by establishing the Christian value placed upon relationships in community. I will begin by looking at examples of relationships in the Old and New Testaments. These passages will paint a picture of the value and benefit of such relationships. They will give examples of personal relationships involving mentoring, discipling, and leadership equipping. Some relationships will also be seen in the context of community.

I will then look at biblical instructions concerning cross-cultural relationships with “strangers.” These passages, once again taken from the Old and New Testaments, will show God’s attitude toward “sojourners” in a society and the way that attitude is to be incarnated in the covenant community.

Finally, I will examine the importance placed upon relationship-in-community in Christian theology. I will sample the perspectives of Lutheran and Wesleyan theology, and the developing postmodern theology.

Examples of Relationships in the Old Testament

Moses and Joshua

From an early age Joshua served Moses and was with him at key moments in his leadership. The result was the staff of leadership being passed to Joshua, who led the people of God into their destiny.

The first mention of the man Joshua is in the story of the battle with the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16). “Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites’” (v. 9). Joshua is introduced in a way that implies his ongoing involvement in the story prior to this point. The Amalekites had chosen a vulnerable moment to attack the Israelites. Moses proposed to stand on top of the hill, holding the staff of God in his hands, while Joshua fought the Amalekites in the valley.

Joshua played an important role in Moses’ battle with the Amalekites: “So Joshua fought.” In this case, Joshua had the more active part to play, organizing a band of warriors, mapping out their strategy, and leading them into battle. Joshua and his men would find themselves engaged in hand-to-hand combat. At the same time, Moses was to stand on top of the hill holding the staff of God in his hand. Eventually he grew weary and sat down on a stone. Then Aaron and Hur held up his hands until the battle was over.

Joshua is not seen complaining about his more active role. He was satisfied serving Moses in this way. In the end the battle was won and the Lord revealed himself as Yahweh *nissi*, “the Lord is my battle standard.” It was important that both Moses and Joshua understand that it was the Lord leading them into battle, and it was the Lord who

won the victory. Their role was to follow the Lord together, to lead the people together, to a place of victory.

The next scene where we encounter Moses and Joshua together is the account of them ascending Mt. Sinai to receive the commandments (Exodus 24:12-18). Here Joshua is specifically referred to as Moses' "aide" (v. 13). The word translated "aide" is the Hebrew *mesaret*. "The term denotes personal service from man to man, but it is also used for man's service to God. The Hebrew root implies honorable service to which one is called or which is undertaken voluntarily."¹ In his relationship with Moses, Joshua is principally an assistant, a servant.

Leaving the elders of Israel behind, Moses and Joshua alone climb the heights of Mt. Sinai into the very glory of God. It appears as though Joshua remained half way up the mountain while Moses continued to the top.

Some time later a similar account is given of the "tent of meeting" pitched outside of the camp (Exodus 33:7-11). Before the building of the tabernacle this temporary tent served as the central place of Moses' leadership. Those who had an issue to be settled brought it to Moses at the tent of meeting.

This tent was also a place of relationship. The text tells us that whenever Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of the cloud of God's glory stood in front of the tent and Moses spoke with the Lord "face to face" or "mouth to mouth," "as a man speaks with his friend" (v. 11). Eventually Moses would return to the camp. But the account goes on to say, "his young aide Joshua . . . did not leave the tent." Evidently Joshua had been

¹ Walter Brueggemann, "Exodus," in *General & Old Testament Articles - the Book of Exodus, Leviticus*, ed. Leander E. Keck, The New Interpreter's Bible, vol. I (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 57 note.

with Moses while spiritual leadership was being exercised in the presence of the Lord. Joshua also accompanied Moses when he entered into the tent and communed with the Lord. Joshua experienced the “face to face” friendship of God. Thomas Dozeman comments,

Joshua embodies the prophetic spirit of Moses more than does any other character in the Pentateuch. Joshua is introduced as the Israelite’s gifted leader in holy war (Exod 17:8-13). He accompanies Moses into Mt. Sinai to receive the tablets of the law (Exod 24:12-15; 32:17-19). Joshua is a charismatic leader with a special role in the tent of meeting.²

Witnessing Moses’ daily leadership, serving Moses in the process, enjoying fellowship with God, valuing the presence of the Lord, were all formative experiences for Joshua’s relationship with God as well as Moses.

The story of Moses and the seventy elders (Numbers 11:24-30) contains the statement that Joshua had been Moses’ aide since his youth (v. 28). The Lord had placed some of the anointing that was given to Moses on the seventy elders, resulting in a release of prophetic ministry. When two of the elders, Eldad and Medad, participated in this prophetic ministry, even though they had not been present at the tabernacle with the others, Joshua objected. Moses was wise enough to realize Joshua was jealous for Moses’ sake. He then modeled spiritual leadership by expressing a desire “that all the Lord’s people were prophets” (v. 29).

Finally, the day came for Moses to appoint his aide to be his successor as leader in Israel (Numbers 27:15-23). Moses once again modeled the characteristics of true spiritual leadership by requesting that the Lord “appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them . . . so the Lord’s people will not be like sheep without a

² Thomas B. Dozeman, "Numbers," in *The Book of Numbers - the Book of 2 Samuel*, ed. Leander

shepherd” (vv. 16-17). Moses exemplified a shepherd’s heart in his love for the people and his desire to see them do well.

The Lord responded to Moses’ request by telling him to “take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit” (v. 18). Joshua was not just Moses’ choice, he was the Lord’s designated successor. He had proven himself to be faithful. He had submitted to a process of spiritual formation resulting in his own capacity for effective spiritual leadership.

God had given Joshua to Moses in answer to Moses’ prayer and one of the first things Moses did was put some of his honor on Joshua (Num. 27:15-20). Moses . . . found his security in God. He rejoiced to see Joshua begin to carry some of the load. In their association, Joshua was there to help Moses in the ministry and carry on after he was gone.³

This rite of passage involved several important aspects:

1. Moses was to publicly lay his hands on Joshua, indicating his identification with Joshua and his impartation of anointing and authority.
2. Joshua was to stand before Eleazar the priest, indicating the future relationship and teamwork of these two leaders.
3. Moses was to commission Joshua before the entire congregation, showing his support for Joshua’s leadership.
4. Moses was to give Joshua some of his authority and allow him to function with that authority immediately. In this way, the congregation would begin to follow his leadership while Moses was still alive.

E. Keck, *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. II (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 107.

³ Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 32.

Joshua is . . . commissioned as Moses' successor. He was ideally suited to the job, having been for many years Moses' assistant (11:28; Ex. 17:9ff; 24:13; 32:17) and one of the spies who had actually visited Canaan (13:8; 14:6). But the narrative makes clear that his leadership will be of the same type as that of Moses. "You shall invest him with some of your authority." Despite the difference in authority between Moses and Joshua, there was a real continuity between them expressed symbolically by the laying on of Moses' hands. In this symbolic gesture Joshua was identified with Moses and made his representative for the future. Joshua's appointment as Moses' successor was, as it were, publicly announced by the laying on of his hands. It was later confirmed by God himself appearing in the pillar of cloud in the court of the tabernacle (Dt. 31:14-15, 23).⁴

The transfer of authority from Moses to Joshua was careful and gradual. It was important for Joshua to realize that his leadership in Israel was not to be a matter of power and control but of Spirit-led service among the people.

At the end of his life Moses called Joshua before all the people and exhorted him to "be strong and courageous" (Deuteronomy 31:7-8). In the future Joshua would have great responsibility and would have to lead the congregation into the Promised Land. However, it was important for Joshua to know that "the Lord himself goes before you and will be with you." Moses' heart toward Joshua is clearly shown in his encouragement to "not be afraid . . . not be discouraged." To the very end the relationship between Moses and Joshua was a never-ending source of life and strength flowing into a new generation. Peter Craigie comments on this event:

The formal and public words spoken to Joshua serve not only to encourage Joshua, but also to remind the people that the leadership was properly being assumed by him, with the full approval of God and of Moses who was the incumbent of the office up to that time. Joshua would assume not only responsibility, but also an enormous privilege. He would be instrumental in the realization of God's ancient promise that he would give his people a land. But as in all cases of leadership, the greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility;

⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction & Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman, vol. 4 (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1981), 194, 195.

and Joshua, more than his fellow Israelites, would need the strength, courage, and freedom from fear that found their roots in God's ability and trustworthiness.⁵

After the death of Moses we read the testimony that Joshua "was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him" (Deuteronomy 34:9). The people of Israel gladly followed his leadership into their inheritance (see Joshua 1:1-9). With the words "The Lord said to Joshua," leadership is transferred from Moses to Joshua. As Moses had done previously so the Lord himself now encourages Joshua in his future task.

Elijah and Elisha

The prophet Elijah was instructed by the Lord to choose Elisha as his successor. The resulting relationship was committed and sacrificial. When Elisha received the mantle of his spiritual father he received a "double portion" of his anointing.

The prophet Elisha had a life-changing relationship with his mentor, the older prophet Elijah. It all began on the mountain of God when the Lord instructed Elijah to "anoint Elisha . . . to succeed you as prophet" (1 Kings 19:16). Elijah was the head of the school of the prophets, God's spokesman in Israel. Now it was time for him to think of future generations, to enter into a relationship with a younger man who would be able to carry on his ministry.

When they met Elisha was plowing a field, working on his family farm. Elijah went up to Elisha and threw his cloak or his mantle on him, indicating that Elisha was to

⁵ Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 370.

inherit the older prophet's prophetic mantle (1 Kings 19:19). In writing about *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* Leroy Eims has remarked that

Elijah did not beg Elisha to go with him or use his prophetic office to force him against his will. If he was to collaborate with him, he must learn from him voluntarily (1 Kings 19:19-21). It cost Elisha something to follow Elijah. But Elisha was aware of the tremendous spiritual enrichment that would be his if he spent time with the mighty prophet of God. To train men a person must be willing to spend time with those men in hours of conversation and association in the normal affairs of life.⁶

Elisha became Elijah's personal attendant (v. 21). The word translated "attendant" in this passage is the same word translated "aide" in the passages referring to Joshua and his relationship with Moses. Elisha became the personal servant and assistant to the prophet Elijah. Choon-Leong Seow comments, "Duly severed from his past, then, he sets out to follow Elijah 'and attended to him,' the Hebrew recalling the role that Joshua, Moses' successor, played before Moses passed on (Num 11:28; Josh 1:1). Elisha plays Joshua to Elijah's Moses."⁷

It is obvious that Elisha's relationship with Elijah transformed the younger man's life. The next time we see the two men mentioned together is in the context of Elijah's assumption and Elisha's succession (2 Kings 2:1-18). Evidently the school of the prophets had a sense that Elijah was about to be taken up by God. Three times Elijah attempted to dissuade Elisha from following him. Three times Elisha proved his commitment to Elijah and to the ministry of the prophet by refusing to leave him.

⁶ Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*, 31.

⁷ Choon-Leong Seow, "The First and Second Books of Kings," in *The First Book Kings - the Book of Judith*, ed. Leander E. Keck, The New Interpreter's Bible, vol. III (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 144.

Howard Hendricks observed three important characteristics in Elisha that made for a powerful, life-changing relationship:

First of all, he was motivated. He dropped what he was doing in order to follow after this man of God. Elisha was eager to accept the challenge of growth. A second quality that marked Elisha as a promising protégé was his humility. Elisha served Elijah. He sought to meet his needs, even as he learned from him. Third, Elisha was incredibly loyal. He stayed with Elijah until the very end.⁸

When Elijah struck the water of the Jordan River with his rolled up cloak, the water parted allowing the two men to cross over on dry ground. After they crossed the river together Elijah asked his attendant how he could serve him. There was a mutuality in these two men's commitment to one another. Elisha asked to inherit a double-portion of Elijah's spirit. He asked to inherit Elijah's ministry as Elijah's spiritual firstborn son. Elijah made it clear that the prophet's task was a difficult one. Yet if Elisha's persistence and loyalty prevailed, he would receive the prophet's mantle.

Eventually chariots of fire and a whirlwind appeared and took Elijah up. As his mantle fell to the ground Elisha picked it up and asked, "Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" (v. 14). He then struck the Jordan River with the rolled up mantle and crossed on dry ground. As at the beginning of Joshua's leadership, Elisha crossed into the Promised Land by the power of the Lord.

Elisha returns to the bank of the Jordan. Once again, he plays Joshua to Elijah's Moses. Just as Elijah parted the water with his mantle, so also Elisha parts the water with the same mantle. Elisha's reenactment, in fact, recalls Joshua's marvelous crossing of the Jordan to enter the promised land after the death of Moses (Josh 3:7-17).⁹

⁸ Howard Hendricks, *Standing Together: Impacting Your Generation* (Gresham, OR: Vision House Publishing, 1995), 102-04.

⁹ Seow, "The First and Second Books of Kings," 177.

When the school of the prophets witnessed this miracle, they acknowledged that the spirit of Elijah was resting on Elisha and submitted to the new leader's authority just as they had to Elijah's. Elisha's spiritual leadership in Israel was a result of the relationship he had with Elijah. The qualities of that relationship, personal sacrifice, consistent commitment and a servant's heart, made Elisha into the man of God he was destined to be.

Examples of Relationships in the New Testament

Paul and Timothy

In the New Testament we see a relationship between Paul and Timothy. Paul chose Timothy to be his spiritual son and associate. Together they extended the Kingdom of God throughout much of the Roman empire.

Paul first encountered the young Timothy at Lystra (Acts 16:1-5). Timothy was a "disciple" who had a believing Jewish mother and a Greek father. Timothy had an excellent reputation in the area, all the brothers and sisters speaking well of him.

The Jews were all aware that Timothy's father was Greek and his mother Jewish. With a Jewish mother Timothy was himself considered Jewish although uncircumcised. To not hinder Timothy's ministry in the Jewish community Paul had him circumcised before joining his team. Timothy was not only committed to being a productive member of Paul's team, his dedication made him ready to pay the price to be one of Paul's assistants.

The next time we see Paul and Timothy together is at Berea (Acts 17:10-15). After a fruitful time of ministry among the Bereans, Jews from Thessalonica agitated for

Paul's arrest. To spare him the local believers sent Paul away to the coast. Timothy, along with Silas, was given the task of remaining behind. He was evidently trustworthy enough to leave in charge of the new Berean believers. However, it was not long before Paul sent word for Timothy to rejoin him as soon as possible.

Timothy was not only a trustworthy assistant, he was Paul's close personal friend. Timothy became Paul's constant companion and son in the faith. Paul spoke of Timothy as "my fellow-worker" (Romans 16:21). Paul also affectionately referred to Timothy as "my son whom I love" (1 Corinthians 4:17). Frank Damazio commented, "Paul considered Timothy to be his own dear son in the faith. For this reason, these two men shared a deep relationship and commitment to the Lord, to one another, and to their ministries."¹⁰ Timothy was Paul's co-worker in every sense, "carrying on the work of the Lord" as Paul's personal representative (1 Corinthians 16:10).

Perhaps Paul's greatest commendation of Timothy was given in his epistle to the Philippians (2:19-23). Referring to Timothy Paul said, "I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel." Timothy had become a mature spiritual leader in his own right, exemplifying the faithful heart of a servant in his care for the saints. Out of the relationship between Paul and Timothy an effective leader had emerged.

The first and second epistles of Paul to Timothy are the epitome of a father's heart for his spiritual son and co-worker. He personally showed Timothy the way to lead,

¹⁰ Frank Damazio, *The Making of a Leader* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1988), 163.

modeling it at every point. He was Timothy's constant encourager as he proved his worth as a leader in his own right. He also instructed Timothy on how to raise up his own leaders (see 2 Timothy 2:2).

Eventually Paul and Timothy worked so closely together they were identified with each other as a vital leadership team. Paul addressed six of his epistles as being from "Paul and Timothy" (2 Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1). They were friends and partners in every sense.

Jesus and His Disciples

Another example of a personal relationship in the New Testament is that of Jesus and his disciples. In three short years Jesus so affected his followers they were able to turn the world upside down in their own generation.

The four gospels are filled with elements of this relationship and the fruit it bore. For the purposes of this chapter I will draw elements from the gospel of Matthew. Terence Donaldson has written an excellent article on the pattern of discipleship in the gospel of Matthew. He makes this observation of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples:

Despite their initial identification as Jesus' helpers and agents, the disciples appear in Matthew's Gospel, for the most part, as companions of Jesus and observers of his activity. Occasionally they go off to carry out some task and then return (21:1-7; 26:17-19). But only rarely do we encounter events where the disciples engage in an activity apart from Jesus. It is in Jesus' interaction with his disciples, then, that the discipleship ideal is communicated by Matthew in his Gospel.¹¹

¹¹ Terence L. Donaldson, "Guiding Readers—Making Disciples: Discipleship in Matthew's Narrative Strategy," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand

The disciples accompanied Jesus at all the key moments in his life and ministry. Jesus' message was personalized in the everyday affairs of life. His classrooms were the events of the day. They were with him when he feasted with new friends (9:10). They were with him when he healed Jairus' daughter (9:18f.). They saw his glory on the mount of transfiguration (17:6). They celebrated his last Passover feast with him (26:18f.) and accompanied him to the mount of Olives (26:36f.).

Jesus did most of his teaching in the small group of his chosen followers.

In telling the story, Matthew uses a variety of means to guide his readers to a correct understanding of discipleship. The most obvious of these is direct teaching, especially in the five great discourses (chs. 5:3-7:27; 10:5-42; 13:3-52; 18:1-35; 23:2-25:46), each one of which is addressed to the disciples.¹²

Before sending them on a mission he took the time to give them personal instructions (ch. 10). He explained his parables only to his disciples (13:10-11, 36f.). Eventually he explained to them the need for his death and resurrection (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19). He even taught them concerning the coming establishment of God's eternal kingdom (ch. 24).

Following Jesus resulted in numerous and challenging teachable moments. When Jesus slept through the storm at sea, he took advantage of the opportunity to exhort the disciples concerning their faith (8:23-27). The miraculous provision of food for the 5,000 (14:15-21) and the 4,000 (15:33f.) resulted in another opportunity to teach the disciples about faith and obedience and the resultant fruitfulness. The unusual episode of Jesus walking on the water followed by Peter's attempt to follow in his footsteps taught the

Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 42.

¹² Ibid.

disciples another valuable lesson concerning faith and the power of God (14:25-33).

When they tried to send the Canaanite woman away, they learned a valuable lesson about persistent faith (15:23f.).

When the disciples couldn't cast the evil spirit out of the boy, they received exhortations on their faith and the need for prayer (17:16f.). When they tried to send all the children away Jesus taught them about the need for childlikeness to participate in his kingdom (19:13f.). The response of the wealthy young man created the context for a lesson on entrance into the kingdom of God (19:23f.). When the disciples witnessed the cursing of the fig tree, Jesus took the time to tell them about their own faith (21:20-22). When Mary anointed Jesus and the disciples complained about the cost, they received a lesson on kingdom priorities (26:8f.).

Discipleship lessons also emerge frequently in the narratives, as events unfold in such a way as to bring some aspect of discipleship into focus. Several patterns can be discerned. In some cases, Jesus himself maneuvers the disciples into learning situations, as when he tells them to provide food for the crowd (14:16) or puzzles them with an enigmatic comment.¹³

Jesus favored the disciples with a close, personal friendship and loyalty. He gave them authority to participate in his mission (10:1). He described them as his true family (12:49-50). He revealed himself fully only to them (16:13-20). He promised them that in the end they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel in God's eternal kingdom (19:23-30). At the end of his life he personally commissioned them to carry on his work, promising to be with them for all time (28:16-20). The disciples responded to Jesus with obedience (21:6). Yet, they were imperfect disciples, continually debating who was greatest (18:1f.), and even disloyal in a crisis (26:56).

¹³ Ibid., 43.

The true quality of a relationship takes place after the spiritual leader is no longer on the scene. The disciples were discouraged and disoriented by the death of Jesus. But after his resurrection and ascension to the throne of God, after the visitation of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the true value of the things deposited in the disciples' lives by their Master came fully to light. Peter stood up publicly with the rest of the disciples and boldly preached Jesus as Lord (Acts 2:14f.). The result was a spiritual revolution in Jerusalem and beyond. Terence Donaldson summarizes the lessons of discipleship from Matthew's gospel this way:

Of the various characteristics of this community of disciples, several, in particular, may be noted. The first is that of love. For Jesus sums up the whole law in the twofold command of love: love for God and love for one's neighbor (22:34-40; cf. 7:12). Closely related to love are two other characteristics of the community of disciples. One is forgiveness. Forgiveness is the only feature of the Lord's Prayer to receive an elaborative comment (6:14, 15), and it forms the subject of a significant portion of the community discourse in chapter 18 (esp. vv 21-35). The other characteristic, which comes to expression earlier in that same discourse, is care for the "little ones" who belong to the community of disciples (18:1-14, esp. v 6; cf. 10:42). This leads, in turn, to the final characteristic to be mentioned here: servant leadership. To be part of Jesus' community, it is necessary to become like children (18:1-5). Hierarchical (23:8-10) and tyrannical (20:25) patterns of leadership are to be guarded against.¹⁴

Biblical Instructions On Cross-cultural Relationships With "Strangers"

The Bible not only gives us helpful examples of relationships, it also contains specific instructions for cross-cultural relationships as seen in the passages pertaining to "strangers" or "aliens."

¹⁴ Ibid., 46.

Relationships with “Strangers” in the Old Testament

The Hebrew term *ger* refers to a sojourner, stranger, foreigner, or a person living out of his or her own country.¹⁵ It comes from the root *gur*, meaning to turn aside from the way, to tarry anywhere as a sojourner and stranger.¹⁶ It is often translated “alien” or “stranger.” It specifically refers to a resident alien. “Israel distinguishes sharply between alien peoples, individual aliens in transit, and resident aliens. The alien who sought to settle in the land . . . [was] under the protection of the people (Ex. 22:20), and he was committed to its care as one who stood in need of help like the widow or orphan (Dt. 14:29 etc).”¹⁷

From the earliest days of the nation of Israel, provision was made for resident aliens to participate in the covenant (Exodus 12:48). The stranger among the people was to be given equal rights and obligations (Exodus 12:49; Leviticus 24:22; Deuteronomy 24:14). Special mention was made of the fact that strangers were not to be mistreated (Exodus 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 19:33). In fact, it was recognized that resident aliens were in a vulnerable position in society, much like widows and orphans. Generosity toward them was commanded (Leviticus 19:10; Deuteronomy 10:18).

Because the Israelites had been aliens in Egypt, they were to love the aliens living among them (Leviticus 19:34). Equal justice was to be administered to strangers as well

¹⁵ H. F. W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, trans. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 178.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁷ Gustav Stahlin, “Philoxenos,” trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 9.

as full citizens (Deuteronomy 1:16; 24:17; Joshua 20:9). Part of the tithes collected from the people was to be used to support the strangers among them (Deuteronomy 26:12).

The psalmist sang of the Lord's personal care for the stranger (Psalm 146:9). Love for strangers was an attribute of God and was therefore to be shown by the covenant community. "The one distinguishing mark of the OT approach to foreigners is that it always has its roots in a final responsibility towards God. For God's sake mercy is shown to the stranger in the land."¹⁸ Gustav Stahlin goes on to say, "God's hospitality is an essential part of His message. Condescending generosity is one of the fundamental features in the biblical depiction of God."¹⁹

The prophets exhorted the people to show their heartfelt repentance by not oppressing the strangers among them (Jeremiah 7:6-7; Ezekiel 22:29-31; Zechariah 7:10). Even eschatological visions defined a specific place for the sojourner (Ezekiel 47:23).

This Old Testament theme reflected a rich tradition of middle eastern hospitality. While resident aliens did not have inherent citizenship rights, their status as strangers afforded them the benefit of generous hospitality. "The foreigner who was originally denied all rights found rich compensation in the primitive custom of hospitality. The root of this noble and world-wide custom is to be sought primarily in the sense of the mutual obligation of all men to help one another, for which there is divine sanction."²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ Ibid., 20.

²⁰ Ibid., 17.

Relationships with “Strangers” in the New Testament

The Old Testament tradition extended easily to the New Testament and the New Covenant community. The Greek word *xenos* means foreigner, alien, stranger, or guest. The New Testament saints were exhorted to “entertain strangers” (Hebrews 13:2). The Greek word translated “hospitality” is *philoxenia*, literally the “love of strangers.” “In place of the imperfect and often distorted love for strangers in the contemporary NT world Jesus shows that unrestricted and unconditional love for the *xenos* is a special instance of love for the neighbour.”²¹ All believers were instructed to “practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13). Being hospitable was a requirement for an overseer (1 Timothy 3:2).

Believers could not validly claim to have God’s *agape* if that did not include the love of strangers. “*agape* always implies *philoxenia*. Hence the latter plays a significant role in ethical instruction. Christian love is expressed therein according to Jesus.”²²

The apostle Peter learned this in a dramatic way. While staying at the home of Simon the tanner in Joppa Peter had a vision (Acts 10:10f.). He was shown a large sheet let down from heaven containing all kinds of animals, clean and unclean. Three times the Lord told him to “kill and eat.” All three times Peter refused, giving rise to the message being sent him, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” The impact of the vision prepared Peter to preach the gospel to a Roman household. Salvation was to be made available to all people, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, male and female

²¹ Ibid., 15.

²² Ibid., 20.

(Galatians 3:28). “One of the most prominent features in the picture of early Christianity, which is so rich in good works, is undoubtedly its hospitality.”²³

The Theme of Relationship-in-Community In Christian Theology

The Christian Story has always made room for relationships with people of all backgrounds. Indeed, the formation of relationships-in-community is central to Christian theology.

The Reformation perspective can be seen in the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In *Life Together* Bonhoeffer points out that the Reformation theme of *sola Christo* forms the basis for thinking about community. Christian community exists in and through Christ.

Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. What does this mean? It means, first, that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ. It means, second, that a Christian comes to others only through Jesus Christ. It means, third, that in Jesus Christ we have been chosen from eternity, accepted in time, and united for eternity.²⁴

Bonhoeffer was clear in stating the centrality of Christ for Christian community. There is no community that does not have Christ at the center. There is no community that does not have the Gospel as its goal. “The goal of all Christian community: they meet one another as bringers of the message of salvation. As such, God permits them to meet together and gives them community. Their fellowship is founded solely upon Jesus Christ and this ‘alien righteousness.’”²⁵

²³ Ibid., 23.

²⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1954), 21.

²⁵ Ibid., 23.

Christ and the grace he alone can bring is the basis for Christian community. Community is not an end in itself. It is simply an outworking of the Gospel in the lives of believers. If we are able to experience true community, it must result in glory going to Christ alone. All is for the glory of God. "Spiritual love proves itself in that everything it says and does commends Christ. It will not seek to move others by all too personal, direct influence, by impure interference in the life of another."²⁶ Christ is to be the center of all relationships in community. All relationships established without Christ at the center are idolatrous and not true Christian community.

In *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Charles Marsh comments on Bonhoeffer's doctoral dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*. He begins by giving Bonhoeffer's definition of Christian community, viz. "Christ existing as community" (*Christus als Gemeinde existierend*). In the incarnation God bound himself to the world in concrete community. "Community with God by definition establishes social community as well."²⁷ Redemption through Christ restores true community. "The thread between God and humankind which the first Adam severed is joined anew by God, by his revealing his love in Christ. The person is restored to the source of its genuine meaning in community."²⁸

Bonhoeffer drew from Luther's notion of "being transformed into one another through love" as a description of the christological character of Christian community.

²⁶ Ibid., 36.

²⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Sanctorum Communio," in *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Promise of His Theology*, ed. Charles Marsh (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), 67.

²⁸ Ibid., 74.

“Each man can and will become Christ for his fellow man.”²⁹ Personal transformation takes place most completely in the context of relationships in community. God extends the life of trinitarian love to human beings through Jesus Christ. Thus, redemption is fulfilled. “The place of God is Jesus Christ existing as community, and in this way God joins the world to himself in a common history.”³⁰

Marsh also draws from Bonhoeffer’s *Act and Being* to describe “Christ existing as community.” The essence of God’s nature involves trinitarian relationship in community. It is a natural outworking of the nature of God to relate to human beings in community. “God is recognized to be a God who because he is for himself in trinitarian community is also for the world in human community. God abdicates total difference from the world for the sake of being for us, with us, and among us in life together.”³¹ When the trinitarian love of God overflows in the person of Christ, true human community becomes possible. “For Christ is present in the world as the overflowing love of God, turning us away from self-will and self-determination, outward to life for the sake of others.”³²

There has been renewed interest of late in the role of community in the Wesleyan tradition. John Wesley is quoted as saying, “‘Holy solitaires’ is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no

²⁹ Ibid., 76.

³⁰ Ibid., 98.

³¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Act and Being,” in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Promise of His Theology*, ed. Charles Marsh (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), 126.

³² Ibid., 134.

religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.”³³ Paul Chilcote has proposed a paradigm of church renewal using Wesley’s insights. Wesley’s emphasis on mutual accountability in fellowship was the key to the spiritual formation of his small group members. “Wesley’s followers were encouraged to ‘watch over one another in love.’ They shared their pilgrimages of faith. To be mutually accountable in the fellowship of the community meant very simply to help each other along the way toward holiness of heart and life.”³⁴

Gregory Clapper has made a similar appeal to the Wesleyan tradition. He draws attention to Wesley’s view of the role of community in spiritual formation. “It was one of the peculiar geniuses of John Wesley’s appropriation of the Christian tradition to see that the living community of fellow believers is among the key ‘instruments’ – to which Christians need to pay attention in order to grow spiritually.”³⁵ No individual is mature enough or honest enough to see all of their faults. Only the possibility of brothers and sisters “speaking the truth in love” had the potential of empowering believers to consistently overcome sin.

Wesley believed that if you meet regularly with someone who has come to know what it is you truly love, what it is you truly fear, what it is you truly find peace and hope in, you will have a hard time fooling yourself about your own relationship with God. This mutually accountable community is one of the instruments of grace that God has given the Christian church.³⁶

³³ Paul W. Chilcote, "The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm of Renewal for the Contemporary Church," in *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal*, ed. Paul W. Chilcote (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 32.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Gregory S. Clapper, "Making Disciples in Community: Guidance and Transformation in the Living Body of Believers," in *The Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. Paul W. Chilcote (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 113.

³⁶ Ibid., 116-17.

Samuel Powell has also drawn fresh attention to the views of Wesley. The Methodist tradition taught that the Christian community was not only a “sanctified community” but also a “sanctifying community.” The power to change lives was in the life of the community.³⁷

Contemporary theologians, writing from within the Wesleyan tradition, have added their own insights. Stanley Hauerwas has gone so far as to define salvation in terms of community. “Christian salvation means, finally, becoming a certain kind of person, one who can enjoy the end of life that the Christian community commends.”³⁸

In his *Systematic Theology*, Thomas Oden also connects individual salvation to the formation of community. “All those united to Christ by faith are united with the called out community by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit after the incarnation was not creating a conglomerate of isolated regenerated persons but rather a community, a family of the regenerated, an ordered household, an organic body.”³⁹ For Oden, *koinonia* summarizes the dynamic of true community. The church, *ekklesia*, has meaning as it participates in *koinonia*. The church is the church Christ is building to the extent that it reflects God’s kingdom community.

Methodist theologian Howard Snyder has written widely on the topic of Christian community. He is a strong advocate of our experience of community going beyond superficial sociability. Christian community in the church must involve more than

³⁷ See Samuel M. Powell, “A Contribution To Wesleyan Understanding of Holiness & Community,” in *Embodied Holiness: Toward A Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 182.

³⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church As Polis* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 8.

³⁹ Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit: Systematic Theology: Volume Three* (San Francisco, CA:

common social skills or a commitment to get along. Community must demonstrate a marked difference from the values of the surrounding culture. Community is not Christian without Christ at the center.⁴⁰

Postmodern theology has elevated relationship-in-community to a whole new level of importance. In a world beyond epistemological and theological foundations, community has become the “integrative motif.”

Ray Anderson has referred to “community as self-emptying love. The community that exists as the life of the Father to the Son and Son to the Father, in the Spirit, is the community that becomes the reconciling community of salvation.”⁴¹ The Christian community enfleshes or incarnates the Gospel in the midst of a postmodern culture. Indeed, the world is looking for an “incarnational community . . . that community in which the life of Jesus continues to exist through the ontological reality of his indwelling Spirit.”⁴²

For Anderson, Christian community is also “kenotic community, as the formation of Christ in the world.”⁴³ The church exists in the world for the sake of the world. The Christian community is God’s redemptive representation in every generation.

Michael Lodahl also emphasizes the role of spiritual formation in community in the present postmodern situation. “One of the distinctive contributions of the postmodern

Harper San Francisco, 1992), 56.

⁴⁰ Howard Snyder, “Authentic Fellowship,” *Christianity Today* 47 (October 2003): 102.

⁴¹ Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 115.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 116.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 117.

sensitivity to contemporary theological reflection is its persistent insistence upon the formative role of specific, identifiably particular communal traditions in human being, thinking and doing.”⁴⁴ Community formation of all kinds is of central importance to a postmodern generation. The formation of true Christian community affords a unique opportunity to proclaim a lived theology.

Perhaps more than any other contemporary theologian, Stanley Grenz has focused on the central role of community in the postmodern context. In *Beyond Foundationalism* Grenz and John Franke focus on the role of community in establishing personal identity. They quote Robert Bellah as saying, “We find ourselves not independently of other people and institutions but through them. We never get to the bottom of our selves on our own.”⁴⁵ Belief in the importance of community is central to our Christian self-understanding. “We believe that the overarching focus of the biblical narrative is the person-in-relationship or the individual-in-community.”⁴⁶

Stanley Grenz defines community as a group of people who are conscious that they share a similar frame of reference.⁴⁷ A community has a shared frame of reference, shared meanings and values, resulting in a group identity. It includes a group identity and a group purpose.

⁴⁴ Michael E. Lodahl, “‘And He Felt Compassion’: Holiness Beyond the Bounds of Community,” in *Embodied Holiness: Toward a Corporate Theology of Spiritual Growth*, ed. Samuel M. Powell and Michael E. Lodahl (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 145.

⁴⁵ Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 203.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 209.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 216.

The uniquely Christian understanding of community is based on the understanding of the nature of God as Trinity.

Because God is ultimately none other than the divine trinitarian persons-in-relationship, a relationship characterized by a mutuality that can only be described as love, the *imago dei* is ultimately human persons-in-loving-relationship as well. Only in relationship—as persons-in-community—are we able to reflect the fullness of the divine character.⁴⁸

We can enjoy true community with other human beings only as we enter into the trinitarian community of God by grace.

The task of theology in a postmodern context is ultimately to facilitate the formation of true community. “Theology engages in this task for the purpose of facilitating the fellowship of Christ’s disciples in fulfilling their calling to be the image of God and thereby to be the biblical community God destines us to become. For this reason, theology is by its very nature communitarian.”⁴⁹

In *Created for Community*, Stanley Grenz seeks to develop a full-orbed postmodern theology of community. Grenz proposes that “community” is to be understood as the goal of God’s plan for creation. “The focus on community encapsulates the biblical message, it stands at the heart of the theological heritage of the church, and it speaks to the aspirations and the sensed needs of people in our world today.”⁵⁰ God’s plan of redemption is to create a reconciled people from all nations, to renew them by his grace, and to form them into a community. This biblical vision of “community” is the goal of history.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 228.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 238.

⁵⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*

Grenz reviews all aspects of Christian theology with a central focus on community:

- God as Trinity is the foundation for our understanding of community. As a Three-in-One being God has both individual and communal aspects in his own nature. “The one God is the social Trinity, the community or fellowship of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Because God is a plurality-in-unity, the ideal for humankind does not focus on solitary persons, but on persons-in-community.”⁵¹
- A doctrine of humanity focuses on God’s purpose for creating human beings. Humankind’s purpose is to have a deep, personal relationship with God, a relationship that overflows to relationships with others and with creation itself. We are “created for community.”⁵²
- Grenz defines sin as a “failure of community.” If our purpose is to share in a relationship with God in the context of community, to sin is to miss the mark of that community. “By not participating in the fellowship God intends for us, we ‘miss the mark.’”⁵³
- The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring salvation to us in such a way as to form true community. “As a consequence of the Spirit’s work, we experience fellowship with God, one another, and all creation.”⁵⁴

(Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 23.

⁵¹ Ibid., 50, 51.

⁵² Ibid., 71.

⁵³ Ibid., 90.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 178.

- The church is to be understood as a communal sign of the fact that the kingdom of God has come. “The church is a people-in-relationship and the sign of God’s kingdom.”⁵⁵
- The mission of the church is to be understood as service to the world out of the context of community. “Evangelism happens as the Holy Spirit fashions us into a community of faith in the world. Our very presence in the world testifies that God has acted, is acting, and will act. We are a sign to the world.”⁵⁶
- A doctrine of last things sees community in its purest form as the destination God has in mind for all believers. “One future day we will share completely in the glorious goal the Creator God has for his handiwork: community on the highest plane.”⁵⁷

Conclusion

In this chapter we have looked at examples of relationships from both the Old and New Testament. We saw those relationships as personal and beneficial. We also examined biblical instructions concerning relationships with “strangers,” i.e. individuals from another culture. We then observed the importance placed upon relationships in community in theology from a Lutheran, Wesleyan and postmodern perspective.

This biblical and theological foundation is intended to reinforce the Christian value placed upon relationships in community, and to set the stage for members of the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 212.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 223.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 64, 65.

faculty of a Christian college to engage in meaningful cross-cultural relationships with students from East Asian cultures.

CHAPTER THREE

THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN COMMUNITY SEEN IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

My desire to facilitate faculty relationships with East Asian students will include an emphasis on the Christian value of relationships in community. That value is demonstrated in Christian Scripture and theology. It can also be seen in Christian history. In this chapter I will look at relevant examples of relationships in community and cross-cultural relationships in Christian history.

Spiritual direction is perhaps the oldest Christian relationship, one that is experiencing a renewal in the church today. Most of the following historical survey will focus on this tradition. I will also examine the tradition of spiritual community, i.e. spiritual friendship in and through community.

Finally, I will present the example of mission partnerships, a case of cross-cultural relationships for the sake of mission. Mission partnerships will not only present an example of relationships in Christian history but will also set the stage for cross-cultural relationships specifically.

Spiritual Direction

The relational model we refer to as “spiritual direction” goes back at least as far as the desert Fathers and Mothers. It can also be seen in Eastern and Western

Christianity and Celtic Christianity and is enjoying a resurgence in contemporary Christianity.

Desert Fathers and Mothers

The tradition of the desert fathers and mothers originated the practice of spiritual direction as a relationship. They spoke of *iatros pneumatikos* or a spiritual physician. These spiritual elders were also referred to *pater pneumatikos* (spiritual parent) or *pneumatophoros* (Spirit-bearer). Spiritual direction was seen as a spiritual friendship between an “elder” and a younger friend. The focus was on prayer, relationship to God, and spiritual formation.

The quality of friendship created an atmosphere in which both parties could be honest and transparent and listen to the Holy Spirit together.

Spiritual direction has always included . . . those elements relative both to the daily struggle for wholeness and healing and to a proper ongoing prayer life. It was the person's experience as a whole which became the very content of dialogue with the director. As one was led toward a deeper communion with God, there was always a focus on what was operational within oneself—the perceptions of heart and mind—and between oneself and God and his or her fellows—behavior concerns. Christian communion depends on these two experiential elements.¹

An elder qualified to be a spiritual director by successfully passing through the challenges of life. It was assumed that one who had grown into maturity possessed certain important characteristics:

1. *theoria*, a capacity for inner reflection, contemplation
2. *askesis*, familiarity with inner struggle and labor

¹ Joseph J. Allen, *Inner Way: Toward a Rebirth of Eastern Christianity Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 4, 5.

3. *diakrisis*, discernment or discrimination; the central component as well as the goal of spiritual direction
4. *prosoche*, inner attentiveness and coherence
5. *nepsis*, an overall watchfulness and comprehensive balance in life
6. *krasis*, a temperament of equilibrium²

Simply having a relationship with someone who had developed these qualities was considered to be inherently beneficial. However, the relationship had to involve complete transparency on the part of the directee.

At the point where the atmosphere between a spiritual director and his directee attains complete trust, thus allowing candid self-disclosure, their relationship begins to transcend mere dialogue and friendship. It is only when the relationship attains true and intimate communion that healing begins to take place. The spiritual director, in turn, is bound to transmit not himself or his own ego, but his abiding rootedness in the life of the Spirit. He transmits his example to the directee, not by spoken word alone, not by activities alone, but by what one can only call a process of “spiritual osmosis.” Indeed, his influence is much more pervasive than can be overtly observed in either actions taken or words spoken.³

There was mutuality between spiritual director and directee. They shared a common journey to God. It was the power of a shared life that brought growth and formation to both parties in the relationship. Spiritual directors were concerned more about “soul care” than “soul cure.” Indeed, the mutual care for each other’s soul brought life and health.

In *Soul Friend* Kenneth Leech surveys the history of spiritual direction, beginning with the desert fathers and mothers. He confirms that these *abbas* and *ammās* were

² Ibid., 23, 24.

³ Ibid., 39.

sought out by many as *pneumatikos pater*. They looked to them for holiness and purity of heart more than for teaching, and the central concept was that of spiritual fatherhood. Most of the desert fathers and mothers lived alone where they battled against demons and perfected holiness. “Living alone as hermits or together in communities under the open skies, the desert Christians eventually became valued as teachers of prayer and facilitators in the healing of spiritual diseases which they called ‘sins.’”⁴

The desert mothers seemed particularly aware of the need to provide spiritual direction.

[Theodora] was obviously conscientious of her own roles as spiritual mentor and teacher. As she says, “a teacher ought to be a stranger to the desire for domination, vain-glory, and pride.” Amma Syncletica is one of the most famous of spiritual guides, a woman who lived for years as a hermit before a community of women gathered about her. What is especially interesting in Syncletica’s hagiography is her portrayal as a reluctant spiritual guide who does not initially want to speak any words of wisdom to the women who come to her, but only sheds tears and tells them to follow “a common teacher—the Lord.”⁵

The desert tradition approached a relationship of spiritual direction as a practical means of learning a lifestyle of holiness. Time spent with a spiritual elder resulted in observing and learning the personal and moral qualities of that individual.

Eastern Christianity

The role of spiritual director continued to develop in Eastern Christianity. “St. Basil (330-79) tells his readers to find a man ‘who may serve you as a very sure guide in the work of leading a holy life,’ one who knows ‘the straight road to God,’ and he warns

⁴ Edward C. Sellner, *The Celtic Soul Friend: A Trusted Guide for Today* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2002), 55.

⁵ Ibid., 65, 67, 68.

that ‘to believe that one does not need counsel is great pride. St. Gregory Nazianzen (330-87) also saw direction as ‘the greatest of all sciences.’”⁶ In his *Conferences* John Cassian gave what would prove to be influential advice: “Go attach yourself to a man who fears God, humble yourself before him, give up your will to him, and then you will receive consolation from God.”⁷

The influence of John Cassian upon the development of spiritual direction was particularly far-reaching.

John Cassian was the one who most fully explored the human need for disclosing sicknesses and secrets which lie in the heart in order to be free of them. According to him, a key lesson which he and his friend Germanus learned from their time in the desert was the importance of an elder: a wise, holy, and experienced person who can act as a teacher and guide for an individual or community. Among the many sources of guidance recognized by the desert Christians as helpful to their spirituality . . . they considered an experienced guide to be, Cassian says, “the greatest gift and grace of the Holy Spirit.”⁸

The medieval eastern fathers carried on this tradition. St. Isaac the Syrian (d. c. 700) wrote, “Confide your thoughts to a man who, though he lack learning, has studied the work in practice. Therefore follow the advice of a man who has himself experienced all, and knows how to judge patiently what needs discrimination in your case, and can point out what is truly useful for you.”⁹ The monks Callistus and Ignatius of Xanthopoulos urged their disciples to “spare no effort in trying to find a teacher and guide . . . a man bearing the Spirit within him, leading a life corresponding to his words,

⁶ Leech, *Soul Friend*, 37.

⁷ Ibid., 38.

⁸ Sellner, *The Celtic Soul Friend*, 74, 75.

⁹ Leech, *Soul Friend*, 40.

lofty in vision of mind, humble in thought of himself, of good disposition in everything, and generally such as a teacher of Christ should be.”¹⁰

The Eastern tradition of spiritual direction continued in the Russian Orthodox church. Russian spiritual elders were known as *staretz* (singular) or *startsy* (plural). The Russian church viewed the *staretz* as an older person who was ahead in the journey. To become a *staretz* is seen as the culmination of a long life of simplicity and humility, a life devoted to the acquiring of the Holy Spirit. In writing of the Russian tradition, Sergei Hackel reports that “a succession of *startsy* was to guide seekers after truth. Where possible, such *startsy* based their counsels on the daily revelation of their client’s thoughts. Their advice, founded though it was on absolute principles, tended to be personal and specific.”¹¹

In his *Letters to Lay People* Macarius (1788-1860) stressed the need to follow

the guidance of a wise man experienced in the fight. As to those who are happy without seeking spiritual direction and quite blissful without bothering much about the deeper Christian life—the life of the mind and heart—theirs is the peace of this world, not the peace of our Master. Whenever we set out firmly to tread the inner path, a storm of temptations and persecutions always assails us. It is because of the dark host that spiritual direction is profitable, nay necessary to us whether we retire to a monastery or continue to live in the world.¹²

St. Seraphim (1759-1833) was considered the greatest of all Russian Orthodox spiritual directors. He saw the aim of the Christian life to be “the acquiring of the Holy Spirit.” Spiritual direction was a relationship of life shared in the Spirit.

¹⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹¹ Sergei Hackel, “The Eastern Tradition from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century: Russian,” in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), 271.

¹² Leech, *Soul Friend*, 43.

As with the desert tradition, Eastern spiritual direction was concerned about learning the life of holiness. However, there was a greater emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the process, both in the life of the director and in learning from him or her. There was a distinctive mystical dimension, a supernatural element, in the practice of Eastern direction.

Western Christianity

There was also a tradition of spiritual direction in the Western church. In his *Pastoral Rule*, St. Gregory the Great (540-604) “emphasizes three essential interior dispositions in the pastor and guide of souls; zeal for right conduct and discipline; love, learning, patience, pity, and a desire to adapt to all and condescend to all; and humility, the guarantee of purity of intention. He extolled the virtue of discretion which was made up of discernment, moderation and confession.”¹³ In *The Rule of St. Benedict*, a relationship with a *pater spiritualis* was recommended for all monks. Monks were to confess to “spiritual seniors who know how to deal with their own wounds and not to disclose or publish those of others.”¹⁴ St. Bernard of Clairvaux “urged those who were novices in the religious life to have a guide to lead and encourage them. Without such direction they were likely to lack discretion, to give themselves up to excesses of devotion, and to injure their health.”¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 45.

¹⁴ Ibid., 46.

¹⁵ Ibid., 48.

In *The Mirror of Faith* William of Saint Thierry wrote, “if we neglect to depend on authority at the beginning of our life of faith, we inevitably take the wrong road, being guided by unaided reason.”¹⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx emphasized the need for true friendship in spiritual direction. “To live without friends . . . is to live like a beast. Friendship is like a step to raise us to the love and knowledge of God. Friendship lies close to perfection.”¹⁷

Members of the Dominican Order became well known for their ministry of spiritual direction. In the *Imitation of Christ* Thomas à Kempis encouraged disciples of Christ to “take counsel with a wise and conscientious man. Seek the advice of your brothers in preference to following your own inclinations.”¹⁸ In his *Treatise On the Spiritual Life* St. Vincent Ferrer (1346-1419) wrote, “a person who has a director by whom he allows himself to be guided, whom he obeys in all his actions, great and small, will more easily and quickly arrive at perfection than he ever could by himself.”¹⁹

In his *Spiritual Exercises* St. Ignatius Loyola (1495-1556) emphasized the role of discernment in spiritual direction. In the *Directory* St. Ignatius describes the qualities of an effective director:

Such a person a) should be “well versed in spiritual things and especially in these Exercises;” b) should be “prudent and discrete, cautious and reserved . . . gentle,” and preferably “personally acceptable to the exercitant;” c) should “preserve the position and character of a master, as in truth he is;” d) should not “attribute anything to his own effort or skill” but rather “put great trust in God;” e) should “be very careful also not to add anything merely of his own,” and so “let him endeavour only that the exercitant may know how to seek the will of God;” f)

¹⁶ Ibid., 49.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 51.

¹⁹ Ibid., 52.

should “take note of the exercitant” in order to provide the best possible help; g) should have studied the Exercises thoroughly.²⁰

In the *Introduction to the Devout Life* St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) advised Philothea, “Do you seriously wish to travel the road to devotion? If so, look for a good person to guide and lead you. This is the most important of all words of advice. Since it is important for you, Philothea, to have a guide as you travel on this holy road to devotion, you must insistently beseech God to provide you with one after his own heart.”²¹ St. Teresa of Avila (1515-82) advised, “The beginner needs counsel to help him ascertain what benefits him most. To this end a director is very necessary; but he must be a man of experience.”²² Concerning spiritual direction Charles de Foucauld wrote, “The soul’s life depends on it: it is the one essential. If you have this, you can dispense with all the rest. It is the key to sanctification and the means of living in interior peace.”²³

Spiritual direction in the Western tradition focused on the authority of the spiritual father or mother and not just the holiness of his lifestyle. Spiritual formation depended significantly on the discipline of submission to a spiritual authority figure. This relationship of unquestioning obedience was considered the key to spiritual health.

²⁰ Ibid., 55, 56.

²¹ Francis de Sales, “Francis de Sales: One True Devotion,” in *Devotional Classics*, ed. Richard J. Foster and James Bryan Smith (San Francisco, CA: Harper SanFrancisco, 1993), 31, 32.

²² Leech, *Soul Friend*, 62.

²³ Ibid. 69.

Celtic Christianity

A study of the ancient Celtic Church tradition brings to light the tradition of the *anamchara*, or “soul friend.” St. Brigit of Kildare was quoted as saying, “Anyone without a soul friend is like a body without a head.” Having a “soul friend” was considered essential to spiritual progress.

Celtic Christianity had its roots in the Eastern tradition and in Celtic history and culture. The writings of John Cassian were specifically formative. They often quoted Cassian regarding spiritual friendship:

With God and the union of character, friends are joined together in a common dwelling. To be a soul friend is to provide a cell, a place of sanctuary to another where, through our acceptance, love, and hospitality, he or she can grow in wisdom, and both of us in depth.²⁴

The friendship between St. Antony and Paul of Thebes as described in the *Life of Paul* by St. Jerome had a strong influence on the *anamchara* tradition. Desert spirituality, with its emphasis on encountering God in conversations with spiritual guides and friends affected the later understanding of the Celtic *anamchara*.

Like the desert fathers and mothers, Celtic soul friends “knew from firsthand experience that the soul, to know itself, must give in to another soul; must speak from the heart to be heard by another heart. Soul friendship was eventually linked . . . with being a midwife of the soul, facilitating the transition from this life to the next.”²⁵

There were significant differences between the desert fathers and mothers and the Celtic *anamchara*:

²⁴ Sellner, *The Celtic Soul Friend*, 13, 14.

²⁵ Ibid., 181, 82.

Unlike the desert Christians who ministered in the barren wilderness of desert lands, the Celtic soul friends appreciated the beauty of nature and the powerful pull of the sea. Unlike the desert guide who tended to settle in one place for the rest of their lives, the Celtic saints, with the wanderlust of their Celtic forebears in their blood, frequently embraced a life of pilgrimage and of missionary outreach. Unlike the early desert guides, many of whom were suspicious of classical education and sought to maintain the primacy of the scriptures in meditation and prayer, the Celtic saints loved learning and the life of study, preserving the pagan stories of their native lands, as well as the spiritual heritage of Greece and Rome.²⁶

The Celtic soul friend became an important means of spiritual formation in the Celtic Church. It came to be closely associated in Christianity with ongoing transformation, a process of conversion-reconciliation that included frequent self-disclosure to a soul friend.

Celtic *anamchara* were found in the context of monastic communities. According to Diarmuid O’Laughaire, “The practice of soul-friendship is of a piece with the general attitude towards the spiritual and monastic life. Allowance was always made for the individual. Even in the same monastery and under the same Rule the Holy Spirit must be allowed to lead as he wills.”²⁷

Celtic soul friends provide an example of relationships in the context of community, and specifically, spiritual friendships in the context of spiritual community. The Celtic soul friend was less about mystical transformation (as in the Eastern tradition) or submission to someone in spiritual authority (as in the Western tradition) than it was about an intimate, transparent, mutual friendship in the context of community. It involved shared lives leading to spiritual transformation.

²⁶ Ibid., 82.

²⁷ Diarmuid O’Laughaire, “Celtic Spirituality,” in *The Study of Spirituality*, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1986), 222.

Contemporary Christianity

With the Protestant Reformation spiritual direction as a means of spiritual formation all but disappeared. However, in the late twentieth century it reemerged with renewed vigor. In *Holy Invitations*, Jeannette Bakke explores contemporary spiritual direction. She describes spiritual direction as “a kind of discernment about discernment.”²⁸ It involves two friends listening to the Holy Spirit together. “Spiritual direction is somewhat of a misnomer because spiritual direction is neither exclusively spiritual nor particularly directive. However, the words do fit in other ways. They clearly identify the primary guide we seek, the Holy Spirit.”²⁹

The present hunger for spiritual direction is a reflection of an overall spiritual hunger as well as personal confidence that true discernment can be experienced. We long to experience God’s presence but we need encouragement to trust God to be God, to trust the Holy Spirit in another person, and to trust God for a particular spiritual direction relationship.

In *The Safest Place on Earth*, Larry Crabb describes spiritual directors as Spirit-led guides on the journey toward God.

Life is a journey toward a land we have not yet seen along a path we sometimes cannot find. It is a journey of the soul toward its destiny and its home. Spiritual directors are men and women who know the Spirit, who trust the Spirit, who by virtue of calling and gifting and self-awareness can see into the workings of the human soul and can direct it toward its end.³⁰

²⁸ Jeannette A. Bakke, *Holy Invitations: Exploring Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 18.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Larry Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth: Where People Connect and Are Forever Changed* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 1999), 182.

So what are we to make of this contemporary resurgence of spiritual direction? People today are looking for authentic spirituality and relationships. People are also more open to traditional practices. This spiritual interest is leading to a new commitment to spiritual friendship as a lifestyle. It may not always be distinctly Christian, but it does reflect true spiritual hunger.

Spiritual Community

Spiritual direction in isolation alone does not meet the current hunger for spiritual formation. What is needed is spiritual formation in community. Such a community has two kinds of transformational relationships: spiritual friendship and spiritual direction. These two kinds of relationships, when found in a spiritual community, can facilitate healing for the members of that community.

The spiritual connections between the various members of a community are the means by which transformation can occur. A connecting community, where each member is joined together in dynamic spiritual union, is a healing community.

For Larry Crabb, a local church may or may not constitute spiritual community. “We don’t need more churches, as we usually define the word. We need more spiritual communities.”³¹ However, the potential exists for community to take place if the members of a local church are committed to the goal of community.

I speak of spiritual community as a gathering of people who experience a kind of togetherness that only the Holy Spirit makes possible, who move in good directions—and want to—because the Spirit is at work. Where such community

³¹ Ibid., 10.

does not exist, there is no church. At its core, the church is a spiritual community journeying together toward God.³²

According to Crabb a spiritual community is a place where people feel safe to “hit bottom” and reveal their brokenness. It is marked by the qualities of unconditional love and acceptance. In this way it can be a place of healing and restoration. “We need spiritual friends, broken people who will provide safety for us to be broken, caring people who want us to live and believe we can live well, giving people who pour the life they have received from God into us, people of vision who see the Spirit shaping us into the image of Christ.”³³ It is a certain kind and quality of relationship that holds the key to personal healing and wholeness.

Crabb bases his approach to spiritual community on Christian theology, starting with the doctrine of the Trinity. “In a Trinitarian universe, where final reality is other-centered relationship, the priority drive toward self-actualization is selfish and out of step with the way things are supposed to be.”³⁴ Our relationship with Christ and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the only source of the life that changes us.

Crabb describes how spiritual community, in his view, can be formed. It involves a process of three steps:

1. We enter each other’s lives with celebration and with the message, “I accept you!”
2. We see what’s beneath the surface, what could be and what is, both good and bad, and we communicate the message, “I believe in you and I discern both the Spirit’s work and the work of the flesh in your life.”

³² Ibid., 22.

³³ Ibid., 41.

³⁴ Ibid., 52.

3. We teach each other with the life of Christ; we freely give whatever the Spirit incites within us as we get to know each other. Our message is, “I give you whatever the Spirit stirs in me to give you.”³⁵

In the end, it is spiritual friendship in the context of a spiritual community that encourages us to know God and empowers us to become more like God.

In the middle of the wild ocean of shattered dreams and broken lives, the community of Christ celebrates God's forgiveness; they believe in what each other could become, they never minimize sin but they love to maximize grace. They are carriers of Christ to each other. That's what spiritual friends do when they act together to journey to God.³⁶

Larry Crabb is not the first to advocate the power of spiritual community. The ancient Celtic Church gave us a model of spiritual community as well as spiritual direction. George Hunter III is a contemporary student of Celtic community. He describes the effect of Celtic monastic communities. Celtic Christianity was spread through the establishment of monastic communities and the invitation of villagers to join in the life of those communities. According to Hunter, “the monastic communities produced a less individualistic and more community-oriented approach to the Christian life.”³⁷ The pattern in Celtic communities was to belong first, leading to a belief in the gospel, followed by a lifestyle of commitment to Christ.

Partnership in Mission

One of the most recent examples of relationships in community involving cross-cultural relationships in Christian history is “mission partnerships.” For two centuries

³⁵ Ibid., 169, 70.

³⁶ Ibid., 178.

³⁷ George G. Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West . . .*

missions primarily involved Western churches sending missionaries to non-Western receiving nations. For most of this time the relationship between “sending” and “receiving” churches was often like that of parents to children.

As the colonial period ended in 1947, it was realized that these paternalistic relationships in missions also needed to end. It was at the World Mission Conference, organized by the International Missionary Council, that representatives of both sending and receiving churches met together as partners. This conference was held in Whitby, Toronto, Canada in 1947. The representatives determined together that the future fulfillment of the Great Commission would require a more equal role for both churches. As a result, they adopted a policy known as the “partnership in obedience,” the definition of a new relationship between churches.

However, not everyone was satisfied with this solution. Many were skeptical that such a partnership was even functionally possible. In January 1967, a Jesuit missionary to Latin America, Ivan Illich, called for a “moratorium” on the sending of Western missionaries to non-Western nations. He claimed that it was Western missionaries who were blocking Latin American Christians from a full engagement in the social and political issues occupying their home countries. This was followed by a similar call from a Philippine Church leader, Nacpil, in 1971. He claimed that Western missionaries were inhibiting the growth of a truly indigenous expression of Christian faith. The call for a moratorium peaked in 1983 at the World Mission Conference in Bangkok. The Bangkok conference called for a temporary moratorium on the sending of Western missionaries to promote fuller self-discovery and self-awareness in the non-Western churches.

Mission Conferences since 1983 have, instead, pursued the development of increasingly effective mission partnerships. The Manila Manifesto of 1989 made a clear commitment to partnership.

We affirm the urgent need for churches, mission agencies and other Christian organizations to cooperate in evangelism and social action, repudiating competition and avoiding duplication. We affirm that God is calling the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. So we determine to proclaim it faithfully, urgently, and sacrificially until he comes.³⁸

What is a mission partnership? The 1947 call for “partnership in obedience” stated that “the partnership idea was a recognition of the equality of the newer Churches with their ‘parent’ Churches in the West.”³⁹ Luis Bush defined partnerships as “an association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship, and fulfill agreed-upon expectations by sharing complementary strengths and resources, to reach their mutual goal.”⁴⁰

A partnership implies a complementary relationship. When two or more autonomous bodies engaged in the work of mission form a trusting relationship, sharing complementary gifts and abilities in order to advance the Great Commission, a mission partnership exists. It is an interdependent relationship of two or more parties who respect each other and view each other as equals. It is a relationship of shared vision and shared commitment.

³⁸ Charles Van Engen, “Toward a Theology of Mission Partnerships,” *Missiology* XXIX, no. 1 (January 2001): 14, 15.

³⁹ Roger E. Hedlund, “A New Partnership For Mission,” in *Readings in Third World Missions*, ed. Martin L. Nelson (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1976), 227.

⁴⁰ William D. Taylor, “Introduction: Setting the Partnership Stage,” in *Kingdom Partnerships for Synergy in Missions*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994), 4.

Mission partnerships are not viewed as an isolated end in themselves. Fulfilling the Great Commission is still the goal. However, the shifts that have taken place on the world scene make partnership the best way to accomplish that goal. At the 1998 Congress on the World Mission of the Church, St. Paul, Minnesota, James Engel summarized these important shifts:

- Churches and qualified nationals in the Two Thirds [world] logically are taking both leadership and initiative in the primary task of extending the kingdom of God. Therefore, missionary sending in the traditional sense now becomes just one option rather than the normative strategy for both churches and agencies.
- The old dichotomy of “sending” vs. “receiving” nations makes little sense, because we are part of the same process of proclaiming and manifesting the lordship of Christ.
- Independent, non-coordinated efforts to reach the unreached are giving way to formulation of strategic, holistic ministry alliances and partnerships that transcend organizational, denominational, ethnic, or geopolitical boundaries.⁴¹

There is a clear biblical and theological basis for mission partnerships. The New Testament use of the word *koinonia* seems to imply partnership or fellowship as the essence of the life of the church. This term communicates partaking together in a group, a shared life, holding things in common. The fellowship of the church includes a common identity, common goals and responsibilities. Partnership is not so much what the Church does as what it is. The church understood as a viable community is a key to our understanding of the value of mission partnerships.

The Pauline theme of the body of Christ, and especially the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit in the body of Christ, paints a picture of partnership (see Romans 12; 1

⁴¹ James F. Engel, “North American Global Mission: A Clouded Future,” in *Mission At the Dawn of the 21st Century: A Vision for the Church*, ed. Paul Varo Martinson (Minneapolis, MN: Kirk House Publishers, 1999), 193, 94.

Corinthians 12 & Ephesians 4). No one has all the gifts necessary to fulfill the mission of Christ. Doing so requires freely shared resources and abilities.

Our oneness in Christ (Ephesians 4:5f) implies that all the unique parts of the body of Christ share in an essential unity. We have one task, but it requires everyone's distinctive contribution to accomplish that task.

Because our oneness is centered in Jesus Christ (the motivation for mission partnerships), we are called to partner together for world evangelization, serving one another in love and humility (the agency) as we participate in Christ's mission, offering to one another the unique gifts given by the Holy Spirit to our various regional and global organizations and churches (the means), so that we may equip the saints for the work of ministry until we all together grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (the goals of mission partnerships).⁴²

The communal nature of the Trinity bears witness to the power of unity in diversity. This truth was foundational to the commitment of the World Evangelical Fellowship's Mission Commission in Manila 1992.

God Himself dwells in community—outside of time, in eternity. God made man to dwell in relationship, first with Himself and then with others. While there is a clear role for individual witness outlined in Scripture, both the Old and New Testament suggest that, in the end, community witness is far more powerful.⁴³

In his high priestly prayer Jesus states that the functional unity of the church will be the ultimate testimony of the truth of the gospel (John 17:20-23). The best way to accomplish that ideal globally is through effective mission partnerships.

The benefits of mission partnerships seem obvious. Every culture has an important and distinctive perspective as well as unique abilities. Bringing them all

⁴² Van Engen, "Toward a Theology of Mission Partnerships," 16.

⁴³ Phillip Butler, "Kingdom Partnerships in the '90s: Is There a New Way Forward?" in *Kingdom Partnerships for Synergy in Missions*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994), 15, 16.

together in one cause results in greater effectiveness. The mutual sharing of resources creates the possibility that every contributor can be more effective. No one church or agency needs to try to be all and do all. Partnerships have a much better chance of succeeding in the long run. “Each culture endows those who are raised with it with certain distinct characteristics that become a part of the organization’s or individual’s personality, a way of coping with the environment, social or physical.”⁴⁴ Every partner has an important role to play.

Along with benefits there are also challenges, principally the challenge of cross-cultural relationships and the misunderstandings that might occur in those relationships. Meeting the challenge begins by simply admitting that cultural differences are an important consideration and need attention. At the Manila 1992 Commission Philip Butler discussed the problem. “We may acknowledge that we are involved in cross-cultural ministry. However, it is remarkable how frequently Christian leaders can and do gloss over the deep differences in worldviews, assumptions, social dynamics, decision-making processes, and expectations between cultures.”⁴⁵

Butler went on to recommend that the potential problems arising out of cultural differences in mission partnerships could be reduced if (1) we acknowledge those differences and the possible impact of them, (2) we take our partnership colleagues

⁴⁴ Paul McKaughan, “A North American Response to Patrick Sookhdeo,” in *Kingdom Partnerships for Synergy in Missions*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994), 71.

⁴⁵ Butler, “Kingdom Partnerships in the ‘90s: Is There a New Way Forward?” 20, 21.

seriously, with respect and a desire to listen and learn, and (3) we take the amount of time necessary to talk through our differences.⁴⁶

At the same commission Patrick Sookhdeo discussed the cross-cultural challenge more specifically. He began by acknowledging at least three fundamental differences: (1) the difference between group-oriented and individualistic cultures, resulting in different leadership styles; (2) the difference between a personal and an institutional approach to a project, resulting in different ways of doing ministry; and (3) the difference between a focus on interpersonal relationships and one on competence and efficiency, resulting in different group dynamics.⁴⁷ He went on to make two suggestions: (1) that we consider multiculturalism positively, that we adopt it as a value, and (2) that we simply recognize the reality of cultural differences and learn to work with them.⁴⁸

Another contributor to the Manila 1992 Commission went so far as to recommend pre-partnership requirements: (1) that each partner be honest about what their dominant cultural values are; (2) that each one be honest about their actual expectations going into a partnership; and (3) that each partner be honest about what the cultural limitations are.⁴⁹ It can be helpful to admit that some cultural differences may not be successfully bridged, and that it is still possible to work together.

In 2003 Dr. Larry Keyes addressed the Nigerian Missions Executive Congress on the theme, “Twenty-First Century Missions Leadership.” In that address Dr. Keyes

⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁷ Patrick Sookhdeo, “Cultural Issues in Partnership in Mission,” in *Kingdom Partnerships for Synergy in Missions*, ed. William D. Taylor (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1994), 59.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁹ McKaughan, “A North American Response to Patrick Sookhdeo,” 77.

modeled the multicultural sensitivity required of a mission partnership. He began by expressing an appreciation of the distinctive contribution being made by the Nigerian church. He pointed out that, contrary to most Western churches, the Nigerian church had a clear “perspective on the spiritual realm,” with an important understanding of “spiritual warfare.” He then acknowledged the Nigerian contribution to prayer, “powerful, all-day, agonizing and miraculous prayer.” He expressed appreciation for the holistic approach to leadership in the Nigerian church with a balanced focus on both humanitarian and evangelistic aspects. He concluded by acknowledging their ability to serve suffering people. “You are able to give hope, demonstrate endurance, encourage faithfulness and give God’s perspective on an eternal home to committed pilgrims on their difficult journey.”⁵⁰

Dr. Keyes then challenged his Nigerian partners to face specific challenges: (1) the challenge of discipleship; (2) the challenge of successful partnerships with Nigerian churches and missions agencies; and (3) the challenge of bridging the gaps between Nigerian culture and Western cultures.⁵¹ “I have come to believe more strongly than ever before that the more one becomes influential in missions, the more one must practice humility in life and character. To put oneself in second place is a requirement of ministry, especially mission ministry.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Larry E. Keyes, “Twenty-First Century Missions Leadership: A Global Perspective,” paper presented at the NIMEC (Nigerian Missions Executive Congress) 2003, 25-28 November Jos, Nigeria, 2003, 4, 5.

⁵¹ Ibid., 5.

⁵² Ibid., 7.

Having challenged the Nigerian leaders Keyes returned to an acknowledgement of the unique perspective of Nigerian culture. Even ethical values varied greatly between Western and African cultures. “Integrity can look differently in Africa than in the west. There can be definite differences between western and African practices of integrity with money and possessions.”⁵³ This admission went far to communicate his cross-cultural sensitivity, his respect for another culture, and his commitment to bridge those differences.

Indeed, other leaders in mission partnerships have acknowledged the need for humility and respect if those partnerships are going to work. The quality of interpersonal relationships, the extent to which co-workers from different cultures love one another, will determine the success of their partnership. “Relationships are primary. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is given concrete reality only in the midst of interpersonal relationships. If the fruit of the Spirit is so central to partnerships in mission, then personal relationships are foundational for mission cooperation.”⁵⁴

The example of mission partnerships combines the best lessons from Christian history on the value of relationships in community. Growing and laboring together presents the best possibility for long-term fruitfulness. In addition, the dynamics of cross-cultural communication and relationships are effectively modeled in these partnerships.

⁵³ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴ Van Engen, “Toward a Theology of Mission Partnerships,” 23.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined various examples of relationships in Christian history. I briefly surveyed spiritual direction, the oldest model of Christian relationship. I then considered the specific theme of spiritual formation in the context of community. Finally, I outlined the challenge of cross-cultural relationships in mission partnerships. In doing so I have sought to further establish the Christian value of relationships in community. With mission partnerships I also anticipated the special needs involved with cross-cultural communication and relationships.

Facilitating faculty relationships with East Asian students requires a clear commitment to the Christian value of relationships in community. It also requires an understanding of cross-cultural communication and relationships skills, the focus of my next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEARNING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

We have thus far worked to establish the value of relationships in the context of Christian community. If authentic personal relationships are to exist between American faculty members and East Asian students, it will be necessary to understand and gain facility in cross-cultural communication and relationship skills.

In this chapter we look at the need for multicultural attitudes in our pluralistic world. We will then examine the general field of culture and cultural variability, followed by brief cultural profiles of U.S.A. culture and Eastern Asian cultures. With the insights gained we will study specific cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural relationship building skills, and particularly their application to U.S.A. - East Asian relationships.

Multiculturalism

We live in a multicultural world. The facts are these: If the world was a village of 1,000 people,

- 206 would be Chinese
- 167 would be Indian
- 79 would be from Central and South America
- 51 would be from North America
- 50 would be from the former Soviet Block
- 45 would be from Western Europe
- 33 would be from Indonesia
- 24 would be from Pakistan
- 22 would be from Bangladesh

- 21 would be from Japan
- 21 would be from Nigeria
- 118 would be from other sub-Saharan African and Asian countries
- 163 would be from all other nations combined

The median age of those living in developed nations would be 30 while the median age in developing or poor countries would be under 16. The 114 villagers from North America, Western Europe and Japan would own nearly 90 percent of the wealth and consume more than half of its products.¹

At the same time, no one is born with the ability to communicate and relate to people from multiple cultures. A conscious effort has to be made in order to effectively function in our multicultural world.

The Challenge of Multiculturalism

Those of us in Western cultures now find ourselves as a minority in the world village. There is an increasing need to learn how to communicate and relate to the rest of the world. The ability to move out from our own culture and to embrace those from other cultures can be hard work. Judith Lingenfelter summarizes the task:

Our culture serves us well when it is the only culture in focus. In fact, it is a palace when there are no other contesting voices around us, when we can live fairly comfortable, ordered lives in the context of our own cultural system. However, when we are pushed into relationships that are outside the boundaries of our culture, that culture becomes a prison to us. We are blind to other ways of seeing and doing things, and we assume that our way is the only way that is appropriate.²

¹ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting in Around the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 19, 20.

² Judith E. Lingenfelter and Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 20.

The challenges are very personal. We must begin with an understanding of our own cultural insensitivity. Some would go so far as to claim, “True ministry within a multicultural context must begin with the admission that each of us is prejudiced. Hidden cultural assumptions and biases—even latent racism—are present within all of us.”³ Is that true? If so, how willing are we to admit it? Our cross-cultural limitations are many, and may even form a high wall around our own relational network. How can we understand the challenge?

Certain key terms will serve to illustrate:

Stereotyping—drawing conclusions about a certain group based on initial, superficial observations.

Ethnocentrism—the tendency to think of one’s own culture as the norm and standard and all others as abnormal or substandard. This is a common tendency when first encountering a new culture.

Misattribution—assigning meaning or motive to someone’s behavior based on one’s own culture or experience.

Prejudice—ascribing positive or negative characteristics to all members of a group based on stereotyping.

Xenophobia—the fear of another culture.

Forced Assimilation—insisting that others conform to one’s own culture with the power to enforce that conforming.

³ James Breckenridge and Lillian Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God? Multicultural Education in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1995), 12.

Cultural anthropologists recognize ego-centered patterns of behavior in all cultures. In studying the phenomenon of ethnocentrism Harry Triandis made these observations:

All people have tendencies to

1. define what goes on in their cultures as “natural” and “correct” and what goes on in other cultures as “unnatural” and “incorrect”;
2. perceive in-group customs as universally valid; that is, what is good for us is good for everybody;
3. think that in-group norms, roles, and values are obviously correct;
4. believe that it is natural to help and cooperate with members of one’s in-group;
5. act in ways that favor the in-group;
6. feel proud of the in-group; and
7. feel hostility toward out-groups.⁴

If we are to break out of these natural tendencies a concerted effort will have to be made.

Multicultural Strategies

There are, in fact, tried and true strategies for the development of multicultural sensitivities and cross-cultural skills. Once again, there are key terms that illustrate the process:

Enculturation—the means by which people are inducted into a group’s culture.

Also known as *socialization*.

Acculturation—the process by which a person learns to adapt to a new culture.

Assimilation—the process of a person being so absorbed into a new culture they leave behind their original culture.

⁴ Harry C. Triandis, “Theoretical Concepts That Are Applicable to the Analysis of Ethnocentrism,” in *Applied Cross-Cultural Psychology*, ed. Richard W. Brislin (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 35.

Biculturation—the blending of two cultures. Sherwood Lingenfelter and others refer to this as being a “150 Percent Person,” someone who is equally comfortable in two cultures.⁵

Pluralism—seeing all cultures as equal, observing and appreciating the distinctives of each one.

Accommodation—showing a willingness to coexist and build relationships with people from other cultures.

Multicultural adjustment requires each one to become a learner. We must begin with a flexible, humble attitude toward other cultures and a desire to learn from them. Just studying variations in culture does not sufficiently meet the challenge of communicating and relating in a multicultural world. A special kind of sensitivity must be developed, along with a new awareness of cultural diversity and a new ability to function in the midst of that diversity.

Cultural adjustment can be very difficult, especially in the face of certain behaviors. Craig Storti refers to “Type I Behavior, where the behaviors of another culture offend us,” and “Type II Behavior, where our own behaviors offend those in another culture.”⁶ Inherently offensive cultural differences make it even more necessary to become aware of the culture, to be objective in observing a culture’s characteristics. With sufficient commitment and hard work, even difficult barriers can be bridged.

⁵ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986), 25.

⁶ Craig Storti, *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1990), 65.

In a multicultural world, how do we begin the process of contacting someone from another culture? Kenneth Cushner proposes a four-part strategy. “(1) Equal status contact, meaning that individuals coming together have equal access to any rewards possible.” We need to commit ourselves to a “level playing field” on which we can contact people of other cultures, with no favoritism being shown any of the parties. “(2) Participants come together to achieve some superordinate goal or common task that could not be satisfied without participation of all members of the group.” Finding common ground is very important to an effective cross-culture contact. “(3) The social norm must encourage intergroup interaction and the reduction of prejudice.” All those involved must be committed to effective multicultural contact. “(4) High acquaintance potential must exist, thus encouraging intimate contact between individuals in the same contact situation.”⁷ Efforts must be made to foster meaningful interaction on the part of all participants. These strategic factors will enable us to make a successful contact with people from other cultures.

As we move out into our multicultural context, we will encounter stages of cultural awareness. We will not experience intimate communication or friendship right away. In fact, we may find the process slow and painful at times. What are the stages of growing cultural awareness? Craig Storti has observed four of them:

1. Unconscious Incompetence (blissful ignorance). At this stage you are not aware that there are cultural differences between people (or between you and a certain person); hence, it does not occur to you that you may be making cultural mistakes or that you may be misinterpreting much of the behavior going on around you.
2. Conscious Incompetence (troubling ignorance). You now realize that there are differences between the way you and people from other cultures behave,

⁷ Kenneth Cushner, “Cross-Cultural Psychology and the Formal Classroom,” in *Applied Cross-Cultural Psychology*, ed. Richard W. Brislin (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 114, 15.

though you understand very little about just what these differences are, how numerous they might be, or how deep they might go.

3. Conscious Competence (deliberate sensitivity). You know there are cultural differences between people, you know what some of these differences are, and you try to modify your own behavior to be sensitive to these differences.
4. Unconscious Competence (spontaneous sensitivity). You no longer have to think about what you're doing in order to be culturally sensitive (in a culture you know well, that is, though not, of course, in one that is new to you). Culturally appropriate behavior comes naturally to you, and you can trust your intuition because it has been reconditioned by what you now know about cross-cultural interactions.⁸

Our goal is to grow through all of these stages until we are able to communicate and relate to people from another culture with ease.

Gaining multicultural skills requires a personal commitment to growing in our understanding of culture. We need to explore general cultural information, e.g. dimensions of cultural variability. We also need to learn culture specific information, such as the values of a specific culture. Those with a sincere commitment to developing cross-cultural skills can, in fact, take the time to learn those skills.

But in addition to cultural understanding, multiculturalism requires the development of an open mind, an ability to put oneself into the place of others in their distinctive situation. Our growing multicultural awareness will enable us to connect to other cultures with sensitivity and effectiveness.

Culture & Cultural Variability

The amount of distance between two cultures varies greatly. To the extent that cultures are unique and different, more cultural variables must be understood and

⁸ Craig Storti, *Figuring Foreigners Out: A Practical Guide* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1999), 157, 58.

bridged. When cultural values and patterns conflict, cross-cultural communication is fraught with difficulty. Specific communication skills must be learned to overcome those difficulties. The task begins with cultural understanding, both of our own and of those we are attempting to bridge. Without a clear and honest understanding, meaningful cross-cultural communication and relationships will not be possible. To begin with, what is “culture?”

“Culture” Defined

In attempting a definition of “culture,” it must be kept in mind that there are differences between the “emic” perspective of culture, namely the insider’s or native’s perspective, and the “etic” or external perspective. Most cultural anthropologists define culture from an external perspective. From that context definitions of “culture” are legion:

- David Hesselgrave has referred to “culture” as “a way of thinking, feeling, believing. It is the group’s knowledge stored up for future use.”⁹ This definition attempts to get at the core perspectives and attitudes of a culture.
- Paul Hiebert defines “culture” as “the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do.”¹⁰ Hiebert

⁹ David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 198.

¹⁰ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 30.

focuses on the perspective of the group as a group and the way that perspective influences behaviors.

- Geert Hofstede delineates “culture” as “patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups.”¹¹ As with Hiebert, Hofstede emphasizes the group perspective and the unique evidences of that perspective.
- Harry Triandis defines “culture” as “a pattern of values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that can be used to contrast a group of cultures to another group of cultures.”¹² Triandis wants us to ask the question, What distinguishes one group from another? The answer is—culture.
- Sherwood Lingenfelter agrees when he defines “culture” as “the anthropologist’s label for the sum of the distinctive characteristics of a people’s way of life.”¹³

In short, culture can be thought of as human corporate personality. It is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. Whenever there is a distinguishable group of human beings, there will be culture. In fact, just as individuals can be thought of in terms of personality typology, cultures can reflect a similar typology. “Culture is to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual.”¹⁴

There is a difference between the objective side of a culture and the subjective side. Objective culture includes such things as food, clothing, greetings, time

¹¹ Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984), 21.

¹² Triandis, “Theoretical Concepts That Are Applicable to the Analysis of Ethnocentrism,” 37.

¹³ Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 17.

¹⁴ Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, 21.

consciousness, eye contact, etc. Subjective culture might involve values, authority roles, beliefs about gender roles, etc.¹⁵

In defining “culture” there is also a difference between intercultural diversity and intracultural diversity. Intercultural diversity describes the differences between two cultures. Intracultural diversity explores the differences between various subcultures within a larger culture.

“Culture” is a very inclusive term that includes linguistic, political, economic, social, psychological, religious, and national differences. Culture is learned, not innate. It is not biologically determined. Culture is a shared system, shared by all members of a society. Culture is an integrated whole, each part functioning in relationship to the other parts. Culture is always changing, cross-culturally and cross-generationally.¹⁶

David Hesselgrave refers to the four layers of culture proposed by G. Linwood Barney. These layers move from the core outward: (1) Ideology, cosmology, worldview; (2) Values, (3) Institutions (marriage, education, etc.), and (4) Material artifacts.¹⁷ Paul Hiebert sees three dimensions of culture: (1) The cognitive dimension, including shared knowledge, communication and community life; (2) The affective dimension, having to do with personal attitudes, notions of beauty, personal tastes, etc.; and (3) The evaluative dimension, made up of values and a sense of morals.¹⁸

¹⁵ Patty Lane, *Crossing Cultures* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 18, 19.

¹⁶ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 100, 01.

¹⁷ Ibid., 101-03.

¹⁸ Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 31.

Patterns of Cultural Variability

Cultural anthropologists have proposed several models of cultural variability. They are variously referred to as cultural dimensions and cultural values. Comparing those models can lead to an observation of commonalities between them. From this observation we can draw our own conclusions concerning basic patterns and their relevance to cross-cultural communication.

Marcelle DuPraw sees six fundamental patterns of cultural differences: (1) Different communication styles, both verbal and non-verbal communication; (2) Different attitudes toward conflict, from confrontational to avoidance; (3) Different approaches to completing tasks, from people-oriented to task-oriented; (4) Different decision-making styles, from majority rule to consensus; (5) Different attitudes toward disclosure, from frankness to shyness; and (6) Different approaches to knowing, from cognition to experience.¹⁹ DuPraw's cultural patterns are designed to have direct relevance to the conduct of business in other cultures. While they are accurate as far as they go, they leave out several variations that are culturally relevant to other kinds of relationships.

In *Cross-cultural Conflict*, Duane Elmer observes seven common cultural differences. He sees them as a series of seven pairs of cultural differences with a continuum in between. His pattern takes the concerns of cultural anthropology into greater account: (1) Time and Event, the difference between a linear view of time in the

¹⁹ Marcelle E. DuPraw and Marya Axner, "Working On Common Cross-Cultural Communication Challenges," Study Circles Resource Center [article online]; available from <http://www.wvcd.org/action/ampu/crosscult.html>; Internet; accessed 24 November 2003.

West and an event/experience approach to time in the East. (2) Task and Relationship, between task-orientation and people-orientation. (3) Individualism and Collectivism, the oft-described difference between a self- and a group-orientation. (4) Categorical and Holistic Thinking, the difference between those who see life as a dichotomy between “black and white” and those who see life as a tapestry. (5) Straight and Curved Logic, the difference between those who reason in a straight line and those who reason three-dimensionally. (6) Achieved and Ascribed Status, the difference between status defined by what one has achieved or the rank we hold in society. (7) Guilt and Shame, the difference between cultures who are controlled by internal forces (guilt) versus external forces (shame) in society.²⁰ It can be observed that several of these differences seem to overlap. In fact, “Categorical and Holistic Thinking” and “Straight and Curved Logic” seem to be almost identical categories.

Other cultural anthropologists describe dimensions of cultural variability. These dimensions involve pairs of characteristics. Every culture participates in both aspects of each dimension, but has one of the aspects more prominently. Geert Hofstede has observed four dimensions of cultural variability. The four dimensions are: (1) Individualism, “describing the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society.”²¹ Of the four this is considered the most important cultural variability. (2) Power Distance, describing the extent to which inequalities in a society are generally acceptable. “The battle between these two forces—status

²⁰ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 118f.

²¹ Ibid., 148.

consistency versus overall equality—is one of the basic issues in any human society.”²²

(3) Uncertainty Avoidance, delineating the tolerance for uncertainty in a society. “Ways of coping with uncertainty belong to the cultural heritage of societies and they are transferred and reinforced through basic institutions like the family, the school, and the state. They are reflected in collectively held values of the members of a particular society.”²³ (4) Masculinity, allowing for fundamental male and female differences in a culture. This cultural dimension describes cultural differences and similarities in opposite-sex and same-sex relationships. People from highly masculine cultures, for example, tend to have little contact with members of the opposite sex when they are growing up. The greater the masculinity in a culture, the less intimate and the more problematic members of the culture see opposite-sex relationships to be. “The predominate socialization pattern is for men to be more assertive and for women to be more nurturing.”²⁴

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions have become very influential in international businesses. The individualist-collectivist dimension is the most common observation in most of the literature. Power distance and uncertainty avoidance are helpful descriptions of the structure of a culture. The fourth dimension, masculinity, seems to be the least helpful in understanding cultural variability. Although gender roles are an important cultural factor, judging entire cultures as masculine or feminine seems to depend too much on gender stereotypes.

²² Ibid., 67.

²³ Ibid., 111.

²⁴ Ibid., 176.

Edward Hall would add a fifth cultural dimension to Hofstede's paradigm, i.e. Context. This dimension gives rise to the difference between Low Context and High Context cultures. Communication in low context cultures focuses on the content of a message and communication in high context cultures focuses the context of the message.²⁵

In *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, Sherwood Lingenfelter see six pairs of contrasting cultural traits: (1) Time orientation vs. Event orientation, linear time vs. time as an event; (2) Task orientation vs. Person orientation; (3) Dichotomistic thinking vs. Holistic thinking; (4) Status focus vs. Achievement focus; (5) Crisis orientation vs. Noncrisis orientation, anticipating a crisis in the future vs. a focus on the actual present experience; and (6) Concealment of vulnerability vs. willingness to expose vulnerability.²⁶ Lingenfelter's paradigm focuses more on cultural values than dimensions per se. Lingenfelter goes on to propose that these contrasting traits can be related to the two hemispheres of the human brain. Although his dichotomistic evaluation may seem too simplistic at first, it essentially agrees with other descriptions of cultural values.

It might be helpful to compare and contrast these various overlapping descriptions of cultural variability in a simple chart:

²⁵ Edward T. Hall, *The Dance of Life: The Other Dimension of Time* (New York, NY: Anchor Press, 1983), 61.

²⁶ Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 40, 41.

Marcelle DuPraw's <i>Cultural Differences</i>	Duane Elmer's <i>Cultural Differences</i>	Geert Hofstede's <i>Dimensions of Cultural Variability</i>	Sherwood Lingenfelter's <i>Contrasting Cultural Traits</i>
Communication styles	Time and Event	Individualism	Time orientation vs. Event orientation
Attitudes toward conflict	Task and Relationship	Power Distance	Task orientation vs. Person orientation
Approaches to completing tasks	Individualism and Collectivism	Uncertainty Avoidance	Dichotomistic thinking vs. Holistic thinking
Decision-making styles	Categorical and Holistic Thinking	Masculinity	Status focus vs. Achievement focus
Attitudes toward disclosure	Straight and Curved Logic	Context (Hall)	Crisis orientation vs. Noncrisis orientation
Approaches to knowing	Achieved and Ascribed Status		Concealment of vulnerability vs. Willingness to expose vulnerability
	Guilt and Shame		

I find Sherwood Lingenfelter's proposal of a parallel between cultural variability, human personality and human brain function to be helpful. It results in the possibility of seeing culture as a series of contrasting traits. Hofstede and Hall's cultural dimensions (less "Masculinity") seem to summarize all the possible cultural variations. Lingenfelter's list of cultural values, especially the first four, is also helpful. Therefore, I propose to focus on four cultural variations:

Individualism	Collectivism
Low Power Distance	High Power Distance
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	High Uncertainty Avoidance
Low Context	High Context

I will also focus on four pairs of contrasting cultural values:

Time as Linear	Time as Event
Task Orientation	Relationship Orientation
Dichotomistic Thinking	Holistic Thinking
Achievement Focus	Status Focus

A more specific exploration of these contrasting pairs of cultural variations follows.

Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism versus collectivism describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity in which he or she lives. In some ways this cultural variability summarizes the others and is often seen as the most fundamental of all.

In an individualistic culture the emphasis is placed on the goals of the individual. Personal identity is defined autonomously, without reference to others. The group exists to meet the needs of the individual. Members of an individualistic culture value personal initiative and achievement. Independence and self-reliance are stressed. The same standards are applied to all. As a result there tends to be more emotional distance between the self and others in a relationship.

A large part of the world's people think of themselves primarily in terms of the group they belong to. There are no autonomous individuals. They value group harmony and group traditions. "One acts in accordance with the expectations of the group. One's own desires are subordinated to those of the group. One draws one's identity from the community and fulfills its experiences."²⁷ They apply different standards to people, depending on whether they are a part of the in-group or an out-group. They emphasize the beliefs of the group and cooperation within the group.

An important aspect of collectivistic cultures is the idea of kinship systems and groups. "A kinship system consists of the rules of a society which determine who is related to whom and in what way. These rules give rise to kinship categories—the sets of

²⁷ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections*, 136.

people who share the same relationship to ego.”²⁸ A kinship group begins on the level of family but ultimately extends to the entire in-group.

Collectivists have a definite sense of the difference between one’s in-group and out-groups.

In collectivist cultures, the in-group goals have primacy over individual goals. In collectivist cultures, behavior is regulated largely by in-group norms. In-group fate, in-group achievement, and interdependence within the in-group are emphasized by collectivists. The self is defined as an appendage of the in-group in collectivist cultures.²⁹

Low and High Power Distance

Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of a culture accept the fact that power is distributed unequally. That inequality can occur in areas such as prestige, wealth and power.

Low power distance cultures structure life in an egalitarian manner. They see everyone as equals with equal rights. They do not necessarily accept the ideas or instructions of a “superior” at face value.

People from a high power distance culture have greater acceptance for “inequalities” in society. Life is structured according to a strict hierarchy, and everyone knows their place. They do not question their superiors’ orders and expect to do what they are told to do.

²⁸ Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 223.

²⁹ Triandis, “Theoretical Concepts That Are Applicable to the Analysis of Ethnocentrism,” 40, 41.

Low and High Uncertainty Avoidance

“The tolerance for uncertainty varies considerably among people. Extreme uncertainty creates intolerable anxiety, and human society has developed ways to cope with the inherent uncertainty of our living.”³⁰ A low uncertainty avoidance culture tends to be more accepting of ambiguity. People accept dissent and take risks more readily. They easily operate on a trial and error basis, learning and improving as they go. What is different is interesting; change is positive; new is often better.

On the other hand, people from high uncertainty avoidance cultures have a lower tolerance for ambiguity, often expressed as a greater need for rules and less tolerance for people with deviant opinions or behavior. Individuals prefer avoiding competition and conflict whenever possible. They value consensus, politeness and humility. What is different is dangerous; change is threatening; new is not necessarily better. Tradition is the guide.

Low and High Context

The cultural context in which communication takes place varies from culture to culture. A low context message focuses on the explicit verbal content. For a low context culture the content of the message is more important than the context. Communication tends to be direct and obvious, avoiding unnecessary subtleties. The speaker is responsible to make his or her message clear.

³⁰ Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, 110, 11.

In a high context culture the message takes on meaning according to the specific context of the message. “It appears that all cultures arrange their members and relationships along the context scale, and one of the great communication strategies, whether addressing a single person or an entire group, is to ascertain the correct level of contexting of one’s communication.”³¹ The context of an event is as important as the event itself in a high context culture.

A high context culture makes certain assumptions: (1) “That it is always possible that there is another message ‘between the lines’ of communication.” Hidden messages are contained in the context of the message. (2) “The second assumption . . . is that the listener is responsible for the communication . . . that it is the listener’s responsibility to understand.”³² It is also assumed that the listener has the communication skills needed to listen between the lines.

Time as Linear and Event

For some, time is primarily a matter of seconds, minutes and hours. These cultures view time as a commodity to be used. They value being on time, not wasting time, finding time, making time, saving time, and not losing time. Other cultures view time seasonally. Time is a series of events. Time is elastic and is valued according to the quality of those events.

This cultural difference is oftentimes referred to as “monochronic” and “polychronic” time. Monochronic time is thought of quantitatively and is limited.

³¹ Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York, NY: Anchor Press, 1976), 61.

³² Lane, *Crossing Cultures*, 52.

Polychronic time is thought of qualitatively and is unlimited. Monochronic time is used efficiently; time is the given, people are the variable. Polychronic time is changeable depending on the people and circumstances.

Task and Relationship Orientation

It is possible to observe task-oriented cultures that place a high priority on achieving goals and getting the job done. Their identity as people tends to be based on the ability to perform. Relationships are built around shared jobs.

Other cultures prioritize relationships that are personal and nurturing. They value talking, relating, interacting, and just being together. Their highest priority is to establish and maintain personal relationships. Relationships are built around the real connections between people. Failure to accomplish a task is less important than the quality of a relationship.

In *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, Sherwood Lingenfelter contrasts the two approaches to time this way:³³

Time Orientation	Event Orientation
Concern for punctuality and amount of time expended	Concern for details of the event, regardless of time required
Careful allocation of time to achieve the maximum within set limits	Exhaustive consideration of a problem until resolved
Tightly scheduled, goal-directed activities	A 'let come what may' outlook not tied to any precise schedule
Rewards offered as incentives for efficient use of time	Stress on completing the event as a reward in itself
Emphasis on dates and history	Emphasis on present experience rather than the past or future

³³ Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*, 42.

Dichotomistic and Holistic Thinking

Some cultures see life in black and white. They think two-dimensionally. Everything is either/or, good or bad, right or wrong. They value categories and specialization. They value personal ownership, personal rights and personal privacy.

Much of the world sees life holistically. They think three-dimensionally and relationally. They see life as a tapestry with interrelated colors and threads. They value a shared life in community.

Sherwood Lingenfelter clearly delineates the difference between these two ways of thinking:

Dichotomy is that pattern of segmental thinking that exhibits great concern about the particulars of any problem or situation, with a tendency to reduce each to right and wrong options. This type of thinking examines and sorts the details, and reasons on the basis of perceived ordered relationships between them. Holism is that pattern of thinking in which particulars are not reasoned on the basis of perceived relationships within the whole.³⁴

Achievement and Status Focus

Recognition through achievement and hard work is valued in some cultures. This describes an achievement-focused culture where a person's sense of self-worth is based on performance. Success is the measure of their worth. People in such a culture tend to scoff at titles and public rituals of recognition. All that matters is what a person has actually accomplished.

Such things as parentage, age and birth order determine status in other cultures. These status-focused cultures give respect to individuals based on their social position

³⁴ Ibid., 55.

and rank. Those individuals find a sense of self-worth from faithfully functioning within their assigned role. They also prefer the company of their “equals” within their in-group.

Achievement Focused	Status Focused
Personal identity is determined by one’s achievements	Personal identity is determined by formal credentials of birth and rank
The amount of respect one receives varies with one’s accomplishments and failures; attention focuses on personal performance	The amount of respect one receives is permanently fixed; attention focuses on those with high social status in spite of any personal failings they have
The individual is extremely self-critical and makes sacrifices in order to accomplish ever greater deeds	The individual is expected to play his or her role and to sacrifice to attain higher rank
People associate with those of equal accomplishments regardless of background	People associate only with their social equals

Worldview

An important aspect of culture is the worldview of that culture. Worldview refers to the way people in a culture perceive the world around them. Worldview reveals the fundamental assumptions about reality found in a culture. “Worldview is the culturally agreed upon perception of reality, in other words, worldview bridges the gap between objective reality and a person’s perception of it. Worldview reflects ‘how’ a culture thinks.”³⁵

People in some cultures assume that reality is primarily external to them and made up largely of lifeless matter. Other people view reality as primarily internal and spiritual. Their worldview enables a culture to view the world in a coherent manner.

The cultural anthropologist Paul Hiebert defines five functions of worldview: (1) “Worldview provides us with cognitive foundations on which to build our systems of

³⁵ Lane, *Crossing Cultures*, 106.

explanation, supply rational justification for belief in these systems.” Our ability to make sense out of life depends on our worldview. (2) “Worldview gives us emotional security.” The ability to make sense out of life provides a sense of security in a dangerous, insecure world. (3) “Worldview validates our deepest cultural norms, which we use to evaluate our experiences and choose courses of action.” It gives us a specific sense of right and wrong and a basis for making judgments. (4) “Worldview integrates our culture. It organizes our ideas, feelings, and values into a single overall design.” It provides us with a unified view of reality, reinforcing our personal convictions. (5) “Worldview monitors culture change.”³⁶ It gives us a basis for accepting some changes and rejecting others.

Perhaps more than any other aspect of culture and cultural variability, worldview gets at the core of a culture. In defining how a group sees life and reality it becomes the basis for values and judgments, attitudes and behaviors in a society.

Cultural Profiles

There is a vast range of differences between cultures. The range of difference may be slight, as between various western European cultures, or great. The largest amount of cultural distance may possibly be between that of the U.S.A. and Eastern Asian cultures. In general, the two sides of the cultural variabilities observed above can be applied to these two cultures:

³⁶ Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, 48.

U.S.A. Culture	East Asian Cultures
Individualistic	Collectivistic
Low Power Distance	High Power Distance
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	High Uncertainty Avoidance
Low Context	High Context
Time As Linear	Time As Event
Task Orientation	Relationship Orientation
Dichotomistic Thinking	Holistic Thinking
Achievement Focus	Status Focus

It must also be remembered that cultural profiles can lead to more sophisticated stereotypes. Every culture group includes intragroup diversity and individual differences. Differences can be observed between rural and urban groups, and between poor/working class and professional/middle class groups. Culture also changes from generation to generation. And of course, there are always individual differences and exceptions. Nevertheless, these general profiles are a helpful place to begin the task of cross-cultural communication.

U.S.A. Culture

If the development of multicultural skills begins with an honest understanding of one's own cultural context, the faculty on an American Christian college campus will need to be honest about the distinctives of U.S.A. culture. Ethnocentric attitudes blind individuals to the fact that much of what they think, say and do is culturally defined; they are not "right" as opposed to others' "wrong" ways of thinking, saying and doing. Greater cultural sensitivity will result in greater openness and facility in cross-cultural communication and relationships.

Before profiling U.S.A. culture (also referred to as American culture below), it must be remembered that most profiles are based on observations of middle class Anglo-

American groups. There are observable differences with minority groups within American culture. In addition, postmodern cultural trends are changing the landscape in the twenty-first century.

Members of American culture assume a real, objective reality outside of themselves. The world is rational and orderly and operates according to natural laws. The world can be observed and understood through rational processes. Because the world is real, U.S.A. culture takes history seriously. A clear distinction is made between myth and historical fact.

American culture takes a problem-solving approach to understanding the world. Reality can be sorted into carefully defined categories. The world is basically mechanistic and can be understood and manipulated. As a result, well-informed individuals can control their own destiny.

The most fundamental theme of U.S.A. culture is that the individual person is the basic building block of society. Each person is an autonomous individual with an identity separate from the rest of society. Each individual can make his or her own choices irrespective of the choices of others. Personal rights and the need to stand up for one's rights are highly valued.

American culture believes in the essential dignity of each individual. All human beings are viewed as equal. Interpersonal relationships are horizontal, conducted between autonomous individuals.

U.S.A. culture places a high value on time. It is a scarce commodity that should be saved and not wasted. Above all, time is money; work and wages are tied to it. In

When Cultures Collide, British author Richard Lewis speculated about the American pace of life:

The pace of American life is different from that of other cultures. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries vast tracts of open, unclaimed land to the west beckoned with some urgency to poorer settlers and new arrivals. For decades it was first come, first served. One might have assumed that with the majority of goals attained and the visible advent of the affluent society, the frenzied tempo of life would have slackened. It has not.³⁷

Geert Hofstede developed an Index for each of his cultural variabilities, i.e. a Power Distance Index (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), Individualism Index (IDV), and a Masculinity Index (MAS).³⁸ These indexes were based on extensive surveys of as many as 112 separate cultures. Here is how the U.S.A. culture scored:

- PDI (40 out of 94)
- UAI (46 out of 112)
- IDV (91 out of 91)
- MAS (62 out of 95)

In other words, U.S.A. culture ranked number one in the world for its rate of individualism.

East Asian Cultures

Asian cultures are divided into three groups: East Asians, Southeast Asians, and Southern Asians. East Asian cultures include the Chinese, Japanese and Korean. My focus will be specifically on East Asian cultures (which I will sometimes simply refer to as Asian).

³⁷ Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide: Managing Successfully Across Cultures* (London, UK: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1996), 165, 66.

³⁸ Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences*, 65.

There is considerable commonality between the various East Asian cultures. For all East Asian cultures the family is central. With the family at the center one's kinship group extends out to encompass other important relationships.

Traditional values are strongly ingrained from birth and become the basis for decision-making and behavior. The Asian "situational orientation" places an emphasis upon the total situation rather than the individual. The behavior or action for a situation will be determined according to what is best for all in the situation, even if it is not to the individual's benefit.

Members of East Asian cultures function according to their defined role. "The role, not the self, determines the behavior in most East Asian cultures. Personal choices, therefore, are based on prescribed roles."³⁹

People in East Asian cultures believe that the expression of negative emotions can damage a relationship and therefore ought to be avoided. Asians will do whatever is necessary to avoid bringing shame into a relationship. Humility and honesty is valued, and it is not acceptable to show public preference or pride in one's self or one's family.

East Asian cultures are "shame-based" as opposed to "guilt based." They are influenced by the perceptions of others, creating the possibility of shame. This results in the cultural value of "face" and "facework." Face has to do with one's social honor and prestige. It is the basis for individual self-respect. Face is not only asked for, it must also be given. "Saving face" involves not causing another to feel shame, maintaining their honor.

³⁹ Ge Gao, "Self and Other: A Chinese Perspective on Interpersonal Relationships," in *Communication in Personal Relationships Across Cultures*, ed. William B. Gudykunst, Stella Ting-Toomey and Tsukasa Nishida (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 89.

In a shame culture the worst thing one person can do is cause another to be shamed, lose face or be dishonored. It is considered an even greater tragedy if this shaming is done in public. To be shamed or lose face before one's family, friends or esteemed colleagues is to be avoided at all costs.⁴⁰

Loss of face can happen in a variety of ways. A person can dishonor himself by not living up to certain goals or standards, or if expectations are not fulfilled. One might lose face by the actions of a family member. It is possible to cause another to lose face by assigning them blame for a problem or difficulty. One can cause an entire group to lose face by causing a minority to be out of harmony with the majority.

Asian philosophy centers on concepts of harmony and balance. This results in the cultural value of moderation and inconspicuousness.

Chinese Culture

The Chinese worldview reflects the religious heritage of Buddhism, i.e. "monism." Buddhist monism sees reality in unique ways: (1) God is impersonal, and the world of experience is an illusion—enlightenment comes by looking inward. (2) Reality emanates from some form of "Supernature" or "Absolute" which permeates the whole and constitutes the "really Real." (3) All of nature is an emanation of this Absolute reality. (4) Individual human beings are also temporary emanations of the Absolute and will ultimately return to it. Every person's goal is union with the Absolute, or Nirvana. (5) Time is cyclical, made up of an endless series of existences or "transmigrations," with the goal of breaking out of a pattern of "bad karma" to union with the Absolute.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict*, 54.

⁴¹ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 244-46.

The philosophy of Lao Tzu proposed a path, way or “Tao,” that embodies the harmony between two opposites, “Yin,” the dark side, the breath that formed the earth, and “Yang,” the light side, the breath that formed the heavens. The Tao is a power that envelops, surrounds and flows through all things. The Tao regulates natural processes and nourishes balance in the universe. Taoism teaches the art of *wu wei*, or letting nature take its course. Lao Tzu’s advice was to “Be still like a mountain and flow like a great river.”⁴²

Of even greater significance are the teachings of Confucianism. The philosophy of K’ung Fu Tzu (Confucius) can be summarized under three headings: (1) Being (*Ren*), benevolence, charity, kindness and love; (2) Doing (*Yi*), right conduct, morality, duty to one’s neighbor; and (3) Ends (*Li*), profit, gain, and advantage. This philosophy would eventually become the official moral and political doctrine of Chinese society.⁴³

The basic teaching of Confucius can be summarized as:

- The observance of the unequal relationships.
- The family is a prototype of all social organizations. We are members of a group, not individuals.
- One must behave in a virtuous manner towards others. Everybody’s “face” must be maintained.
- Education and hard work must be prized.
- One should be moderate in all things. Save, stay calm, avoid extremes, shun indulgence.⁴⁴

⁴² B.A. Robinson, “Taoism,” Ontario Consultants On Religious Tolerance [article online]; available from <http://www.religioustolerance.org/taoism.htm>; Internet; accessed 24 November 2003.

⁴³ Kelley L. Ross, “Confucius,” The Proceedings of the Friesian School, Fourth Series [article online]; available from <http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm>; Internet; accessed 24 November 2003.

⁴⁴ Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*, 382.

The resultant combination of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism gave rise to a unique Chinese worldview, summarized by David Hesselgrave:

1. Supernature is composed of a variety of deities, devils, and spirits. Conceived of in more impersonal terms, *Ti'en*, or the will of heaven, and the *Tao*, or all-pervasive principle, are of greatest importance.
2. Nature is the product of the *Tao* acting through the principles of *Yin* and *Yang*. It is the sphere in which the *Tao* continues to operate through a harmonization of these principles and therefore provides both the context of and configuration for harmonious living. Specially valued is the “good earth” of China itself.
3. People are by nature good and can be kept that way by being in touch with the *Tao* and by education. Every person has a proper station in society and should conduct himself and relate to others accordingly. A person’s spirit outlives his body. Filial piety extends beyond the grave to proper care of the ancestral spirits.
4. The Chinese look back, not forward, to the Golden Age of China. The spirits of the dead join the ancestors. Therefore history past is extremely important.⁴⁵

Confucius taught that there are five basic relationships that describe a harmonious society: (1) Emperor-subject (the relation of righteousness), (2) Father-son (the relation of closeness), (3) Husband-wife (the relation of distinction), (4) Elder-younger (the relation of order), and (5) Friend-friend (the relation of faithfulness). The central relationships are found in the family, and since the family is the basis of the society, one relates to the rest of the world in much the same way.

Chinese tradition defines women as subordinate to men. In Chinese Taoist cosmology, the male element, Yang, is representative of positive and superior elements, while the female element, Yin, represents the negative and inferior. The principles taught by Confucius serve to reinforce this understanding of gender.

Confucian doctrine lists three obediences for women: to the father when yet unmarried, to the husband when married, and to the sons when widowed. It also defines four virtues for women: she knew her place, she did not talk too much,

⁴⁵ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 263, 64.

she would adorn herself to please the opposite sex, and she would willingly do all the chores in the home.⁴⁶

The Chinese summarize their concept of “face” with the term *mien-tzu*. This concept is central to Chinese social life. “*Mien-tzu* reflects one’s reputation achieved and maintained through the scrutiny of others, with the standard of acknowledgement reflecting not only social values, but moral values as well. To put it simply, *mien-tzu* can be seen as a measure of the recognition accorded by society.”⁴⁷ Chinese *mien-tzu* has two sides: the individual claims *mien-tzu* from the society and *mien-tzu* is defined by the social interaction between people in society. The extent to which one can claim *mien-tzu* depends on who one is communicating with and their position in society.

Mien-tzu can be thought of as a social commodity. “The amount of *mien-tzu* one can claim in front of others is determined by the recognition accorded by others. Since *mien-tzu* is a quality claimed for oneself, it becomes a front, a mask that one uses to augment and signify personal social prestige.”⁴⁸ Individual members of a group and the groups they belong to share *mien-tzu*. Members of the family of an individual with *mien-tzu* share in the achievements of the individual. “Precisely because of the involvement of others, it is possible for social actors to maneuver *mien-tzu* in interpersonal encounters. Since issues of *mien-tzu* cannot be avoided, they must be negotiated between interactants

⁴⁶ Breckenridge and Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God?* 182.

⁴⁷ Hui-Ching Chang and G. Richard Holt, “A Chinese Perspective on Face As Inter-Relational Concern,” in *The Challenge of Facework*, ed. Ting-Toomey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 99.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.

themselves.”⁴⁹ If the *mien-tzu* of another is not appropriately handled, their relationship will be in jeopardy.

Ge Gao describes three functions of Chinese facework. (1) “Engaging in appropriate behavior is of concern to most Chinese because inappropriate behavior often results in others’ negative remarks and thus brings loss of face.” The need for face tends to regulate behavior in Chinese culture. (2) “One’s concern for face governs what to disclose and not to disclose in personal relationships. To avoid the threat of losing face, the Chinese will not reveal their personal or family disgrace to others.” As a result, Chinese rarely discuss matters of a personal nature. (3) “Face need is not only a personal concern but, more important, a collective concern. Face is more a concern to the family than to the person and face-losing or face-gaining acts reflect both on persons themselves and on their families.”⁵⁰

A related concept is *guanxi*, or interpersonal obligations. “*Guanxi*, generally translated as ‘connections’ or ‘relations,’ is central to an understanding of Chinese relationships.”⁵¹ *Guanxi* points out the surpassing value of an integrated network of interpersonal relationships in Chinese society. In many ways, understanding of one’s place in one’s kinship group and in the society as a whole defines Chinese culture.⁵²

Social *guanxi* can be acquired passively, by simply being a member of the in-group. Or *guanxi* can be acquired actively, by doing favors for people.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 102.

⁵⁰ Gao, “Self and Other: A Chinese Perspective on Interpersonal Relationships,” 95, 96.

⁵¹ Mary Margaret Wang, et al., *Turning Bricks Into Jade: Critical Incidents for Mutual Understanding Among Chinese and Americans* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 2000), 31.

⁵² Chang and Holt, “A Chinese Perspective on Face As Inter-Relational Concern,” 106.

It is this second method of establishing *guanxi* that frequently gets Westerners into trouble. Accepting favors, especially large, important favors, puts one in “*guanxi* debt” to the person who grants the favors. It is generally advisable to return favors, in kind, as quickly as possible, to avoid building up *guanxi* debt that may be called in at a very inconvenient time.⁵³

When faced with a problem, a North American might ask, “What can I do to accomplish what I need.” The first response of the Chinese might instead be, “Who do I know that can help me accomplish this?”

“The obligations to those within the collective are arguably the most powerful obligations a Chinese person has. They override laws, previous commitments to people outside the collective, and, in some cases, ‘the greater good.’”⁵⁴ Businesses in mainland China have a special department for young employees whose parents live in another town. That department functions *in loco parentis* for the young person. This would be particularly true in the case of illness, when the department head would be expected to take care of the ill young person.

“Self” in the Confucian sense is defined by one’s relationships. A Chinese self is an interdependent self.

An individual is not a complete entity in the Chinese culture; an individual implies only a physical “body.” An exchange of “hearts” between two “bodies” completes a person. The self’s orientation to others’ needs, wishes, and expectations is essential to the development of the Chinese self. Consequently, the other-orientation is inseparable from the Chinese self; it permeates all indigenous concepts of Chinese interpersonal relationships.⁵⁵

⁵³ Wang, et al., *Turning Bricks Into Jade*, 32.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁵ Gao, “Self and Other: A Chinese Perspective on Interpersonal Relationships,” 83.

The importance of the “other” in defining an interdependent self determines cultural norms, including modesty, humility, social reserve and formality. “To be modest is to treat oneself strictly and others leniently. Values such as tolerance of others, and solidarity with others further demonstrate the importance of the ‘other’ in one’s relational development.”⁵⁶

The Chinese concept of *fei* defines the development of interpersonal relationships and compares it to a stone cast into the water, generating ripples moving outward from the center. “The innermost ripples represent those closest to the social actor, with different degrees of the ripple effect representing different degrees of intimacy and obligation.”⁵⁷ Western cultural anthropologists have customarily seen Westerners as having an “I” orientation and Easterners as having a “we” orientation. Instead, *fei* defines an “I-in-we” orientation. “Contrary to the accepted classification of Chinese society as ‘collectivist,’ *fei*’s analogy implies that the individual is the self-created center of an ever-expanding set of relationship ‘circles.’”⁵⁸

In their relationships with others, Chinese make clear distinctions between their in-group and the out-groups. Some insiders, such as parents, siblings and colleagues, are automatic. Other insiders are selected. Relationships with insiders are to be governed by five qualities. They are to be nice, trustworthy, caring, helpful and empathetic.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁷ Chang and Holt, “A Chinese Perspective on Face As Inter-Relational Concern,” 106.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Gao, “Self and Other: A Chinese Perspective on Interpersonal Relationships,” 87.

Moral standards are also determined by relationships. “In the Chinese culture, moral judgments are not only cognitively but affectively based. Moral standards tend to vary from one relationship to another.”⁶⁰

The amount of emotional expression allowed in Chinese culture varies from situation to situation. For instance, young girls are instructed not to show emotion too readily.

In “Required Studies For Women” we find such warnings as the following: “Do not show your unhappiness easily and do not smile easily”; also, “Do not let your teeth be seen when you smile,” that is, your smile must be so circumspect that the teeth do not show. On the other hand, there are many occasions on which the emotion of grief has to be displayed. One of the Chinese classics is “The Book of Rites,” a considerable portion of which is devoted to the technique of the mourning ceremonial, with elaborate instructions as to just what procedure should be followed in order that the expression of the grief may be socially acceptable.⁶¹

In 1987 the Chinese Culture Connection conducted the Chinese Value Survey. Their report included a list of the top four values in Chinese culture: (1) Filial piety (obedience to parents, respect for parents, honoring of ancestors), (2) Industry (hard work), (3) Tolerance for others, and (4) Harmony with others.⁶²

Japanese Culture

Much of traditional Japanese culture, like Chinese culture, is based on Confucianism. Both Buddhism and Confucianism arrived on the islands of Japan in the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Otto Klineberg, “Emotional Expression in Chinese Literature,” in *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, ed. Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1972), 190.

⁶² James W. Neuliep, *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 49.

sixth century AD. All of the features of Confucian philosophy and their affect on culture observed of the Chinese also apply to the Japanese, with a few differences.

The Japanese are religious pluralists, and they often engage in more than one religion—or in a homegrown religion. The traditional religion of Japan is Shinto. This is an ancient, essentially animistic religion that worships a great variety of nature gods and goddesses. Ancestor worship and the emperor cult are extensions of traditional Shinto.

Japanese culture prescribes a set of social behaviors known as the “*Enryo* Syndrome.”⁶³ These behaviors include showing restraint and reserve in social situations. It also prescribes levels of politeness within levels of power and authority.

The Japanese concept of face is contained in the word *kao*. It refers to a person’s name, status, and reputation.⁶⁴ It is the appearance one presents to another. The Japanese concept of face contributes directly to the use of politeness. In order to preserve another’s face, circumspect responses to others are required. “When communicators are not in an intimate relationship, when they differ in power, and/or when they make a high face-threat request, they perceive a serious face-threat and lose face.”⁶⁵

Japanese society is marked by great interdependence between all members of a group with an abundance of social and moral obligations, both vertically and horizontally. “Packed together in large numbers in big cities they developed complex social skills which led to the phenomenon known as the ‘web society.’”⁶⁶ Japanese

⁶³ Breckenridge and Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God?* 169.

⁶⁴ Seiichi Morisaki and William B. Gudykunst, “Face in Japan and the United States,” in *The Challenge of Facework*, ed. Ting-Toomey (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 49.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶⁶ Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*, 400.

children are encouraged from birth to be completely dependent on those close to them and develop a keen sense of interdependence that stays with them for life.

Japanese cultural values relate to the strict hierarchical structure of their society. They include such things as: acknowledgement of dependency on others in their group, ascribed obligation according to their role in the group, loyalty to one's superior, modesty in the presence of a superior, being less visible in public through conformity, and a high work, high achievement orientation.

The Japanese go to great lengths to be polite. This is reflected in the Japanese language. For instance, verbs are impersonal, honorific terms are used to enhance politeness, long indirect pauses precede the main statement, etc.

In reporting on Japanese social patterns, Tsukasa Nishida observes four distinctives of Japanese culture:

First, value is placed on . . . who you are in relation to the people involved. Second, group membership is enforced. Emotional participation . . . one-to-one relationships, and total involvement in the group are the norm. Third, intragroup communication is effective, but intergroup communication is not. There is a clear distinction between ingroup and outgroup, and communication is local and tangible. Fourth, a strong seniority system is based on birth date and one's length of services. In this respect, equal ability among people is assumed.⁶⁷

International businesses have been forced to deal with, and therefore come to an understanding of, Japanese culture. In his article, "How to Negotiate in Japan," Howard Van Zandt lists distinctive behavioral characteristics of Japanese businessmen and Japanese culture in general:

⁶⁷ Tsukasa Nishida, "Communication in Personal Relationships in Japan," in *Communication in Personal Relationships Across Cultures*, ed. William B. Gudykunst, Stella Ting-Toomey and Tsukasa Nishida (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 111.

1. Emotional Sensitivity. The Japanese possess a greater emotional sensitivity than do we Americans. The sons of Nippon appreciate it when foreigners show emotional sensitivity, too.
2. Hiding of Emotions. Although personal feelings play a significant role in Japanese behavior, a stranger from overseas may never realize it.
3. Power Plays. Japanese dislike the bold use of power and try to avoid situations where this takes place.
4. *Amaeru* and Paternalism. *Amaeru* may be defined as a longing to be looked after and protected. This trait is one of the forces that have led to the lifetime employment system so widely followed.
5. Group Spirit. The Japanese prefer to work as members of groups rather than individually.
6. *Ringi* Process. *Ringi* is based on the principle that decisions will be made by groups, in accordance with a free consensus.
7. Special Interests. In Japan, as in other Oriental countries, “face” is a factor. Sometimes an organization will decide on a certain course, not because of economic or political reasons, but in order to save face for some important person.
8. Avoidance of “No.” Foreigners long resident in Japan learn to recognize cues which mean “no.” For example, if, when pressed for an answer, a Japanese draws breath through his teeth and says “sah” (it has no meaning), or says, “it is very difficult,” the chances are strong he means “no.”
9. Value of Friendship. Friends are often called on in Japan to give help. The more good friends a man has, the more secure he feels.
10. No Arguments, Please. Among the characteristics that confound visitors when negotiating is the Japanese reluctance to enter into arguments. He just remains quiet.⁶⁸

In *When Cultures Collide*, Richard Lewis gives advice to western businesses doing business in Japan. He includes a chart of common misunderstandings that that occur in Japan.⁶⁹ Here are some examples:

⁶⁸ Howard F. Van Zandt, “How to Negotiate in Japan,” in *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, ed. Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1972), 267-72.

⁶⁹ Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*, 410.

Japanese as seen by others	
Appearance	Reality
They are aloof.	Extreme shyness makes it difficult for them to initiate conversation.
They are short on words.	True. Japanese distrust words. Also they may have poor command of the language you speak.
They deafen you with silence.	Silence shows respect for the speaker.
They often look glum.	In Japan, happiness hides behind a straight face.
When they smile, they don't look sincere.	Japanese often smile to make you feel comfortable. You should be thankful—if they don't like you a smile is still better than a scowl.
They say “yes” when they mean “no.”	They don't like to offend you by showing open disagreement or refusal.
We can never tell what they're really thinking.	By generally keeping a straight face, Japanese are rather impassive. They are not trying to deceive you.
They never look you right in the eye.	Japanese are taught that it is rude to stare.

James and Lillian Breckenridge summarized the differences between American and Japanese culture this way:⁷⁰

American Culture	Japanese Culture
Individuality	Collectivity
Will, freedom	Duty, obligation
Self, egalitarianism, independence	Hierarchical orders, dependency
Aggressive, assertive	Shameful to “show off”

These differences between Japanese and the U.S. cultures are very similar to those seen between the U.S. and Chinese. However, as an “island culture,” Japan is a more closed culture than China with more rigid cultural rules concerning roles, status, communication, etc. Cross-cultural communication and relationships with someone from

⁷⁰ Breckenridge and Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God?* 191.

Japan can be very difficult for an American, but still possible with patience and commitment.

Korean Culture

Korean culture is also rooted in the philosophy of Confucius. This especially affects the emphasis placed on relationships in Korean culture. According to Confucian doctrine human dignity can only be achieved through relations to other human beings. Koreans value social relationships more than anything else.

Koreans often forego their own personal interests and the welfare of the groups they belong to for the sake of their interpersonal relationships. Persons are judged based upon their abilities to maintain successful relationships. Having good relationships with others is considered to reflect one's character as well as competence.⁷¹

Koreans take status and protocol even more seriously than the Chinese or Japanese. Face pervades every aspect of Korean culture. "If you fail to give a Korean the respect due to his rank or status, he will withdraw and avoid you in the future. If you fail to observe the basic rules of social exchange in Korea, you become an 'unperson' and Koreans will henceforth have no concern for your welfare."⁷²

Korean relationships are governed by *jung*. While love is a feeling of affection for someone, *jung* is broader and deeper.

Jung grows gradually through a long history of a relationship. *Jung* requires a long history of interaction, mutual experiences, and mutual interdependence. Because *jung* takes a long time to become established, it does not easily fade

⁷¹ Tae-Seop Lim and Soo Hyang Choi, "Interpersonal Relationships in Korea," in *Communication in Personal Relationships Across Cultures*, ed. William B. Gudykunst, Stella Ting-Toomey and Tsukasa Nishida (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996), 122.

⁷² Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*, 398.

away. Whereas love is a volatile emotion and makes a relationship intense, *jung* is a very solid emotion and makes a relationship stable.⁷³

Touching another person in Korea is considered a personal affront. It has been observed that they have a high need for personal space. Relationships with Koreans must keep this observation in mind to avoid unnecessary offense.

A distinctive aspect of Korean culture is the philosophy of *palzza*. This idea refers to the fate by which the life of an individual unfolds. Korean *palzza* is related to an astrological concept called *saju*. The astrological data of one's birth is the basis for *palzza*. Physical features, including the shape one's face and hands, can also indicate one's *palzza*. "A person with good *palzza* leads a comfortable life without much effort on his or her part; a person with rough *palzza* will have things go wrong even when they are guaranteed to go right. *Palzza* . . . may help Koreans to accept hardship, personal tragedy and misfortune."⁷⁴

As with Japanese culture, Korean culture, while similar to Chinese, is more closed, more rigid and more formal, with more social rules to keep in mind.

Cross-cultural Communication

Communication and culture influence each other. The culture from which individuals come affects the way they communicate, and the way individuals communicate can change the culture. Cultural variability has a direct effect on patterns of communication. The better we interpret culture the fewer misunderstandings and

⁷³ Lim and Choi, "Interpersonal Relationships in Korea," 132-34.

⁷⁴ Dosheen Toarmino and Chi-Ah Chun, "Issues and Strategies in Counseling Korean Americans," in *Multicultural Issues in Counseling*, ed. Coutland C. Lee (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling

conflicts we will have in communication, leading to the possibility of building authentic relationships.

Communication Variables

A good place to start is an examination of communication variables. It is at the point of these variables that cross-cultural communication occurs effectively or is blocked. LeRay Barna lists five variables: (1) Language, including vocabulary, syntax, idioms, slang, etc. Verbal language has a context, which may or may not alter the meaning of the words being used. (2) Nonverbal communication, including gestures, postures, vocalizations, touch, etc. Nonverbal communication expresses a variety of “meta-messages” that are understood and interpreted culturally. (3) Preconceptions and stereotypes, personal and cultural prejudices, filter any attempt at communication. (4) Personal judgment, the tendency to evaluate, to approve or disapprove. Everyone interprets communication through their own value system. (5) Various levels of discomfort and anxiety within the cross-cultural context.⁷⁵

Of these various communication variables perhaps the most obvious and the most important are verbal and non-verbal communication. Both must be considered if there is to be successful cross-cultural communication.

Association, 1997), 236, 37.

⁷⁵ LeRay M. Barna, “Stumbling Blocks in Interpersonal Intercultural Communications,” in *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, ed. Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1972), 241f.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication patterns are learned from an early age. They include various styles of language interaction that make it possible to function in various contexts.

What we think about and how we think about it are direct functions of our language; and what we think about and how we think about it in part determine the nature of our culture. An examination of a language's vocabulary and grammar goes a long way toward describing the distinctives of any culture.

The ultimate meaning of any word is, in fact, culturally determined. Cross-cultural communication faces the difficulty of encountering words that may have differing denotations as well as connotations. For this reason some words in a language are not completely translatable to another language.

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication includes "proxemics" or the structuring of space. Proxemics includes such things as the arrangement of furniture in a room. David Hesselgrave summarized five aspects of the use of space in communication: (1) Private and public space, i.e. the amount of space around a person that is considered private; (2) Interaction distance, the amount of personal space needed in face-to-face communication; (3) Positioning, the importance of the location of objects and people in a room; (4) Zones of participation, the relationship between room size and the number of people and objects

in the room; and (5) Functional distance, examining the number of interpersonal contacts in a certain size of space.⁷⁶

Body language is another aspect of non-verbal communication. This might include such things as gestures and other body movements. “To be bilingual means to know two languages of gestures as well as two languages of words.”⁷⁷

An important aspect of non-verbal communication is various touching behaviors. Some cultures are very physically expressive while others are “non-touch” cultures. An understanding of appropriate body contact from culture to culture can save untold cross-communicational conflicts.

Eye movement is another form of non-verbal communication. Eye contact is important in some cultures while in others individuals never look at each other.

Dimensions of Cross-cultural Communication

In *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, David Hesselgrave lists seven dimensions of cross-cultural communication. These dimensions constitute a cultural grid through which all messages must pass. In the process they leave a distinctive mark upon the message. (1) Worldviews, the ways of perceiving the world; (2) Cognitive processes, the ways of thinking about the world; (3) Linguistic forms, the ways of expressing ideas; (4) Behavioral patterns, the ways of acting in the world; (5) Social structures, the ways of interacting with others in the world; (6) Media influence, the ways of channeling the message; and (7) Motivational resources, the ways of making decisions in the world. The

⁷⁶ Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 424.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 417.

cultural distance between communicators in each of these dimensions must become smaller and smaller if effective cross-cultural communication is to take place.⁷⁸

Every communication context has levels of comprehension and influence. David Hesselgrave quotes Eugene Nida's four levels of communication comprehension: (1) A simple message is communicated but has no effect on the behavior or value system of the receptor. (2) A message is communicated that has a short-term effect on behavior but no effect on the receptor's value system. (3) A message affects both the behavior and the values of the listener. (4) A message is so completely communicated the receptor owns it as his or her own.⁷⁹ To the extent we are serious about building cross-cultural relationships, our goal is to move to a high level of communication with someone from another culture.

Challenges to Effective Cross-cultural Communication

Cultural variability creates many predictable blocks to effective cross-cultural communication. Observing communication between East and West quickly reveals fundamental differences in communication patterns. While communicators from Western cultures prefer direct speech, East Asians prefer indirect speech. Westerners are fairly quick to disclose their personal issues while those from the East are slow to do so. Western communicators are open in their emotional expressions while Asians are more

⁷⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 177, 78.

closed. American culture is informal in communicating while Asian culture is formal. There are also vast differences in the way conflicts are resolved from one culture to the other.

Direct and Indirect Speech

Members of low context cultures such as that found in the U.S.A. tend to use direct forms of speech. Their counterparts in high context cultures prefer an indirect style of speech. Direct communication involves transmitting verbal messages that clearly, plainly and simply state the speaker's intentions. Indirect communication may use speech patterns that conceal the speaker's intent out of deference or politeness.

Direct speech makes use of categorical words such as "certainly," "absolutely," or "positively." Indirect speech prefers the use of qualifiers such as "maybe," "perhaps," or "probably." Direct speech seeks to be as precise as possible and may even be "wordy" in the process. Indirect communicators prefer understatement and value silence. A Chinese proverb says, "Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know." "In high-context communication . . . silence is a communicative act rather than a mere void in communicational space."⁸⁰

William Gudykunst observed four implications of the direct versus indirect communication patterns in cultures: (1) "The dimension of direct-indirect speech style is a powerful construct to tap possible differences and similarities in verbal interaction across cultures." It could be claimed that most cross-cultural difficulties take place

⁸⁰ William B. Gudykunst and Stella Ting-Toomey, "Communication in Personal Relationships Across Cultures: An Introduction," in *Communication In Personal Relationships Across Cultures*, ed. William B. Gudykunst, Stella Ting-Toomey and Tsukasa Nishida (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications,

because of the difference between direct and indirect communication. (2) “The use of direct verbal style in individualistic, low-context cultures is, overall, for the purpose of asserting self-face need and self-face concern, while the use of indirect verbal style in collectivist, high-context cultures, is, overall, for the purpose of preserving mutual-face need and upholding interdependent group harmony.” The way the need for self-respect and public prestige is viewed has a direct bearing on communication style. (3) “While the face-negotiation perspective provides a middle-range theory that may account for the reason one verbal style variation is preferred over another style, there may exist a set of deep-rooted historical-political logics that surround the use of one predominant style over another in different cultures.” An examination of the history of a culture may reveal deep roots of preferred communication patterns. (4) “The direct-indirect verbal style is subjected to context-specific interpretations.”⁸¹ Whether or not a speaker is, in fact, using an indirect communication style, and therefore, how that communication is to be interpreted, must be examined in the light of the overall cultural context.

In *Figuring Foreigners Out*, Craig Storti provides a table of common statements people make and the different meanings applied depending on whether or not it is a direct or indirect culture.⁸² Here are some examples from his chart:

1996), 32.

⁸¹ William B. Gudykunst and Stella Ting-Toomey, *Culture and Interpersonal Communication* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1988), 104, 05.

⁸² Storti, *Figuring Foreigners Out*, 101, 02.

Technique Used by Speaker	Meaning in a Direct Culture	Meaning in an Indirect Culture
Understatement (“I have one small suggestion”)	Understatements are often taken literally; in this case, the listener would assume the speaker doesn’t feel strongly about this matter.	This is the way to express considerable interest in/concern about the matter.
Changing the subject.	The person wants to go on to a new subject.	The person does not want to talk further about the subject now under discussion.
Saying yes.	Agreement, approval, acceptance, understanding.	Mere acknowledgment that the person heard you; being polite and respectful.
Saying nothing in response to a proposal or suggestion.	The person does not object, disagree with, or have a problem with the proposal/suggestion.	The person does not approve or does not think it his or her place to comment and would rather say nothing than criticize.
Telling a story that seems to be off the subject.	The person has lost his or her train of thought, has gotten off track, is not very organized.	The person is trying to make a point indirectly, normally a “difficult” point, such as a criticism, refusal, or something disappointing.
Asking a question about or returning to a point previously agreed upon.	The person has forgotten the previous decision or that this point has already been discussed.	The person did not like the previous decision and wants to change.

Self-Disclosure

Some cultures are quick to disclose personal facts and feelings to those with whom they are communicating with, while others consider personal information essentially irrelevant. In high context cultures speakers prefer not to divulge large amounts of information. Information about the group is considered much more relevant.

In addition, some verbal styles are individual-centered while others are group- or role-centered. Self-disclosure may be about “me” or it may be about “my role” in a group context. William Gudykunst refers to this as the difference between verbal personal and verbal contextual styles of speech. “In the verbal personal style, meanings are expressed for the purpose of emphasizing ‘personhood,’ while in the verbal

contextual style, meanings are expressed for the purpose of emphasizing prescribed role relationships.”⁸³

Intimate communication is reserved for close members of the in-group only. However, as relationships become more intimate, those in high context cultures engage in increasing levels of personal self-disclosure.

Emotional Expression

As has already been seen, Asians govern their pattern of communication by a desire to maintain good relationships. That includes the amount of the expression of emotion considered appropriate. East Asians see overt emotional expression as a sign of immaturity. Striving for emotional restraint is an example of adult behavior.⁸⁴

On the other hand, Asian communicators show a greater sensitivity to the feelings of others. Indirect patterns of speech may be designed to soften the impact of a message or protect the feelings of another.

In addition, the degree of formality or informality is variable from one culture to another. “In some cultures—Japan, for example—formality in dress, in language, and in greeting another shows respect for the host or declares one’s social status.”⁸⁵

⁸³ Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, *Culture and Interpersonal Communication*, 109.

⁸⁴ Breckenridge and Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God?* 164.

⁸⁵ Tom Phillips and Bob Norsworthy, *The World At Your Door: Reaching International Students In Your Home, Church, and School* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1997), 103.

Conflict Resolution

Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. In U.S.A. culture individuals are taught to deal with conflict as it arises. In East Asian cultures conflict is considered embarrassing or demeaning; differences are worked out quietly.

East Asian cultures negotiate conflict resolution in vastly different ways than do Westerners. These conflict resolution strategies take face into account and are often indirect. Four ways have been described: (1) The use of a mediator, finding a respected third party to represent both sides. (2) Storytelling and role playing, as an indirect means of confrontation. (3) Silence, as a way to avoid saying “No,” thus saving face. (4) One down position, assuming a position of vulnerability. For example, instead of saying, “You did not do what you said, and now we are having a problem,” you would say, “Please help me with a problem I am having.”⁸⁶

In referring to communication patterns in Japan, Tsukasa Nishida describes a three-way pattern of conflict resolution. “A two-person model functions only in the abstract. Human relations occur only when we assume the third person in a real sense. In order to understand Japanese communication behaviors better, an appropriate model for the analysis of Japanese behaviors would be the three-person structure.”⁸⁷ The use of an intermediary in social contexts, and especially in conflict resolution, is an essential

⁸⁶ Lane, *Crossing Cultures*, 127-30.

⁸⁷ Nishida, “Communication in Personal Relationships in Japan,” 107, 08.

aspect of Asian culture. East Asian communication is most effective in the context of a small group, i.e. in community.

In summary, it is possible to observe patterns of variability in cross-cultural communication that correspond between West and East, between U.S.A. culture and East Asian cultures:

U.S.A. Culture	East Asian Cultures
Direct speech	Indirect speech
Quick self-disclosure	Slow self-disclosure
Open emotional expression	Closed emotional expression
Informality	Formality
Confrontational conflict resolution	Non-confrontational conflict resolution

Cross-cultural Relationships

Communication is not only the essence of culture, it is also the essence of relationships. Our goal for developing cross-cultural communication skills and sensitivity is to facilitate cross-cultural relationships. What are the relational dynamics that need to be kept in mind as we begin the journey of developing cross-cultural relationships?

Development of Relationships

Relationships develop from one level to another, from chance encounters to close personal relationships. Communication begins superficially and extends to high levels of self-disclosure. Several factors must be kept in mind in the process of developing relationships.

William Gudykunst refers to the four stages in the development of interpersonal relationships proposed by I. Altman and D. Taylor: (1) Orientation, involving only superficial aspects of one's personality and stereotypical responses; (2) Exploratory affective exchange, involving interaction at the periphery of the personalities of those in a relationship; (3) Affective exchange, involving an increasing exchange of self-disclosure in central aspects of each one's personality; and (4) Stable exchange, when each partner is able to fully disclose themselves to each other.⁸⁸ This model has relevance to any relationships, including a cross-cultural relationship.

There is only one way to develop a relationship with a person and that is, to spend quality time with him. The more each person learns about the other the more comfortable they will be in their relationship. It is important for each one to learn about each other and to learn from each other. This can be risky and even threatening to us. Sometimes the so-called truths that we hold dear can be shaken and challenged when we meet up with someone from a different culture or mindset.

One aspect of developing relationships is the degree of emotional satisfaction parties have with their communication. Does the communication process meet personal expectations? Is the communication increasingly personal? William Gudykunst has researched this particular aspect of relational development:

Our research indicates that the more communication in a relationship is personalized and synchronized, and the less difficulty people experience in communicating with their partner, the more satisfied they are with the communication in their relationship. We also found that the more partners self-disclose to each other, the more they are attracted to each other, the more

⁸⁸ Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, *Culture and Interpersonal Communication*, 186.

similarities they perceive, and the more uncertainty they reduce about each other, the more satisfied they are.⁸⁹

The degree of anxiety or uncertainty in the communication process is an important key in whether or not a personal relationship will develop. Uncertainty in communication involves an individual's ability to predict and explain the feelings, attitudes and behaviors of the other person in the relationship. The more each party excels in the use of cross-cultural communication skills, and the more personal information and insights are shared, the more certain each will be of their relationship.

The way a certain culture communicates intimacy is important to the development of relationships between those cultures. Collectivistic cultures communicate with ease within their in-group, but with difficulty outside of their in-group. The beginning of the relational development process is the most challenging for people from these cultures. The more communication persists, the more personal it is liable to become. Eventually it is possible for people from disparate cultures to develop an authentic personal relationship. If a close personal friendship develops between people of different cultures, cultural mistakes in that relationship will be less important. The degree of relational intimacy will produce greater understanding between persons, providing a cover for cross-cultural mistakes.

In order to develop a relationship with someone from another culture, several communication factors must be in place: (1) We must communicate our sincere and full acceptance of the other person, (2) We must be willing to express our personal feelings,

⁸⁹ William B. Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991), 135, 36.

and (3) We must avoid negative stereotyping of that person.⁹⁰ In this way we are communicating to our new cross-cultural friend our belief in their inherent worth as a person.

Some degree of empathy is also necessary for the development of a personal relationship. Each party must be able to perceive forms of similarity between the two persons, with an ability to adapt to each other's communication style. At the very least, this means both parties must be fluent in at least one language.

When developing a cross-cultural relationship, forming relationships with additional members of the other person's cultural group is important. Their group orientation will cause them to receive a personal message of acceptance by our acceptance of their group as a whole.

Ultimately, intimacy implies self-disclosure. The ability to effectively communicate personal thoughts and feelings will lead to a close personal relationship.

Personal cross-cultural relationships require more than cultural understanding and communication skills. A cross-cultural relational empathy is needed. The idea of relational empathy describes the process of two people from two cultures coming together to such a degree that a third shared culture results, a culture unique in some ways to the culture of either party. Relational empathy involves mutual understanding and shared meaning between the two.

Relational empathy is conceptualized not as the ability to accurately reproduce another's perceptions or emotions, but rather that which is created by two people interacting. This third culture of relational empathy and shared meaning is the outcome or harmonization of communication in which unique values, beliefs, norms, and symbols are shared by the interactants. The third culture emerges

⁹⁰ Ibid., 140, 41.

when the interactants are open and willing to communicate with others and expose themselves to new meanings.⁹¹

East-West Relationships

Insights into cross-cultural relationships must be specifically applied to relationships between East and West, and specifically, between people from East Asian cultures and the U.S.A. culture. Because the family is the central relationship in East Asian cultures, it can be difficult to make personal friends outside of that kinship group. If it is to happen at all, it will be with consistent commitment and a considerable investment of time and energy.

Emotional love is communicated in Asian cultures, not by words or emotional expression, but by acts of helping and caring. Only the consistent caring for another will communicate authentic personal friendship. “Attending and responding to others’ needs and wishes appear to provide the foundation for a viable relationship.”⁹²

When East meets West, relational partners must be sensitive to perceived differences in status. Most East Asians believe in strict, well-defined social hierarchies that directly affect communication and relational patterns. There is a clear difference as to who is and who is not a member of the in-group.

In interpersonal relationships it is common for East Asians to use an intermediary. An intermediary serves to integrate two parties. It creates a group in the most intimate sense, thus facilitating personal relationships. The involvement of an intermediary is also

⁹¹ Neuliep, *Intercultural Communication*, 287.

⁹² Gao, “Self and Other: A Chinese Perspective on Interpersonal Relationships,” 91.

an important means of saving face. A face-to-face confrontation is avoided and a third party is called on to protect the face of all parties.

Issues of face in general may cause a person from an East Asian culture to hesitate to get too close to someone else. There is a need to maintain a careful balance in a personal relationship. For instance, if a person is given a gift, the other person in the relationship has a corresponding obligation. Rejecting the gift would be rude and not responding in kind would also be rude. It would be safer to simply avoid a personal relationship all together. Therefore, when developing a relationship with an Asian, matters of face must always be kept in mind.

In *Crossing Cultures*, Patty Lane gives specific suggestions to avoid losing face:

(1) “Do not ask questions that will force the other person to admit a mistake.” Instead of asking, “Did you forget to bring in the mail?” ask “I cannot find the mail, would you help me?” (2) “Listen for the answer to yes/no questions. If the answer to a yes/no question is no, the answer may not be stated.” An indirect answer may be something more like “Not yet,” or “I don’t think so,” or “That’s fine.” Being able to identify an indirect no is very important. (3) “Pay attention to cultural etiquette. When you do not do this you lose face in their eyes.” Ignoring protocol communicates the assumption that you are above or superior to their culture. (4) “Be complimentary. Many cultures concerned with face are very effusive in their compliments and praise. It is good to reciprocate.” Be sincere. However, it is also important to know that praise may be a cultural courtesy. (5) “Show respect. This includes using titles and formality if that is their custom.” Respect shows both admiration and humility, both important in a face-oriented culture. (6) “Make an

effort to understand their positions on context, authority, activity, relationships and time.”
The effort to understand cultural variability will communicate respect for that culture.⁹³

A personal relationship with someone from an East Asian culture is possible. An important Confucian principle is faithfulness to relationships. Loyalty to a friend is very important. When a personal relationship is established, the new friend becomes a member of an Asian’s kinship group; they become “family.”

Conclusion

In this chapter we explored the cross-cultural aspects of relationships. We examined the reality of living in a pluralistic world and the need to develop multicultural sensitivities. Ethnocentrism seems to be a more natural human response than cultural pluralism. However, a sincere commitment to the proposition of cross-cultural relationships, especially on the part of Christians, can provide sufficient motivation to learn the skills that make multiculturalism possible.

We explored the world of culture and cultural variability. We learned that culture is much like corporate personality with accompanying patterns and preferences. The differences between “individualism” and “collectivism” seem to summarize those differences. This was followed by a specific focus on East Asian cultures, contrasting the cultural variability of U.S.A. culture and East Asian cultures. In terms of cultural variability, East Asian culture and U.S.A. culture are poles apart. Thus, the work of developing cross-cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural communication and relationship

⁹³ Lane, *Crossing Cultures*, 91, 92.

skills between those cultures is particularly challenging. However, it is possible to gain an understanding of and appreciation for those cultural differences.

We then looked at the process of communication and the dynamics of cross-cultural communication. Cultural variabilities lead to very different patterns of communication affecting both verbal and non-verbal communication. The difference between direct and indirect speech, the level of self-disclosure and emotional expression, as well as conflict resolution strategies, was discussed. Once again, the differences are most obvious between East Asian cultures and U.S.A. culture.

Since communication is at the heart of relationships, an understanding of cross-cultural communication led to a discovery of the process of developing cross-cultural relationships. As collectivistic cultures, East Asia places a higher priority on relationships than individualistic cultures. East Asians are open to meaningful relationships, but they are not prepared to conduct many superficial relationships. Their emphasis on family extends to other members of their kinship group, including people of status such as teachers.

With a sincere commitment to bridge cultural gaps, it is possible for an American college teacher to have a meaningful relationship with an East Asian student. However, the challenge for teachers and students goes beyond that of normal cross-cultural communication and relationship skills. Those skills must extend to the college campus and to the classroom. Being a person of status can present its own kinds of hindrances to relationships with East Asian students. In chapter five I will explore those educational factors with the goal of envisioning a multicultural learning community.

CHAPTER FIVE

FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS WITH EAST ASIAN STUDENTS

If the members of the faculty of an American Christian college campus are to engage in meaningful, personal relationships with East Asian students, they must have a vision for the unique opportunities presented by the presence of international students on campus. They must see not only the opportunities but also the challenges involved, for students and staff alike.

In this chapter I will go beyond culture learning to the specific issues pertaining to East Asian students on a Christian college campus. After presenting the facts concerning the presence of international students on American campuses I will address the daunting challenge of cultural adaptation faced by these students, including culture shock. I will then present the ideal of a multicultural learning community, including the unique relationships involved in a multicultural classroom. In the process I will address the issues of learning and teaching styles and standards of academic honesty.

The specific role of an International Student Adviser in building a multicultural learning community will be explored, including an interview with the ISA of Portland Bible College. Finally, I will present the unique opportunities afforded by the faculty in a multicultural learning community.

International Students

The United States hosts more international students than any other nation. According to a survey conducted by the Institute of International Education, 586,323 international students enrolled in American colleges and universities for the 2002-03 school year.¹ India sent the most students to the U.S. (74,603), followed by China (64,757) and Korea (51,519). Asian students made up 51% of all international students studying in the U.S., followed by Europeans (13%) and Latin Americans (12%).

The number of international students has increased by 74% over the last twenty years. However, enrollment in the 2002-03 school year was up less than 1%. In fact, of the top 20 sending countries, 13 sent fewer students than the year before. Overall, 45% of all U.S. colleges and universities reported decreased international student enrollment during the 2002-03 school year. For example, Indonesia sent 10% fewer students and Malaysia sent 11% fewer. Most schools reporting decreased international student enrollment indicated that increased post-9/11 security as well as economic downturns in some Asian countries were the cause. International students contribute \$12 billion annually to the U.S. economy. Nearly 75% of all international students finance their education from sources in their home country.

Obviously hundreds of thousands of students consider an American education highly desirable. “The value of a U.S. education for most international students is without reckoning. Through individual governments or through the pooling of

¹ “International Student Enrollment Growth Slows in 2002/2003,” Institute of International Education [article online]; available from <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org>; Internet; accessed 2 December 2003.

the entire family's resources, students come to the U.S. to represent their family and their country."² International students bring other benefits with them as well. They contribute new and unique perspectives on culture and education. They reflect a different version of current events. In the process, they serve to adjust the ethnocentric view of American faculty and students.

One author reported that as many as one-third of all the world's top positions in politics, business, education, and the military are filled by international students educated in the U.S.³ American college educators have an opportunity to affect the world in the process of interacting with international students. If U.S. professors are to significantly and positively impact the international students under their tutelage, what issues must they understand and take into consideration?

International Student Adjustments

Personal and cross-cultural adjustments for international students are many and profound. Gary Althen summarized the adjustment issues under several broad headings:⁴

- English proficiency. The most obvious challenge faced by international students is the use of the English language—speaking and listening, reading and writing.

² Paul M. Shaver, "Responsibilities in Mentoring and Advising of International Students: Graduate and Professional Options," in *International and ESL Undergraduate Students: Communication Issues in Pedagogy, Curriculum, and Student Acculturation*, 81st annual meeting of the speech communication association (San Antonio: Speech Communication Association Conference, 18-21 November 1995), 9.

³ Eileen Maloy, "International Student Satisfaction Survey: Lane Community College" (George Fox University: Management of Human Resources, 14 April 1995), 1.

⁴ Gary Althen, *The Handbook of Foreign Student Advising* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1983), 58.

- Field and levels of study. American college education includes subjects and teaching methods unfamiliar to many international students.
- Cultural background. All international students coming to the U.S. face a multitude of cross-cultural challenges, especially those coming from Asian countries.
- General level of sophistication. The personal, relational, cultural and educational development of an individual student varies greatly, but all students face adjustment issues on one level or another.

Gary Althen also listed such issues as status shock (the shock of having no status on an American college campus), the possibility of being treated stereotypically, financial shortfalls, and prejudice in some members of the host culture.

In adjusting to a new culture international students are faced with several options:

(1) Assimilation, being absorbed by the new culture; (2) Integration, learning how to adapt to the new host culture; (3) Rejection, including isolating oneself from the host culture; or (4) Deculturation, losing all sense of cultural identity.⁵

The adjustment needs of international students can be very deep and personal. Kenneth Cushner emphasizes the personal need for belonging faced by international students, especially for those who come from a collectivistic culture. “People find meaning, security, and identity by belonging to various groups or networks. When excluded from such groups, people may begin to experience such negative responses as loneliness, alienation, a loss of self-esteem, and a decreased sense of direction and

⁵ Paul Pederson, “International Students and International Student Advisers,” in *Improving Intercultural Interactions: Modules for Cross-Cultural Training Programs*, ed. Richard W. Brislin and Tomoko Yoshida (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 159.

purpose.”⁶ Cushner also refers to the anxiety commonly experienced by international students and the problems that anxiety creates for the learning process. “A high degree of anxiety, evident in such school-based settings as test-taking with its accompanying threat of failure as well as with interaction with peers, teachers, and parents, may result in inattention and an inability to operate at higher levels of cognitive processing.”⁷

Multicultural counselors have observed the unique challenges faced by Asian international students. Those working with Asian students must be particularly aware of their adaptation needs.

In addition to problems common to all students, Asian international students experience problems that, if not unique to Asian international students are often amplified with them. These include language problems, culture shock, homesickness, adjustment to U.S. social customs and norms, financial problems, racial or religious discrimination, climate, paranoia, depression, personality problems, role conflict, and lack of self-confidence. When compared to other international students, Asian international students have been found to have more problems than students from Europe . . . to interact less frequently with U.S. citizens than do students from Europe, to handle stress less effectively than other international students . . . to have more difficulty with the English language than other international students.⁸

Culture Shock

These and other challenges are very stressful for all international students. The stress of attempting to internalize two or more cultures often results in what has been

⁶ Kenneth Cushner, “Preparing Teachers for an Intercultural Context,” in *Improving Intercultural Interactions: Modules for Cross-Cultural Training Programs*, ed. Richard W. Brislin and Tomoko Yoshida (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 117, 18.

⁷ Ibid., 118.

⁸ Naijian Zhang and David N. Dixon, “Multiculturally Responsive Counseling: Effects on Asian Students' Ratings of Counselors,” *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development* 29, no. 4 (October 2001): 253-63.

termed “culture shock.” This can best be understood by examining the Social Readjustment Scale (SRS) that measures the amount of stress experienced as a result of various kinds of change. The SRS assigns a number to high stress adjustments. Those whose spouse has died experience the highest amount of stress, 100 on the SRS. The next highest level of stress is felt by those going through a divorce (73), and so on. An accumulative score of 300 or more during a one-year time span creates a vulnerability to stress-related problems. It has been claimed that all international students experience an SRS score higher than 300 and are therefore in need of stress management training.⁹

The process of accumulating higher and higher levels of stress occurs in several stages: (1) Alarm, preparing for a “fight or flight” response; (2) Resistance, a negative reaction to the stressful circumstance; and (3) Exhaustion, both emotionally and physically. All of these stages can be observed in the experience of international students.

Judith Lingenfelter defines culture shock as “an emotional state of stress, depression, and varying degrees of impaired function caused by constant exposure to people whose way of life conflicts with our own.”¹⁰ Culture shock occurs in several stages:

Honeymoon stage. During the first few weeks (or months) an international student functions much like a tourist in the new culture. Everything is new and exciting.

⁹ Richard Brislin and Tomoko Yoshida, “Emotional Challenges,” paper presented at the Intercultural Dimensions of International Educational Exchange (Summer institute for intercultural communication, 24-28/July, 1995), n.p.

¹⁰ Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, 121.

Crisis stage. The attempt to settle into a daily routine in the host culture focuses more attention on the things that are unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and inconvenient, resulting in increasing stress.

In 1995 Eileen Maloy surveyed the international students attending Lane Community College in Salem, Oregon.¹¹ Among other things she asked the question, “With what part of U.S. culture are you the most uncomfortable?” At the top of the list was “Language barriers” (25%), followed by “Daily living habits” (20%), the view that “Americans are unreliable” (15%), and a “Different cultural emphasis on time” (10%). This is an example of the kinds of things international students on an American college campus might find stressful.

As stress levels increase a person can become overwhelmed, resulting in anger and even depression. Culture shock seems to be more intense when the gap between the student’s culture and the host culture is great. Asian international students have a harder time in adapting themselves to U.S. society.

How can you tell whether or not an international student is experiencing culture shock? Tom Phillips lists several symptoms:¹²

- Emotional strain
- Physical sickness
- Sense of loss
- Overeating or not eating
- Rejection
- Withdrawal
- Feelings of discrimination
- Role confusion
- Frustration

¹¹ Maloy, “International Student Satisfaction.”

¹² Phillips and Norsworthy, *The World At Your Door*, 100, 01.

- Anger
- Feelings of powerlessness

Adjustment stage. Eventually an international student learns stress management skills, new problem solving skills and conflict-resolution strategies, leading to a healthy appreciation for the host culture and an ability to make new friends in that culture.

The attempt to cope with culture shock will determine whether or not an international student becomes functional in the host culture. Unhealthy coping strategies would include such things as flight, severe withdrawal, aggressiveness, or dependence. Healthy coping strategies would include deciding to be a student of people in the host culture, reflection and prayer, gratitude and graciousness, appropriate assertiveness and flexibility.¹³

It is possible to help students cope with culture shock. Nancy King defines a few simple helping strategies:¹⁴ (1) “Define what is helpful.” Maybe culture shock cannot be avoided or eliminated, but it can be helped. At the very least, teachers can help the international student avoid unnecessary additional stress while managing present stress. (2) “Discuss culture shock behavior.” Having an honest discussion of culture shock, how it happens, what it means (and does not mean), and how to cope, can be very helpful. (3) “Encourage reaching-out behavior.” Social isolation only exasperates culture shock. It is important to reach out to others, to seek new friends, and to serve in significant ways.

Reverse culture shock is often a problem for international students who stay in the U.S. for two years or more. Students travel to not one but two foreign cultures, the one

¹³ Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, 122.

¹⁴ Nancy King and Ken Huff, *Host Family Survival Kit: A Guide for American Host Families* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1985), 69.

they are visiting and the one they return to. When they return home international students often find their own culture strange and even forbidding. In *Cross-cultural Connections* Duane Elmer studied the phenomenon of reverse culture shock:

It seems strange to think that re-entering your home culture would cause culture shock, but it does. And, sometimes it is worse than the culture shock you experience when you enter that new culture. The reason? When you leave your home culture for a new one, you expect things to be different. When you leave the foreign culture to return to your home culture, you expect things to be the same. In one case you are expecting the shock of differences but in the other situation you are expecting that everything will be just as you left it. This seems to be true for international students as well, who, after extended study in the West, find it difficult to fit in again in their home culture.¹⁵

Just as culture shock follows a fairly predictable pattern, a pattern can also be observed for reverse culture shock:

Euphoria. The first response to being back home is joy and celebration, getting reacquainted with friends and family.

Disappointment. Friends and family may not seem very interested in the story of a returning student's sojourn and simply want to get back to business as usual as quickly as possible. Disappointment may come as a result.

Negative emotions. Disappointment can easily turn into frustration, anger, and even depression. This may be accompanied by desires to return to the foreign culture that a student had successfully adjusted to.

Moving on. After time has been spent processing thoughts and emotions, a new resolve can come to get on with life in the home culture.

There are other issues that impact reverse culture shock: (1) The possibility of being criticized for becoming "Americanized." (2) Feeling out of step with the changes

¹⁵ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections*, 194.

that have occurred in one's home culture. (3) Feeling awkward with no longer speaking English. (4) Being ignored by some friends who have "moved on" in their relationships. (5) Missing new friends in the host culture. (6) Finding ways to integrate new knowledge and skills into daily life in the home culture. (7) Having to adjust to another climate. "No one goes home; rather, we return to our native country and, in due course, we create a new home. This condition of homelessness is perhaps the central characteristic of the experience of reentry, and the confusion, anxiety, and disappointment it arouses in us are the abiding emotions of this difficult period."¹⁶

Dimensions of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Successful adaptation to a new host culture involves several levels of personal health: *Psychological Health*, the internal equilibrium of an international student, his or her ability to feel comfortable in a new cultural environment; *Increased Functional Fitness*, the ability to carry out daily tasks with ease; and *Intercultural Identity*, the ability to adopt more than one cultural perspective.¹⁷ When all three levels are in place, successful cultural adaptation has taken place.

Judith Martin has studied the factors that contribute to cross-cultural adaptation. She has discovered that some international students show more of an "Adaptive Predisposition" than others.¹⁸ This predisposition would include such things as: (1)

¹⁶ Storti, *The Art of Crossing Cultures*, 100.

¹⁷ Judith N. Martin, "Intercultural Communication: A Unifying Concept for International Educational Exchange," in *Learning Across Cultures*, ed. Gary Althen (Washington, D.C.: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 1994), 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15, 16.

“Cultural Background/Similarity.” The degree to which one’s home culture is similar to the host culture makes for an easier adaptation. (2) “Personality Attributes and Personal Characteristics.” Personality attributes such as open-mindedness and personal flexibility contribute to successful adaptation. Personal characteristics like extraversion, appropriate assertiveness, communication skills and people skills, contribute to cross-cultural adaptation. (3) “Age and Gender.” Making the adjustment to certain cultures, especially collectivistic cultures, can be assisted by being older and male. (4) “Preparedness for Change.” The degree of one’s educational experience, pre-departure training, cross-culture learning, etc., can also assist adaptation.

There are also factors in the host culture that can make cross-cultural adaptation more successful (or difficult): (1) “Conformity Pressure.” Some cultures demand more conformity than others. The more tolerant a culture is the easier cross-cultural adaptation will be. (2) “Receptivity Toward Sojourners.” If the host culture is open and accepting to other cultures, if there is a basic multicultural sensitivity present in the host culture, adaptation will be greatly facilitated.¹⁹

The degree to which communication continues with members of one’s home culture is also an issue. Some advise “cultural immersion” with little contact with the home culture. Others suggest that ongoing communication with the home culture is an important element in cross-cultural adaptation.

It may seem that students abroad should minimize interaction with members of their own nationality/ethnic group, and from the assimilationist perspective that long prevailed among exchange practitioners, interaction with co-nationals was discouraged. However, it now seems that the opposite may be more advisable, particularly at the beginning of the sojourn. This contact serves many functions.

¹⁹ Ibid., 16, 17.

It provides emotional and social support, culture “brokering” links between the sojourner and the host culture; and important information about the host culture.²⁰

This would include ongoing communication with friends and family back home. Contact with friends and family at home during various stages of the sojourn can help to facilitate long-term adaptation and a more successful return home.

Studies have been done on the long-term changes that occur in well-adjusted international students, especially those who stay for two years or more. According to Paul Pederson, basic cultural or religious attitudes, career goals and attitudes toward one’s home culture change very little. However, most international students experience fundamental changes in their attitudes toward open-mindedness, the value of knowledge, personal freedom, and the relationship between genders and people of other cultures.²¹

A Multicultural Learning Community

It is possible to build a multicultural learning community where both teachers and students can experience a collaborative education. Such a community begins with teachers who are committed to studying various cultures and learning the necessary cross-cultural communication and relationship skills. It is the view of Kenneth Cushner that “educators can become culturally sensitive in their approach to teaching and learning; sensitive not to the extent that the focus on their teaching is on cultural content .

²⁰ Ibid., 23.

²¹ Paul B. Pederson, *Culture-Centered Counseling Interventions: Striving for Accuracy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 125.

. . but in that consideration be given to more subtle, subjective aspects of culture that affect instructional interaction and learning.”²²

The school produces a culture all its own. The “hidden curriculum” of every class is the majority culture represented by the teacher and the majority of the students. For example, Western classrooms clearly reflect Western culture. These Western cultural elements do not necessarily guarantee a better learning environment; they simply exist as a normal part of a Western classroom.

A multicultural classroom will produce a unique cultural expression that combines all the most helpful elements of the various cultural groups represented. Whether or not the teacher values multiculturalism will directly determine whether or not the classroom will become a multicultural learning community.

Judith Lingenfelter refers to a multiculturally sensitive teacher as an “incarnational teacher.” An incarnational teacher has the ability to embody a culture other than his own. An incarnational teacher has taken the time to learn cross-cultural communication and relationship skills. Such a teacher has the desire and the ability to adapt to more than one cultural perspective.

The teacher, who has the authority to define the classroom experience, must take responsibility for creating a context that bridges cultural differences. To accomplish this the teacher must resist using power and begin as a learner. To be an effective cross-cultural teacher, one must learn the other-culture perspective and derive from it new alternatives for the challenges faced in a classroom. Relying on past experience will often lead to misunderstanding and failure. Only by understanding the other-culture context can we identify appropriate alternatives for teaching that will have maximum effectiveness for student learning.²³

²² Cushner, “Cross-Cultural Psychology and the Formal Classroom,” 101.

²³ Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, 52.

There are various attitudes and approaches to multicultural education. James and Lillian Breckenridge refer to four: (1) “The Contributions Approach,” where the unique contributions of other cultures are acknowledged; (2) “The Additive Approach,” where features of other cultures are added to the class curriculum; (3) “The Transformational Approach,” where members of one culture are encouraged to understand and even adopt some of the perspectives of another culture; and (4) “The Decision-Making/Social Action Approach,” that encourages the actual development of cross-cultural relationships and the celebration of diversity.²⁴ The ideal multicultural classroom would attempt a Decision-Making/Social Action Approach.

Cultural development and learning happens best in a multicultural classroom. Having students from a variety of cultures presents the opportunity for everyone to grow in cross-cultural understanding and skills. According to Pieter Batelaan, “the school ought to be the place where students learn to reflect on similarities and differences between cultures, where all kinds of issues can be studied from different perspectives, and where . . . students from different origins can learn to communicate and co-operate in a secure environment.”²⁵ Among other things, the goal of a multicultural classroom is to enable students to function successfully in a multicultural environment.

Knowledge of the need for cross-cultural adaptation will prepare teachers to help their students adjust. They can adjust their materials and methods to accommodate the

²⁴ Breckenridge and Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God?* 85, 86.

²⁵ Pieter Batelaan, “Intercultural Education for Cultural Development: The Contribution of Teacher Education,” in *Development, Culture and Education*, ed. L. F. B. Dubbeldam, International Yearbook of Education, vol. XLIV (Paris, FRANCE: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994), 122.

stages of culture shock. Teachers can serve as cultural mediators for their international students.

Teachers in a multicultural classroom can be aware of the differences culture makes to learning. For instance, a group orientation as compared to an individual orientation results in large differences in student responses to teachers and the learning process. Cultural attitudes toward time impact attitudes toward class attendance and the timeliness of the completion of assignments. Cultural attitudes toward status directly affect the way students respond to teachers in the classroom.

Well-prepared instructors enter their multicultural classrooms with a knowledge of their students' cultures and their own culture, and with an awareness of the cultural adjustment of each of their students. In addition, they have an ever-ready structure for processing and interpreting the information they learn—both cognitively and experientially—through interactions with their students. They are now prepared not only to manage a multicultural classroom but to maximize its potential.²⁶

Various cultures have different attitudes toward formal education within the family. Since the family is the central feature of a collectivistic culture, the standards of that family pertaining to education control the attitude toward and performance within education. For instance, education is a high priority for Japanese families. James and Lillian Breckenridge point out four themes in Japanese families that serve to prepare Japanese students for educational excellence:

(1) Japanese place more importance on education in the home. (2) Formal education begins at an earlier age for most Japanese children. (3) Japanese children show greater discipline in school behavior than their American counterparts. (4) From high school through College, serious Japanese students do little but study and attend school.²⁷

²⁶ Carol Archer, "Managing a Multicultural Classroom," in *Learning Across Cultures*, ed. Gary Althen (Washington, D.C.: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 1994), 83.

²⁷ Breckenridge and Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God?* 190.

Culture has a direct effect on education in specific ways. Teaching and learning styles, attitudes toward classroom learning, and relationships in the classroom and between students and teachers are directly influenced by culture. In *College Teaching Abroad* Pamela Gale George has made an extensive study of the effects culture has on learning and teaching. She summarizes her findings under several headings:

Competitive versus Cooperative Orientation. American education encourages competition in which students work to outperform their classmates. “In this paradigm, students usually work alone, strive to perform better than others, and celebrate their own success and others’ nonsuccess.”²⁸ On the other hand, Asian education teaches cooperation and harmonious interaction with other students. Avoidance of shame for oneself and one’s fellow students is of paramount importance. “Students may exhibit great aversion to verbal expression in class and to ‘standing apart’ from the group. A student from a culture with a cooperative orientation may feel extreme shame when called on to demonstrate something for which he is ill prepared or to answer from reading she has not done.”²⁹

Attitudes About Time. The American linear view of time results in an emphasis on schedules, timelines and calendars. Beginning class on time, turning assignments in on time, etc. is highly valued. On the other hand, these elements are not necessarily valued in cultures with a different attitude toward time.

²⁸ Pamela Gale George, *College Teaching Abroad: A Handbook of Strategies for Successful Cross-Cultural Exchanges* (Boston MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), 8, 9.

²⁹ Ibid., 9.

Amount of Student Participation. The extent to which students prefer to remain silent or to interact in the classroom varies greatly from one culture to another. The methods teachers use to solicit student participation must consider those cultural differences.

Humor and Joking. It is obvious that what is funny in one culture may be offensive in another. Whether or not students are laughing is not necessarily a gauge of whether or not they consider a statement to be humorous. Humor can be appropriate but must be used sensitively.

Physical Interaction. Informal cultures may find appropriate physical interaction acceptable, while more formal cultures would never allow touching to take place.

In *Intercultural Education at the University Level*, Neal R. Goodman used the cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede to describe cultural patterns of education:

Power Distance. High power distance cultures tend to have a teacher-centered approach to education. Teachers have automatic status in society and are viewed as the authoritative dispensers of wisdom. Information flow is to take place from the teacher to the student; students are not expected to initiate communication or speak up unless called upon to do so.

Individualism-Collectivism. In collectivistic cultures there is a strong emphasis on respect for tradition within the group. Group work is preferred. "Students are not expected to call attention to themselves by calling out answers. Neither the teacher nor the student should be put into a situation where they might lose face."³⁰ The failure of a student will cause his entire in-group to lose face.

³⁰ Neal R. Goodman, "Intercultural Education at the University Level: Teacher-Student

Uncertainty Avoidance. High uncertainty avoidance cultures are very structured. Students and teachers alike prefer structured learning situations and detailed assignments. “In such an environment, lecturing is most common and there are no interruptions or disagreements with the ‘all-knowing’ teacher. Learning the subject as precisely as possible is more important than learning how to learn.”³¹

One contrast of teaching styles is Confucian versus western. Students who embrace the Confucian ethic expect a teacher to be an authority who is never questioned. Confucian family values motivate students to excel, and they are oriented toward group achievement. In contrast, western students expect a teacher to be a guide who can be challenged. They are motivated by individual desire and emphasize individual development.³²

Masculinity. In highly masculine cultures competition is encouraged and failure leads to low self-esteem. There is also greater gender segregation, both in education and careers.

In *Teaching, Learning, and Working with International Students*, Randall D. Parker described some additional factors in cross-cultural education.

Equality and Informality. American teachers and classroom environments are notoriously informal. Asian students may find this informality disconcerting. “They may come from a culture where it is inappropriate for students to develop any personal rapport with faculty, and they may feel uneasy being more than passive receivers of the written or spoken word.”³³

Interaction,” in *Improving Intercultural Interactions: Modules for Cross-Cultural Training Programs*, ed. Richard W. Brislin and Tomoko Yoshida (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 138.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, 71, 72.

³³ Randall D. Parker, “Teaching, Learning, and Working With International Students: A Case Study,” paper presented at the 28th Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association

Pragmatism vs Reasoning Style. “Some students may be so task oriented that they ignore developing alternate reasoning styles and concentrate only on the most efficient way to master the task.”³⁴ While these students may know how to get high grades, they never learn how to think critically.

The various cross-cultural variables and their effect on teaching and learning can be summarized in the following table:

Cross-Cultural Teaching & Learning	
U.S.A.	East Asia
Competitive orientation	Cooperative orientation
Linear view of time	Event view of time
Interactive student participation	Passive student participation
Informal interaction	Formal interaction
Teacher-centered teaching	Student-centered teaching
Individual work	Group work
Structured classroom	More unstructured classroom
Pragmatic thinking	Critical thinking

Learning and Teaching Styles

Preferred learning styles vary from culture to culture. People learn how to learn in ways that are related to their culture. In addition, teachers tend to teach according to their own preferred learning style.

A teacher in a multicultural classroom must be prepared to communicate with diverse learning styles in mind. This requires growth in cross-cultural teaching skills. A variety of teaching methods will need to be used so that a multiplicity of learning styles are taken into consideration.

(Point Clear, AL: Mid-South educational research association, 17 November 1999), 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 6.

There are various approaches to the field of learning styles. Cultural anthropologists tend to see two learning styles: (1) Field-independent learning, involving learning that is independent of the surrounding field, analytical, two-dimensional learning; and (2) Field-dependent learning, relational, three-dimensional learning, that occurs within a larger context/field.

Field-independent learners are parts-specific, can isolate facts as needed, are linear in their thinking and approach to problem-solving, and tend to test rather well. Field-dependent learners, on the contrary, must see the big picture, seek to find personal relevance in the task at hand, and require that some sort of personal relationship is established between teacher and student.³⁵

A traditional Western classroom is geared toward analytical, field-independent learners, while most international students from Asian cultures prefer a field-dependent style.

Kenneth Cushner refers to four learning styles and describes the influence of culture on these learning preferences:³⁶ (1) “Concrete experience,” referring to learning that takes place in the context of experiences from the real world. Because people from different cultural backgrounds bring different experiences to their learning, because they have vastly different frames of reference, their classroom learning will be profoundly affected. (2) “Reflexive observations,” involving responses to information. Cultural understanding of what is true and what is real will have a direct affect on observations made in a learning context. (3) “Abstract conceptualization,” the formation of general concepts from individual bits of information. Different cognitive backgrounds will result in vastly different conclusions. (4) “Active experimentation,” learning through the manipulation of concrete objects or interaction with people. However, different cultural

³⁵ Cushner, “Preparing Teachers for an Intercultural Context,” 121.

³⁶ Cushner, “Cross-Cultural Psychology and the Formal Classroom,” 103.

contexts will produce very different interpretations from observations made. Cushner goes on to say, “considerable differences in learning styles, evident in individuals’ needs for quiet or sound, in seating arrangements, mobility preferences, desired temperature, degree and kind of structure required, motivation, and in conformity versus nonconformity have been identified across cultural groups.”³⁷

In *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, Judith and Sherwood Lingenfelter have identified certain “traditional learning strategies” still commonly found in developing countries. These strategies can also be found in the international student community. Traditional learning strategies include such things as repetitive memorization, special status given to the teacher, and the nonuse of questions. “Educators trained in the western tradition need to recognize the cultural patterns of this style of teaching. The Western tradition emphasizes the individual and achieved status. We are taught to challenge rather than to accept passively what another says.”³⁸

Teaching and learning styles differ greatly from Asian to U.S. classrooms, including the interaction between students and teacher. “In Asian countries, students would play a more passive role in the teaching-learning process than in America. Students respect their teachers and do not challenge those in authority. Students wait to be answered or to participate unless otherwise requested by the teacher.”³⁹ Asian students tend to prefer teacher-centered classroom methods while U.S. students prefer

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, 50.

³⁹ Breckenridge and Breckenridge, *What Color Is Your God?* 207.

student-centered approaches to learning. Asian teaching styles would commonly utilize memorization, copying, listening, taking notes, repetition, and recitation. As a result,

The American expectation for discussion and initiative should not be insisted upon. Extra time should be allowed to respond to questions. Present group work and group problem-solving activities in a manner that is nonthreatening and voluntary. Participation can be encouraged, but should not be required. It would be wise for teachers to avoid any overemphasis upon physical touching or Western familiarity.⁴⁰

The possibility of losing face results in Asian students not admitting a mistake, not questioning a teacher, or not asking for help. In a case involving an Asian student in an English class, the student failed the class because of an unwillingness to seek the assistance made available to him. “Even where a Learning Center was theoretically available to help him, if only he would decide to walk into it and seek assistance, culturally speaking, he would never have exposed a weakness and sought help unless it was readily and tactfully available in some more immediate guise.”⁴¹

Teaching methods must take culturally informed learning styles into consideration. While it is true that Asian classrooms lean on lecture, students in cross-cultural situations where English is a second or foreign language often have difficulty with comprehension of lecture material. Difficulty with concentrating on another language means that comprehension decreases as a lecture continues.

On the other hand, dialogue with cross-cultural learners can be very difficult. If a question-and-answer method is used, it is best to prepare questions ahead of time, to publish them in advance, explaining clearly what the objectives of the questions are, and

⁴⁰ Ibid., 208.

⁴¹ Leslie Croxford, “Global University Education: Some Cultural Considerations,” *Higher Education in Europe* XXVI, no. 1 (2001): 60.

to ask them in an indirect manner. Responses to answers given must also take the various cultural backgrounds into consideration. “A questioning technique used with students who give incorrect responses is to react, not by ‘Wrong!’ or ‘Incorrect!’ but rather by ‘Try again!’ or ‘Can you give another answer?’”⁴²

Questions must allow international students to reflect in a holistic way, perhaps using a story or picture or describing a hypothetical situation. Sometimes questions of importance must be asked indirectly. Carefully constructed group exercises can also be used, including group responses to questions posed by the teacher.

The Problem of Plagiarism

In collectivistic cultures community always comes before the individual. Individual learners function only within the larger context of community. In one study, students were asked: “If you had to choose between attending a class or visiting a sick friend, which would you regard as the more important?” The responses were almost unanimous; “visiting the sick friend.”⁴³ These students prefer to study in groups. They would consider it disloyal to the group to not help a classmate with his or her assignments. Relationships are always considered more important than any ideals or principles. An abstract notion of academic honesty carries less weight than helping another person.

In Western cultures, “intellectual property” is very much a part of the cultural value of “personal property” and “personal rights.” However, collectivistic cultures do

⁴² Ibid., 158.

⁴³ Croxford, “Global University Education: Some Cultural Considerations,” 57.

not share any of these values. As a result, plagiarism, or the use of the ideas or words of another without due documentation, is a very common occurrence in a classroom with Asian students. Leslie Croxford has concluded “the concept of academic honesty, far from being a universal norm based upon natural reason or natural law, is contingent upon modern ideological developments in the West. Other societies, it seems, are equally entitled to view the matter of what makes for good study from their own, quite different, cultural perspectives.”⁴⁴

In China, virtually anything that has been published belongs to the public domain. “The Confucian idea that individuals should sacrifice personal profit in order to benefit the group has led the Chinese to hold copyrights, used by authors to secure private profit, in less regard than in the West.”⁴⁵

The problem of plagiarism in many ways summarizes the challenges of a multicultural classroom. In fact, some cultures would consider it arrogant to claim an idea as one’s own. In Asian cultures, no one would consider making a public statement they did not assume represented the thoughts of the whole community. Final authority is not located in any one individual, no matter how high their status. Public thoughts and public words are, by definition, communal. “Risking a point of view, placing oneself on a level with the Authority, or contrary to him or her, is at best an impertinence, at worst the secular equivalent of blasphemy. Hence the discomfort, and consequent intellectual sterility, such a student feels on being required to provide his or her own ideas.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid., 56.

⁴⁵ Wang, et al., *Turning Bricks Into Jade*, 219.

⁴⁶ Croxford, “Global University Education: Some Cultural Considerations,” 57.

Building A Multicultural Learning Community

If community has prior significance in a multicultural classroom, especially when Asian collectivistic cultures are factored in, it is important to explore the specific role of community to the learning environment and how community can be built.

The first level of community for an Asian student is one's in-group. The immediate family, even though outside of the college campus, continues to be a constant source of identity, support and guidance. In addition, classmates from the same culture form a kind of extended family while in school.

A specific class can function as a learning community for an Asian student, especially if multicultural community building is an intentional focus of the teacher. The class as a whole can form an important support structure, not only for the international students but indeed for all of the students in the class.

The college campus as a whole can also be an important expression of community for international students. The international students as a group and the student body as a whole can foster an atmosphere of multicultural acceptance and support. The campus residences can be structured to express and contribute to community. The faculty and staff can also work together in a committed way to foster a multicultural learning community on campus.

The availability of support persons seems to be an important factor for international students' college adjustment and academic success. Feeling confident, determined, and independent, as well as having a support person, are found to be important variables for academic success.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Maloy, "International Student Satisfaction," 10.

International Student Advising

A central element of any multicultural learning community is the International Student Adviser or Foreign Student Adviser (FSA). The FSA acts as a “clearinghouse” for cross-cultural issues on a college campus. The FSA is usually a member of the Registrar’s staff or the Dean of Students’ staff, depending on the emphasis of their job description.

A college or university with international students enrolled must have clearly defined institutional objectives as it pertains to international education and the job of the Foreign Student Adviser. The National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA) has recommended certain minimal standards for institutions. The first principle states:

The institution should have a clearly stated policy, endorsed by the governing board, for the goals and objectives of the international educational program or programs developed by the institution. This policy should be manifest in the institution’s planning and budgeting. Personnel and program resources—administrative and academic—should be sufficient to assure that the program can be operated in ways consistent with the principles presented in this document.⁴⁸

Colleges with any significant foreign student population should have a significant place for them. This institutional commitment to international education must include cultural sensitivity and preparedness for those students.

4. Regardless of program size, the institution should acknowledge its responsibility to demonstrate sensitivity to cultural needs—social, religious, dietary, and housing. These factors must be accounted for in the planning and execution of the program.

⁴⁸ National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, “NAFSA Principles for International Education Exchange,” in *The Handbook of Foreign Student Advising*, ed. Gary Althen (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1983), 159, 60.

6. Administrative staff and faculty should seek to develop and maintain respect and sensitivity toward those from different cultures in the execution of their responsibilities for international educational exchange programs.⁴⁹

NAFSA also mandates the specific function of a Foreign Student Adviser. “An institution that enrolls students or invites foreign scholars should recognize that individuals from different cultures and educational systems have special needs for advice and assistance. These needs must be met by services that are organized, directed, and funded by the host institution.”⁵⁰ Specific guidelines for the function of an FSA office are also given:

1. The host institution should state clearly its intentions to provide special services for the foreign students and scholars it brings to its campus. These services should include advisory and counseling services.
3. The institution should provide ample professional services which are fully accessible to foreign students and scholars. Advisory services should include academic advising—performed either by faculty members or foreign student advisers.⁵¹

Gary Althen had written the “industry standard” regarding the role of the FSA. In *The Handbook of Foreign Student Advising* Althen proposes a summary list of responsibilities for a Foreign Student Adviser, including:⁵²

- Enforcing U.S. immigration law and regulations
- Handling crises involving foreign students
- Helping foreign students adjust to a new culture
- Helping foreign students realize their educational objectives with the least possible difficulty
- Helping institutional colleagues deal with students from abroad
- Monitoring foreign students’ academic and perhaps social conduct on behalf of sponsoring and/or foreign governments

⁴⁹ Ibid., 160.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁵¹ Ibid., 166-68.

⁵² Althen, *The Handbook of Foreign Student Advising*, 8, 9.

- Helping foreign students achieve the maximum feasible amount of self-development

This is an all-encompassing job description, one that very few FSA's would fulfill.

International students tend to have their own view of the job of the FSA. Some view the FSA as an agent of intelligence or law enforcement organization. Others view the FSA as an utterly benevolent figure who can and will resolve any difficulty the students face. At the very least, international students expect the FSA to assist them in getting into the college of their choice. They also expect them to be a personal advocate once they arrive.

Government agencies, and particularly the INS, have a very specific view of the job of the FSA. For the immigration service the FSA is to enforce INS policy. However, the INS also tends to view Foreign Student Advisers as soft on enforcement. "It is probably safe to say the INS staff members generally regard most FSA's as being soft-hearted and amateurish, or at least as inadequately devoted to upholding the immigration law."⁵³

College faculty and staff tend to view the job of the FSA positively or negatively depending on their view of international students in general.

Faculty and staff who are favorably inclined toward foreign students are likely to have a positive view of FSA's, or at least to give them the benefit of the doubt. The opposite is true of faculty and staff who are unfavorably disposed toward students from other countries. It is mainly through competent performance, however, that FSA's can enhance their influence among institutional colleagues.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10, 11.

The Foreign Student Adviser stands between the international student community and the college or university as an institution. The FSA also mediates between the international students and college and the relevant government agencies, their policies and procedures. It is a delicate balancing act requiring great skill and expertise.

Gary Althen proposes that a minimal job description for an FSA is “to provide foreign students with assistance in realizing their academic objectives.”⁵⁵ This would include such things as: immigration advising, orientation, financial issues, cross-cultural counseling, and mediating with college faculty and staff. In other words, the primary role of the Foreign Student Adviser is to advise and advocate for international students.

The International Student office was organized on most university campuses because of specialized problems arising among international students requiring specialized knowledge. The international student adviser is often asked to intervene on behalf of an international student when extenuating circumstances may have contributed to the student’s failure. Not only the student but the university has a considerable investment to protect in helping the student succeed.⁵⁶

In order to do so, FSA’s must be thoroughly training in cross-cultural issues in general and as they pertain to specific international students. The FSA must understand the educational background of international students:⁵⁷

- What is the official ideal concerning education for the country’s citizens?
- What is the nature of the national government’s role in education?
- From what social strata and geographic areas do most students come?
- What entrance and leaving examinations are required at each level?
- What curricula are normally followed by college-bound people?
- What changes and controversies . . . are currently engaging the attention of people in the field of education?

⁵⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁶ Pederson, “International Students and International Student Advisers,” 154, 55.

⁵⁷ Althen, *The Handbook of Foreign Student Advising*, 53.

- What methods of education (lecture, laboratory, problem-solving, etc.) predominate?
- What is the predominant conception of the nature of education?
- What intellectual skills (for example, memorization, in-depth analysis, synthesis) does the system reward?
- How is the student's academic work evaluated?

It is also important for an FSA to be aware of the various cultural backgrounds of the international students on campus:⁵⁸

- How are differences in status (for example, student-teacher) handled?
- What is the prevalent concept of the locus of control (internal or external) over people's lives?
- What are the predominant friendship patterns?
- What are the most common forms of verbal interaction in everyday relations?
- Where (if anywhere) do people go for help with personal problems?
- What assumptions shape male-female relationships?
- What kinds of evidence . . . are considered persuasive?

In assisting international students one of the main issues is English language mastery. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is the standard exam given to incoming foreign students. It is up to the FSA office to set institutional standards for the TOEFL test scores. International students must have attained a minimal standard of English proficiency to function at a minimal level in an American college classroom. Many FSA's include various levels of ESL training for students who score below a certain level on the TOEFL exam.

Cross-cultural orientation for incoming international students is also an essential part of the job of the FSA.

FSA's function as educators and trainers in many of the things they do involving foreign students, including orientation programs, workshops on intercultural relations, pre-departure workshops, counseling . . . and the daily interactions

⁵⁸ Ibid., 55.

where they are trying to help students manage their affairs in a more constructive way.⁵⁹

In general, the Foreign Student Adviser is in the best position to promote and facilitate “culture learning” or “cross-cultural training,” not only with the international students, but also with the student body as a whole, with faculty and staff, and within the larger community. “In my view, FSA’s ought to be concerned with the hosts’ attitudes toward and treatment of foreign students for the sake of the foreign students, if for no other reason. A receptive campus and community will make the foreign students’ experience in the United States easier to manage and more beneficial.”⁶⁰

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by a Foreign Student Adviser is the cross-cultural training of the larger community. When doing so the cross-cultural developmental process must be kept in mind. Members of a host culture develop cross-cultural skills in various stages:

Denial. Students and staff who have little experience with other cultures may begin their training at this point. It is difficult for these individuals to even conceive of other cultural values and perspectives. They may even assume that all people groups are essentially the same.

Defense. When people in the host culture begin to encounter other cultures, they may move from “Denial” to a “Defense” response. As a result of recognizing vast cultural differences, they feel threatened by this thought and form negative stereotypes of others.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 86.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 122.

Minimization. An individual from the host culture is now prepared to allow for cultural differences. However, these differences are viewed as minimal or even insignificant.

Acceptance. Differences are no longer judged as minimal or good or bad. “At this point, people have fully accepted that their values and norms are not necessarily ‘right’ and that other cultures have their own values and norms that are just as respectable.”⁶¹

The Foreign Student Adviser is also in a position to foster cross-cultural relationships on campus. Being aware of the potential pitfalls in student relationships and the cultural contributors is very helpful. Encouraging the formation and healthy functioning of a multicultural community involving both students and faculty can be a unique contribution made by the FSA.

Interview

Angela Prosser is the International Student Adviser for Portland Bible College. PBC has had an ISA for over 15 years, full-time for most of those years.

The international student population has been as high as 28% of the total student body at Portland Bible College. The percentage has gone down since the fall of 2001. During the fall semester 2003, 21% of the student body were from other nations than the U.S. Of those students, 61% are Asian (mostly from Japan), 17% are Canadian, 12% are Latin American, 5% are from Africa, and 5% are from Europe.

⁶¹ Brislin and Yoshida, “Emotional Challenges,” n.p.

Angela Prosser interacts with international students from their first inquiry. She advises them in the application process and helps to facilitate their visa application, relationship with the U.S. embassy, INS, etc. A minimum score of 550 on the TOEFL exam is required for full-time students. Those who score between 500 and 550 are required to participate in an ESL program. Those who score under 500 are referred to The Language and Culture Institute In Oregon (www.lcio.us) until their TOEFL scores are above 550. In this way all international students demonstrate sufficient English proficiency to guarantee their successful functioning in the classroom.

When the students arrive on campus Angela conducts a thorough orientation workshop over a two-day period. She arranges for host families to offer hospitality to international students. She then maintains an ongoing relationship with international students, providing friendship, advocacy and counsel as they adjust to a new situation.

As the International Student Adviser she also facilitates other community building activities on campus. She conducts an international student potluck at the beginning of the semester. Two students, a male and female, are chosen to represent the international community as members of the Student Council. An International Chapel is conducted each semester. International students are assigned a faculty adviser in the same way that domestic students are.

On November 14, 2003, I conducted an interview with Angela. The focus of the interview was faculty involvement with international students. I wanted to know how members of the faculty could more effectively serve the international students in cooperation with her as the International Student Adviser. These were her responses:

1. She would like to see faculty more aware of INS stipulations. At the very least, it would be helpful if faculty did not (unknowingly) advise international students in a way that is contrary to government requirements.

2. She would like to see the faculty participate in the cross-cultural orientation process. At first this might involve culture learning on the part of the faculty themselves, perhaps by attending an international student orientation workshop. Then their actual participation in the orientation workshop would result in a quicker, more effective connection to the international students.

3. The involvement of faculty in cross-cultural events would be helpful. Their attendance at international pot-luck dinners and other social events would help the culture learning of the faculty as well as personal relationships with the students.

4. If members of the faculty are serious about building personal relationships with international students they will have to be prepared to initiate social and personal contacts. This might even include inviting small groups of students over to a faculty member's house for a social evening.

It seems that while the involvement of faculty and staff at Portland Bible College is fairly extensive and consistently effective, there are still areas in which the faculty can assist the ongoing development of service to and relationships with the international students.

Faculty Relationships with International Students

Colleges with international educational programs often hire a Foreign Student Adviser to handle all the cross-cultural issues on campus. This person may even be a

highly competent professional with a graduate degree in intercultural studies. Yet the need to foster a multicultural learning community on campus requires more than the committed involvement of one professional and his or her staff. It requires the involvement of the entire community. Specifically, it requires the involvement of the faculty.

Teachers have a unique influence on the lives of those they teach. The opportunity to interact with international students on a college campus creates the possibility of an influence few others have.

It is important that faculty relationships with their students be given a high priority. This is uniquely true on a Christian college campus. Christian teachers, in placing a high priority on relationships, seek not only to teach effectively but also to relate effectively.

Pamela Gale George has studied faculty relationships with international students and has observed several important rules:

Rules of Deference. Relationships between teachers and students occur in the context of automatic status in certain cultures. “Difference in status and prestige of teachers present many sources of consternation for professors in cross-cultural situations.”⁶²

Rules of Propriety. The degree to which a professor conducts himself or herself in a formal or informal manner varies greatly from culture to culture. Most international students will expect their teachers to be a bit more formal than they are used to being.

⁶² George, *College Teaching Abroad*, 5-8.

Rules of Privacy. The extent to which self-disclosure is appropriate also varies greatly. “While often a matter of personal comfort, the nature and quantity of factual information and personal opinion that is appropriate for teachers and students to ask about or reveal is a cultural phenomenon.”⁶³

Cultural roles assigned to teachers also reflect cultural variations. American teachers in a multicultural classroom can expect one or more of these roles:

Teacher as Authority Figure. Especially in Asian cultures, teachers are viewed as authority figures in society as a whole. This will influence the way teachers relate to their international students. For instance, “because Japanese students invest so much authority in their professors, it is beyond their imagination to interrupt, speak to or ask a question . . . in class.”⁶⁴

Teacher as Mentor. Other cultures look at their teachers as a personal guide or tutor. In Thailand a professor’s role “often includes serving as a . . . tutor or mentor to students who will return for special favors many times and even years after graduation.”⁶⁵

Teacher as Parent/Patron. Some cultures go beyond the role of teacher as mentor to view their professors as parent figures. Judith Lingenfelter has observed that some “Asian doctoral students . . . refer to their male faculty mentors as their ‘father.’ They hold and affirm this relationship until the mentor dies. The student expects his mentor to care for him the way a father cares for a son.”⁶⁶ This role includes that of Teacher as

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally*, 79.

Friend. Friendships with international students are formal at first, but eventually may become more intimate than friendships with students from the host culture. Tom Phillips observes, “International students are often from very close-knit families. Consequently, friendships with them are very meaningful, deep, and rewarding.”⁶⁷

Tom Phillips goes on to suggest a list of guidelines for beginning a relationship with an international student:⁶⁸

- Learn to say his name correctly.
- In many countries conversation is a form of entertainment. Your student is probably used to relaxed conversation. He or she will be especially interested in talking about his or her family and homeland.
- You may be presented with a gift. Ask the student about their cultural expectation.
- When talking with the student, speak slowly and distinctly. Do not raise your voice. Be careful not to use idioms or cliches.
- Make a point to listen to your international friend’s perception of life in America. He or she may be experiencing culture shock and your friendship can help him or her adjust to the culture.
- Don’t promise the international student that you will do something with him unless you actually plan to do it.
- As the American hosts, we need to take the initiative and set up time together. More than likely they are wanting to continue the relationship with you and are hoping that you will seek them out.
- Be careful not to be dogmatic about your opinions. If they perceive you will judge their experience negatively, they will never share deeply with you.
- Allow the student to initiate expressions of friendship to you.
- Get together with him regularly, and call him to see how he is doing. Find out your student’s birthday and plan to do something special.
- Inviting your international friend for a meal is a wonderful way to strengthen your relationship.

Because they view the classroom as a formal setting, personal relationships with international students must be developed largely outside of class. Informal opportunities

⁶⁷ Phillips and Norsworthy, *The World At Your Door*, 71.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 76-84.

to converse with them must be initiated by the teacher. The sincerity, patience, and cultural sensitivity of communication will be an important part of building a new friendship.

A key to stimulating conversation is to avoid asking simple questions that require yes or no answers. Rather, utilize who, what, when, where, and how questions for good conversation. Another caution is to avoid sounding like a talk-show host or an interrogator. Include more than one international in conversation, when possible, to promote interaction between cultures and countries represented.⁶⁹

Relating as a teacher to East Asian students is a unique experience. Because of their collectivistic cultural perspective, their teacher is a person of status in their lives. Eventually, as a relationship progresses, that teacher may be “adopted” into their kinship network as a kind of parent figure. The collective orientation goes beyond just the family and includes all who are involved. This kinship phenomenon has been specifically studied among Chinese students:

To the Chinese, family is both a home and a community. Family serves as the primary and ongoing unit of socialization of each person. It is in the family that one acquires various skills, such as relating to and communicating with others. When friends become very close, Chinese say they’re like members of the family.⁷⁰

Studies of relationships with Chinese and Japanese students have produced helpful suggestions. Regarding Chinese students Tom Phillips recommends that “friendship is the result of time and patience, which produces mutual trust. Friendship is also the willingness to sacrifice one’s own interests to meet the needs of others. In befriending Chinese students, find out about their personal lives and involve them in

⁶⁹ Ibid., 91, 92.

⁷⁰ Gao, “Self and Other: A Chinese Perspective on Interpersonal Relationships,” 86.

yours.”⁷¹ Chinese students respond to sincere and consistent personal interest accompanied by practical acts of services.

Concerning Japanese students Tom Phillips observes that “most Japanese people desire friendship with people from other nations. As an island nation, Japan has been learning foreign ways and borrowing what it thought helpful for centuries. For the most part, Japanese have a natural curiosity about other parts of the world and are eager to learn from other cultures. Specifically Phillips recommends, “You must, therefore, be ready for a lot of unilateral social outreach. Social politeness often dictates two or three refusals before an offer is accepted. Don’t give up too soon.”⁷²

It is possible for the faculty of an American college campus to commit themselves to cross-cultural relationships with international students. If they do, several things are recommended:

1. Keep up the process of cross-cultural training. Determine to make the study of other cultures a life-long commitment.
2. Create a faculty team. Work together as a team to cultivate multicultural skills as it pertains to international students. Encourage each other in the hard work of facilitating relationships with students on campus.
3. Cooperate with the international student adviser’s office. Work together with the FSA to foster a multicultural learning community. Assist in the process of culture learning whenever needed.

⁷¹ Phillips and Norsworthy, *The World At Your Door*, 145.

⁷² Ibid., 148, 49.

4. Continually engage in the process of evaluating culture, both that of the home culture as well as that of visiting cultures. When encountering cultural issues of international students remember to stop, look and listen—be mindful of the cultural realities and challenges of students and determine to assist them in their adjustment.

5. Help international students prepare for reentry into their home culture. Then stay in touch with them after their return. Allow them to participate in alumni activities as well as assist other international students in their preparation for an American college experience.

Focus Group

I invited a group of seven Asian students to participate in a focus group. Since Asian students have a very different attitude toward gender roles, and since I work with all male students, all those invited were male. They ranged in age from 21 to 31. One was from China, two were from Indonesia, one was from Malaysia, one from Vietnam, and two from Japan. The Indonesian and Malaysian students were from Chinese families. I composed five indirect questions and sent them to the students in advance, clearly stating my objectives for the focus group and for the questions being posed. I asked a Chinese student to review the questions and make suggestions before I distributed them. I allowed the students to respond to questions in writing as well as participate in the focus group. On November 13, 2003, all seven students invited participated in a noontime discussion.

What kind of relationship would a college student have with a member of the faculty on a campus in your home country? Please give some examples. One of the

students from Indonesia responded that he had experienced only very distant relationships with teachers. Teachers in his culture were very authoritarian. Students felt it necessary to please their teachers by giving them gifts. The Malaysian student reported that he had been entirely on his own academically. However, he had one mentor who greatly assisted him. The Chinese student described a patron relationship with his teacher who participated almost as a member of his family. If he missed school due to sickness, his teacher would come to his house to check on him and to make sure he did not fall behind in his work. The other Indonesian student wrote that neither he nor his friends have ever had much of a relationship with a college teacher, and if they did, it only pertained to questions regarding course work.

If a new international student from an Asian country came to PBC and asked you how they should relate to a member of the faculty, how would you advise them? What ideas would you give them? An Indonesian student said he would advise incoming international students to show their teachers respect, but to keep in mind that the teachers are open to a relationship with students. The student from Vietnam said students from his culture would tend to be shy and would not initiate a relationship with a teacher. He would be willing to introduce a new student to teachers and to serve as an intermediary. The other Indonesian student stated that he would advise new Asian students to trust the teachers, that they are “real,” that their heart is for the students. He also suggested the faculty take the initiative by inviting new students to social occasions. He said teachers should not be surprised that new Asian students would hesitate to ask questions in class. Additional written comments were provided by the student from China, who said he would advise incoming students to respect the teachers but also to be open and honest

with the American faculty while seeking to understand American culture. The student from Malaysia wrote that international students have better relationships with parents than with teachers; however, they should try to break through their shyness and learn to be open with their American teachers. A Japanese student wrote that most Asian students are too shy to initiate a relationship with a teacher, that the teacher will not only have to initiate but will have to do so consistently before any kind of personal relationship will be possible.

If an Asian student was having difficulty communicating with a PBC teacher and asked for your help, what are the kinds of insights you would share with him or her? The student from Malaysia said he would encourage new students from his own experience of positive relationships with the faculty. An Indonesian student said he would challenge the preconceived notions about faculty and encourage them to be more trusting. A Japanese student stated that teachers in his culture are respected for who they are, not for their ability or expertise. While he maintains that attitude, he would also recommend a personal openness to the American faculty. Additional responses were given in writing. The Chinese student said he would seek to be a bridge between new students and the faculty. The student from Vietnam wrote that international students need to work harder at understanding the culture of the American teachers. He would encourage students to spend more time with members of the faculty, praying with them and getting to know them better. A Japanese student wrote that he would be willing to go with a new international student to help mediate communication with a member of the faculty.

If an international student from an Asian country was having significant personal problems (such as financial, family or health issues, etc.) and was hesitant to share them

with a PBC teacher, what advice would you give him or her? A student from Indonesia stated that personal questions would only be dealt with in the context of family and not with teachers. The student from Vietnam shared that difficulty with English as well as a need to “save face” would make it very difficult to discuss personal problems with a teacher. Written responses included a statement from the Chinese student that an international student should prayerfully consider being open with and talking to a member of the faculty he or she feels they can trust. He also recommended that it would be easier to talk with a trusted friend from his own culture who could then possibly function as an intermediary with a teacher. A student from Japan wrote that he would encourage an Asian student from his own experience with members of the PBC faculty, namely that they are committed to helping new students.

If an Asian student wanted a mentoring relationship with a PBC teacher, what kinds of questions would you ask him or her? How would you advise him or her? What might their expectations be? What ideas would you give him or her? One of the students from Japan stated that “mentors” do not exist in his culture so a student would never think to ask for one. An Indonesian student said that American teachers have to take more initiative with international students, that Asian students are trained to be more passive and are afraid to say the wrong thing. The student from China contributed a written suggestion that an international student be clear on why they want a faculty mentor, and then to approach him or her with humility and respect and a teachable attitude.

While conducting the focus group I made note of the fact that the older students always spoke up first, the younger ones deferring to them. The Japanese students were

the last to speak up; in fact, one of the Japanese students did not speak at all. Even the process of conducting the focus group illustrated the cultural dynamics involved with Asian students.

The focus group clearly confirmed the literature on the subject of faculty relationships with Asian students. If any such relationship is to exist, American teachers will have to initiate, and not just once but consistently over time. Teachers will have to demonstrate the sincerity of their desire to relate to the Asian students and show their sincerity in practical ways. They will also have to establish their trustworthiness as relationship partners. The role of an intermediary in the initial stage of a relationship was also confirmed by the focus group.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of international students attending American colleges and universities presents a unique and important opportunity. College faculty can literally affect the nations of the world through their relationships with international students.

The first challenge is to assist international students in the daunting task of cross-cultural adjustment. Being aware of what those adjustment issues are will enable college personnel to facilitate a successful adaptation experience. Students experiencing culture shock are particularly open to personal help. This will be the beginning of a meaningful relationship with those students.

The goal is to create a multicultural learning community on the college campus. Such a learning community will not only benefit international students but will foster a healthier learning environment for all students and for the entire community. American

teachers can begin by understanding the culturally informed preferred learning styles of international students, and especially East Asian students. This will enable faculty to facilitate a successful college experience for those students.

A multicultural learning community necessitates the involvement of important professionals, especially a Foreign Student Adviser. But ultimately, such a community will only be possible if the faculty commit themselves to learning cross-cultural teaching skills and engaging in healthy, personal relationships within the international student community. An understanding of the unique way East Asian students relate to their teachers, as authority figures and even as patrons, will also support these relationships.

The Christian college faculty will need to work together as a team to see a multicultural learning community established. My goal of facilitating that process will begin with a faculty handbook that makes specific recommendations, the subject of my final chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PROBLEM OF FACULTY RELATIONSHIPS WITH EAST ASIAN STUDENTS ON AN AMERICAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE CAMPUS: A PROPOSAL

International students on an American college campus face unique opportunities and challenges. The most extreme challenges are faced by students from cultures most distant from American culture, i.e., East Asian students. They have difficulty functioning in the classroom and with American students on campus in general. They also face significant difficulties relating to American faculty. Similar challenges are faced by the American faculty. Although they have a sincere desire to effectively connect with their international students they often do not know how to bridge the cultural gaps. They may wonder if it is even possible. My goal is to do whatever I can to facilitate those teacher-student relationships.

My conviction is that meaningful relationship with East Asian students on an American Christian college campus with members of the faculty can be effectively facilitated if two things take place: (1) If teachers are convinced of and committed to the Christian value of relationships in community, and (2) If teachers are taught basic cross-cultural communication and relationship skills. The result would be a new multicultural sensitivity in the classroom and on campus and the development of a true multicultural learning community.

In chapter one I introduced the problem by describing my particular ministry situation. The student population of Portland Bible College has a high percentage of international students, the majority of them coming from East Asian countries. The faculty is made up mostly of former pastors who bring a pastoral philosophy of education and ministry training into all they do. Although they are American teachers, their pastoral commitment extends to the international students. They simply need help in knowing how to bridge the cultural gaps and conduct meaningful relationships with their students. With this in mind I presented my claim and an outline of my plan to support that claim.

Part of my claim is that if the Christian value of relationships in community can be reinforced in the commitment of our American teachers, they will be motivated to do the work necessary to effectively connect with their East Asian students. In chapter two I sought to establish the Christian value of relationships in community by examining biblical examples of such relationships. I specifically examined the relationships of Moses and Joshua and Elijah and Elisha from the Old Testament, and the relationships of Paul and Timothy and Jesus and the Twelve from the New Testament. I also studied Old and New Testaments passages that deal with the idea of “strangers” or sojourners from other cultures and the mandate for hospitality to be extended to them. I continued my study in chapter two with an examination of the theme of relationship-in-community in Christian theology, looking at the Lutheran, Wesleyan and postmodern perspectives.

I continued the task of prioritizing the value of relationships in community in chapter three by surveying examples from Christian history. My focus was on the example of spiritual directors functioning in the context of spiritual community. The

tradition of spiritual direction and spiritual friendships in spiritual community give a clear vision of what is possible on an American Christian college campus. I also reviewed the story of cross-cultural relationships in the history of Christian missions. The recent development of mission partnerships provides an excellent example of relationships in community for the sake of mission and gives hope that these relationships can be built across cultural divides. The testimony of Christian Scripture, theology and Christian history confirms the priority given to relationships in the context of Christian community, including cross-cultural relationships. Since a Christian college constitutes a Christian community, faculty-student relationships become a high priority. This can lead to a new commitment on the part of American teachers to do whatever is necessary to bridge cultural barriers and establish effective relationships with their international students.

Building a relationship with a student from an East Asian culture involves more than a commitment to a Christian value. Time has to be given to culture learning. Those American teachers who wonder whether effective cross-cultural relationships are even possible can be taught a few simple cross-cultural communication and relationship skills that will give them new hope and motivation. In chapter four I presented the concept of culture, including cultural variability. I also painted a brief picture of U.S.A. culture and East Asian cultures. I then looked at the specific issues of cross-cultural communication and relationships skills. A commitment to learning these cross-cultural skills will enable a member of the faculty to bridge cultural differences and build relationships with East Asian students on campus.

Christian teachers on an American college campus are engaged in more than relationships. Their primary task is education. Their cross-cultural skills must include

the specific challenges of faculty-students relationships, as well as a new understanding of the multicultural classroom dynamic. In chapter five I explored specific cross-cultural teaching and learning issues. I started by looking at the phenomenon of international students on American college and university campuses and the cultural adjustment challenges they face. I then proposed the possibility of a multicultural learning community, made possible by culturally sensitive teachers and classrooms. A basic understanding of culturally informed learning and teaching styles and the unique patterns of faculty-student relationships in other cultures, especially East Asian cultures, makes such a community possible. Although the challenge seems daunting, a basic multicultural sensitivity learned over time, as well as a willingness to devote quality time to the task, makes it a reachable goal.

In this last chapter I will conclude with a specific proposal. I will begin with a case study involving my own relationship with a student from China. I will then present a stand-alone Faculty Handbook designed for teachers seeking to grow in their ability to relate to East Asian students. Because I am assuming teachers have not read this dissertation, the Handbook will include a brief summary of the principles researched in the previous chapters of this project. It will also make practical suggestions for the successful implementation of those principles at the end of sections five and six. I will end with a recommended reading list for interested faculty.

Case Study

Haixiang “Stanley” Zhang was born and raised in Shenzhen, China. He is a fourth generation Christian, his family participating prominently in their local Three Self

Patriotic Movement congregation. He attended a university in Singapore for 3½ years, majoring in Business and Marketing. He then spent one year as a Business Information Technology student at a university in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. While a student in Malaysia he attended a church pastored by a graduate of Portland Bible College. When he expressed an interest in training for church leadership he was referred to PBC.

Stanley arrived in Portland in January 2001. He has been a prominent figure on campus for several reasons: he is the first student from mainland China to attend PBC, he comes from a prominent Chinese family and has been careful to maintain his family ties and his cultural distinctives while at PBC, and his gregarious personality has endeared him to the hearts of students and faculty alike.

I was assigned as Stanley's faculty adviser for the fall semester 2002. Our relationship has grown steadily since that time. Because of my dissertation project I have kept a journal of our relationship and report from it here with his full knowledge and permission. Here are some relevant excerpts:

22 November 2002

"I took Stanley Zhang to lunch at the Unique Buffet. He said that the people from the province of Canton have the reputation for being the best cooks—which is why most of our Chinese food is Cantonese. (He is also Cantonese.) He told me of his vision for teaching and preaching as well as business. He intends to earn a Masters degree in both areas. He wants to continue to work in the Three Self Patriotic Movement when he returns home. He also wants to maintain contact with the Chinese unregistered house churches. Stanley then indicated a desire to be in our home and to spend more personal time together. He also stated that he is not resistant to the idea of mentoring."

1 February 2003

“Stanley invited us to attend a Chinese New Year’s celebration at New Happy Fortune. About thirty students joined us for dinner. We had traditional Chinese food, including some special dishes specifically served for New Year’s Day. Once again the politeness and honor shown by Stanley for me as his mentor was very obvious, yet not in a fawning way. It was appropriate for his culture. I am learning to have great appreciation for Stanley and for his culture.”

11 February 2003

“I took Stanley to lunch today. We had a long conversation about his family. He is a fourth generation Christian and he told me how much of a difference that has made compared to more traditional families in China. For instance, he referred to the different way the women in his family are treated. He also said marriages are not arranged in his family. He was very responsive to me. I also noted his sincere attitude of faith and gratitude. He wants to teach the Bible when he gets back home so we discussed the possibility of seminary.”

14 April 2003

“I went with Stanley to coffee this afternoon. He has been to college in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur before coming to PBC. He said mentoring relationships with faculty were not available to students before coming here. He expressed great appreciation for any kind of relationship with a teacher here and is very responsive. We had a good discussion about our relationship and decided to continue to meet during the summer break.”

5 May 2003

“I went to lunch with Stanley at his initiative. The importance of the extended family was our theme. His sister just had her first child in Canada and his parents are taking turns spending time with her and the baby while balancing the need to take care of their parents in China. There is something to be said for that model of family. Once again, Stanley was the picture of respect and thoughtfulness. He is going to check at Multnomah Seminary about the possibility of doing graduate work there.”

1 July 2003

“I ate lunch with Stanley, David H. and Gabe G. In a mixed group Stanley is much more reserved and formal. He was much quieter than I am used to. It could have been the presence of chatty Americans—or he might just have been tired.”

5 September 2003

“Stanley went with me and a couple of other students to lunch. I noticed again that he is more formal and careful in mixed groups. We then drove by ourselves to a Chinese grocery store. He is clearly more comfortable and personal when it is just us. We had a good visit on the way. He helped me buy some Thai rice.”

22 October 2003

“Stanley has been sick for several days. He came by my office and asked for prayer. I took him to our home and gave him some cold medication. It was an example to me of an Asian student looking to a teacher as a patron.”

3 November 2003

“Stanley responds to me more and more as a patron. He was sick for a couple of weeks and called me at home to ask for help. I bought him some food and medication

and prayed for him. Today he brought me a problem he is having with the DMV. I helped him write a letter, FAX it, etc. I was happy to help. I think I am part of his family now.”

15 November 2003

“I attended a birthday party for Stanley this evening—his 31st. He insisted that I sit at the head table with him. Another Chinese student from Indonesia organized the event and served us. I was informed of appropriate protocol during the party. After I got home Stanley called to see if I was offended that he had not publicly opened the birthday card I gave him. He told me that in China they would not publicly open a present without permission from the giver. He was kind enough to help me function culturally in our relationship. I assured him I was not offended.”

My ongoing relationship with Zhang Haixiang has not only been appropriate and helpful, my sincere desire to have a committed relationship with him, confirmed by my willingness to serve him in times of need, have established me as a member of his kinship network. He has communicated this to his family in China and they have communicated their appreciation to me. Stanley is not only my student, mentoree and friend, we are family.

Facilitating Relationships with East Asian Students: A Handbook for Faculty¹

Preface

The goal of this faculty handbook is to communicate a positive vision for relationships with international students, and specifically with East Asian students. It is designed to increase understanding and improve communication with these students. This will be done by emphasizing the sense of vision and purpose unique to Christian colleges and faculty. Christian Scripture, theology and history all illustrate the value placed upon the development of relationships in the context of Christian community. The unique opportunity afforded by the presence of international students on an American college campus will also be discussed.

The challenges involved in teaching and relating to international students require a basic understanding of culture, cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural relationships. These will be reviewed, along with relevant cultural profiles. The special needs of East Asian students on an American college campus will be outlined, including adjustment needs and the distinctives of a multicultural classroom. Finally, the possibilities of developing meaningful personal relationships with East Asian students will be presented. Specific recommendations for teachers will be given at the end of sections five and six.

¹ In designing this Faculty Handbook I examined two published handbooks: Virginia Bianco-Mathis and Neal Chalofsky, eds., *The Full-Time Faculty Handbook*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999); and James W. Moore, *Understanding, Advising, and Teaching International Students: A Handbook for Faculty* (Monmouth, OR: Western Oregon State College, 1987).

Everyone benefits from the success of international students. Not only the international students themselves but students from the host culture also gain benefits from their association with students from other cultures. Indeed the faculty and staff, the college community and the surrounding community as a whole are enriched and strengthened from these relationships. For those faculty who accept the challenge, personal and community growth awaits them.

This faculty handbook is designed with several groups of people in mind:

- Faculty who serve as advisers to East Asian students
- Faculty who are attempting a more intensive and/or personal relationship with an East Asian student
- Faculty who have a significant number of East Asian students in their class
- Faculty who feel a personal calling and commitment to engage East Asian students on campus

1 The Value of Faculty Relationships with International Students

1.1 The Christian Ideal of Relationships in Community Seen in Christian Scripture

A teacher in a Christian college accepts the ideal of relationships in community. As human beings we are made in the image of God—we are made for relationship. Our relationship with God naturally overflows in relationship with others. All we do has relationship as our means and our goal.

The value of relationships in community can be seen in several Old Testament models, including Moses and Joshua (Exodus 24:12-18; Numbers

27:15-23), and Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:16-21; 2 Kings 2:1-18). The New Testament presents the ideal of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the twelve (Mark 3:14; Matthew 10:1) and the relationship of Paul and Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19-23). All these relationships demonstrate the way in which mutual love and commitment can result in personal growth and fruitfulness.

Scripture specifically prioritizes relationships with “strangers.” In the Old Testament, provision was made by the covenant community for the care of sojourners (Exodus 12:48) and the prophets rebuked the nation for not considering the needs of strangers in their midst (Jeremiah 7:6, 7). In the New Testament, the believers were exhorted to extend hospitality to strangers (Hebrews 13:2), a characteristic especially seen in church leaders (1 Timothy 3:2).

1.2 The Christian Ideal of Relationships in Community Seen in Christian Theology

Christian theology has always placed a high value on relationships in community. The doctrine of the Trinity forms the foundation. The doctrine of Christ tells the story of God’s plan for restoring the human community. The doctrine of salvation is all about reconciliation, beginning with humanity’s relationship with God. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit shows the work of God in the midst of the human community. The doctrine of the church defines the

covenant community Christ is building. The doctrine of last things paints a beautiful picture of relationships with God and others brought to completion.

1.3 The Christian Ideal of Relationships in Community Seen in Christian History

The entire story of the Christian church shows various attempts to extend the community of Christ to all people. Restored relationship with God was the first object, resulting in the formation of covenant communities everywhere the Gospel prevailed. There were various expressions of believing community. The monastic communities developed relationships with spiritual directors, a tradition that continues to the present day. The goal of these kinds of spiritual relationships was the formation of spiritual community, a safe place of covenant and commitment where all members can grow into maturity. The recent development of mission partnerships provides an excellent example of relationships in community for the sake of mission, and especially in a cross-cultural context.

1.4 The Vision and Mission of a Christian College Faculty

Christian educators are committed to the process of personal growth and spiritual formation as well as academic training. In the process of equipping people for life and vocation they are committed to the transfer of Christian values and the development of godly character. This process requires more than classroom expertise—it requires committed personal relationships with students

on campus. As a result, a Christian college faculty seeks to be excellent and diligent in their field of study and in the quality of their relationships.

1.5 The Opportunity Presented by International Students

There were a reported 586,323 international student enrolled on American and university campuses during the 2002-03 school year. Fifty-one percent of them were from Asian countries. Many of these students will go on to become prominent leaders in their home countries.

While on campus international students contribute a healthy multicultural perspective, assisting American faculty and students alike in developing a world perspective. Having international students on campus creates an excellent opportunity for cross-cultural training. Many American Christian college students will have significant areas of ministry and leadership among ethnic groups in their own communities. The cross-cultural skills they learn as a result of forming relationships with international students will prepare them for effectiveness and sensitivity in Christian service.

2 Cross-cultural Communication and Relationships

2.1 The Meaning and Significance of Culture

Culture is a corporate pattern of values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that can be used to contrast one group with another. Culture is corporate human personality. Culture includes such outward things as food, clothing, architecture, music, attitudes toward time, and patterns of communication. Culture also

includes core issues such as values, beliefs, worldview, attitudes toward authority, gender roles, etc.

Everyone grows up and is educated in a particular culture. Everyone reflects a certain culture—in what they think, say and do, and in the way they do it.

2.2 The Challenge of Multiculturalism

We live in an increasingly pluralistic world. American cities are being populated with citizens from a variety of people groups who speak various languages and reflect various cultures. The American college campus is perhaps the most pluralistic of all communities. The ability to function successfully in such a community requires new attitudes, new skills and new sensitivities.

There are certain negative but natural human tendencies in the face of a multicultural context: *Stereotyping*—drawing conclusions about a certain group based on initial, superficial observations. *Ethnocentrism*—the tendency to think of one's own culture as the norm and standard and all others as abnormal or substandard. *Misattribution*—assigning meaning or motive to someone's behavior based on one's own culture or experience. *Xenophobia*—the fear of another culture.

The challenge of multiculturalism is to adopt a new attitude toward other cultures. This new attitude would include such things as: *Pluralism*—seeing all cultures as equal, observing and appreciating the distinctives of each one.

Accommodation—showing a willingness to coexist and build relationships with people from other cultures. *Biculturation*—the blending of two cultures.

This requires each participant to become a cultural learner, learning cross-cultural communication and relational skills.

2.3 Patterns of Cultural Variability

Cultural variables are ways of describing poles of key differences between cultures. Cultural anthropologists have proposed various patterns of cultural variability. Here are some of the most commonly agreed upon variables:

Individualism and Collectivism. In an individualistic culture the emphasis is placed on the goals of the individual. Personal identity is defined autonomously, without reference to others. The group exists to meet the needs of the individual. In a collectivistic culture people think of themselves primarily in terms of the group they belong to. There are no autonomous individuals. They value group harmony and group traditions.

Low and High Power Distance. Low power distance cultures structure life in an egalitarian manner. They see everyone as equals with equal rights. They do not necessarily accept the ideas or instructions of a “superior” at face value. People from a high power distance culture have greater acceptance for “inequalities” in society. Life is structured according to a strict hierarchy, and everyone knows their place. They do not question their superiors’ orders and expect to do what they are told to do.

Low and High Uncertainty Avoidance. A low uncertainty avoidance culture tends to be more accepting of ambiguity. People accept dissent and take risks more readily. They easily operate on a trial and error basis, learning and improving as they go. People from high uncertainty avoidance cultures have a lower tolerance for ambiguity, often expressed as a greater need for rules and less tolerance for people with deviant opinions or behavior. Individuals prefer avoiding competition and conflict whenever possible. They value consensus, politeness and humility.

Low and High Context. For a low context culture the content of the message is more important than the context. Communication tends to be direct and obvious, avoiding unnecessary subtleties. In a high context culture the message takes on meaning according to the specific context of the message. The context of an event is as important as the event itself.

Time As Linear and As Event. For some, time is primarily a matter of seconds, minutes and hours, flowing in a straight line. These cultures view time as a commodity to be used. They value being on time, not wasting time, finding time, making time, saving time, and not losing time. Other cultures view time seasonally. Time is a series of events. Time is elastic and is valued according to the quality of those events.

Task and Relationship Orientation. Task-oriented cultures place a high priority on achieving goals and getting the job done. Their identity as people tends to be based on the ability to perform. Relationships are built around shared jobs. Other cultures prioritize relationships that are personal and nurturing. They

value talking, relating, interacting, and just being together. Their highest priority is to establish and maintain personal relationships.

Dichotomistic and Holistic Thinking. Some cultures see life in black and white. They think two-dimensionally. Everything is either/or, good or bad, right or wrong. They value categories and specialization. Much of the world sees life holistically. They think three-dimensionally and relationally. They see life as a tapestry with interrelated colors and threads. They value a shared life in community.

Achievement and Status Focus. Earning a place in society through achievement and hard work is valued in some cultures. This describes an achievement-focused culture where a person's sense of self-worth is based on performance. Success is the measure of their worth. In other cultures, such things as parentage, age and birth order determine status. These status-focused cultures give respect to individuals based on their social position and rank. Those individuals find a sense of self-worth from faithfully functioning within their assigned role.

At either end of the poles of these cultural variabilities are found U.S. culture and East Asian culture. In general, a difference can be seen between Western and Eastern cultures.

Western Cultural Variables	Eastern Cultural Variables
Individualism	Collectivism
Low Power Distance	High Power Distance
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	High Uncertainty Avoidance
Low Context	High Context
Time As Linear	Time As Event
Task Orientation	Relationship Orientation
Dichotomistic Thinking	Holistic Thinking
Achievement Focus	Status Focus

2.4 The Dynamics of Cross-cultural Communication

Effective communication takes place on several levels.

Verbal communication includes various styles of language interaction that make it possible to function in various contexts. Language is a central feature of any culture. The meaning of any word is, in fact, culturally determined. Cross-cultural communication faces the difficulty of encountering words that may have differing denotations as well as connotations.

Non-verbal communication includes such things as the use of space, including personal space, body language, eye movement, and various touching behaviors. Effective cross-cultural communication requires knowledge of non-verbal as well as verbal communication skills.

Cross-cultural communication skills includes a knowledge of the difference between *direct and indirect speech*. Direct communication involves transmitting verbal messages that clearly, plainly and simply state the speaker's intentions. Indirect communication may use speech patterns that conceals the speakers intent out of deference or politeness.

The degree of *self-disclosure* in communication is another important dynamic. Some cultures are quick to disclose personal facts and feelings to those with whom they are communicating, while others consider personal information essentially irrelevant. Information about the group is considered much more relevant.

The mode of *emotional expression* is another aspect of the dynamic of cross-cultural communication. Collectivistic cultures govern their pattern of communication by a desire to maintain good relationships. That includes the amount and mode of the emotional expression considered appropriate. This also includes the degree of formality or informality from one culture to another.

Cross-cultural communication involves very different strategies for *conflict resolution*. Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. Conflicts are then resolved in a direct or indirect manner.

In general, certain behaviors are important if effective cross-cultural communication and relationships are to take place:

- The capacity to communicate respect
- The capacity to be non-judgmental
- The capacity to display empathy
- The capacity to be flexible
- Tolerance for ambiguity

Cross-Cultural Teaching & Learning	
U.S.A.	East Asia
Competitive orientation	Cooperative orientation
Linear view of time	Event view of time
Interactive student participation	Passive student participation
Informal interaction	Formal interaction
Teacher-centered teaching	Student-centered teaching
Individual work	Group work
Structured classroom	More unstructured classroom
Pragmatic thinking	Critical thinking

2.5 The Dynamics of Cross-cultural Relationships

Communication is not only the essence of culture, it is also the essence of relationships. Learning cross-cultural communication skills creates the possibility of having positive, personal cross-cultural relationships. There is only one way to develop a relationship with a person and that is to spend quality time with them. The more each person learns about the other the more comfortable they will be in their relationship.

One element of a developing relationship is the degree of *emotional satisfaction* persons have in their communication with each other. Does the communication process meet personal expectations?

Another important element is the degree of *anxiety or uncertainty* in the communication process. The more each party excels in the use of cross-cultural skills, and the more personal information and insights are shared, the more each will be certain of their relationship.

The way a certain culture *communicates intimacy* is important to the development of personal relationships between cultures. The more

communication persists, the more personal it is liable to become. Eventually it is possible for people from disparate cultures to develop an authentic personal friendship.

In order to develop a relationship with someone from another culture, several communication factors must be in place: (1) We must communicate our sincere and full acceptance of the other person; (2) We must be willing to express our personal feelings; and (3) We must avoid negative stereotyping of persons from other cultures.

Ultimately, personal cross-cultural relationships require more than cultural understanding and communication skills. A cross-cultural relational empathy is needed. This quality describes the process of two people from two cultures coming together to such a degree that a third shared culture results. Relational empathy involves mutual understanding and shared meaning between the two.

3 Characteristics of U.S.A. and East Asian Cultures

3.1 The Characteristics of U.S.A. Culture

Cross-cultural understanding begins with an honest assessment of one's own cultural characteristics. Members of an American culture assume an objective reality outside of themselves. The world is rational and orderly and operates according to natural laws. Because the world is real, U.S.A. culture takes history seriously. A clear distinction is made between myth and historical fact.

U.S.A. culture takes a problem-solving approach to understanding the world. Reality can be sorted into carefully defined categories. The world is basically mechanistic and can be understood and manipulated. As a result, well-informed individuals can control their own destiny.

The most fundamental aspect of U.S.A. culture is autonomous individualism. The individual person is the basic building block of society. Each person is an autonomous individual with an identity separate from the rest of society. Each individual can make his or her own choices irrespective of the choices of others.

3.2 The Characteristics of Chinese Culture

Buddhism. The Chinese worldview reflects the religious heritage of Buddhism. Buddhist “monism” sees reality in unique ways: (1) God is impersonal, and the world of experience is ephemeral—enlightenment comes by looking inward; (2) Reality emanates from some form of “Supernature” or “Absolute” which permeates the whole and constitutes the “really real”; (3) All of nature is an emanation of this absolute reality; (4) Individual human beings are also temporary emanations of the Absolute and will ultimately return to it; (5) Time is cyclical, made up of an endless series of existences or “transmigrations.”

Taoism. The philosophy of Lao Tzu proposed a way or “Tao” that embodies the harmony between two opposites; “Yin,” the dark side, the breath that formed the earth, and “Yang,” the light side, the breath that formed the

heavens. The Tao is a power that envelops, surrounds and flows through all things. The goal is balance and harmony in all areas of life.

Confucianism. The philosophy of K'ung Fu Tzu (Confucius) eventually became the official doctrine of Chinese life. It teaches five principles: (1) The observance of unequal relationships; (2) The family as a prototype of all social organizations; (3) Behaving in a virtuous manner towards others in a way that maintains each one's "face"; (4) Education and hard work must be prized; and (5) Moderation in all things—save, stay calm, avoid extremes, shun indulgence.

Maintaining harmonious relationships in Chinese society is the highest good. The importance of the "other" in defining an interdependent self determines cultural norms, including honesty, humility, social reserve and formality. Moral standards are also determined by relationships. Filial piety, hard work, tolerance for others, and harmony with others are the highest values of Chinese culture.

3.3 The Characteristics of Japanese Culture

Traditional Japanese culture is also derived from Buddhism and Confucianism, much of it borrowed directly from China. However, there are also unique elements of Japanese culture that come from Japanese history as well as a result of being an island culture.

The traditional religion of Japan is Shinto, an ancient, essentially animistic religion that worships a great variety of nature gods and goddesses. Ancestor worship and the emperor cult are extensions of traditional Shinto.

Japanese society is marked by great interdependence between all members of a group with an abundance of social and moral obligations. Japanese cultural values relate to the strict hierarchical structure of their society. They include such things as: acknowledgement of dependency on their group, ascribed obligation according to their role in the group, loyalty to one's superior, modesty in the presence of a superior, being less visible in public through conformity, and a high work, high achievement orientation. The Japanese go to great lengths to be polite. This is reflected in the Japanese language.

3.4 The Characteristics of Korean Culture

Korean culture is also rooted in the philosophy of Confucius. This especially affects the emphasis placed on relationships in Korean culture. Koreans value social relationships more than anything else. Koreans take status and protocol even more seriously than the Chinese or Japanese. Face pervades every aspect of Korean culture.

Touching another person in Korea is an affront. They have a high need for personal space. Korean culture is known for such things as: personal toughness, tenacity, nationalism, and a competitive spirit.

4 Adjusting to an American College Campus

4.1 The Process of Cross-cultural Adaptation

International students, and especially those from East Asian cultures, face tremendous adjustment challenges. The most obvious adjustment has to do with

language. English proficiency comes with great difficulty for those whose first language is oriental. East Asian students must not only master speaking and listening skills but also reading and writing skills.

There are significant educational adjustment challenges. The educational philosophy and system in the East is very different from that in the U.S. East Asian students face the challenges of the possibility of being treated stereotypically, of financial shortfalls, and of prejudice in some members of American culture.

There are also practical daily life challenges such as a very different diet, climate, medical services, and patterns of personal relationships, immigration laws, and new customs of all kinds. Cross-cultural adjustment can be very traumatic.

4.2 Culture Shock

The stress of attempting to internalize two or more cultures often results in what has been termed “culture shock.” Culture shock has been observed to occur in stages:

Honeymoon stage, an initial period when an international student functions much like a tourist in the new culture. Everything is new and exciting.

Crisis stage, the attempt to settle into a daily routine in the host culture, focusing more attention on the things that are unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and inconvenient, resulting in increasing stress. It is during this stage that students

can show signs of emotional strain, rejection, withdrawal, frustration, anger, confusion, even physical sickness.

Adjustment stage, a student eventually learns important stress management skills, new problem-solving skills, conflict-resolution strategies, and eventually a healthy appreciation for the host culture and an ability to make new friends in that culture.

4.3 Reverse Culture Shock

Those students who stay in the U.S. for two years or more will quite probably experience reverse culture shock when they return home. Reverse culture shock can also be seen to follow a predictable pattern:

Euphoria, an initial response of joy and celebration upon returning home, getting acquainted with friends and family.

Disappointment, when friends and family seem less interested in their sojourn and just want to get back to business as usual, combined with missing new American friends and even aspects of American culture that had been successfully adjusted to.

Moving on, after an opportunity to process thoughts and emotions there is a new resolve to get on with life in one's home culture.

4.4 Cross-cultural Adjustment Skills

International students can adjust to a new culture if they develop certain adaptive skills. Personal attributes such as open-mindedness and personal

flexibility contribute to successful adjustment. Personal characteristics such as extraversion, appropriate assertiveness, communication skills and people skills, also contribute to cross-cultural adaptation.

The degree of a student's educational experience, pre-departure training, and cross-cultural learning has a direct affect on a student's ability to make necessary adjustments. Above all, learning cross-cultural communication skills is essential. The desire or motivation to interact with members of a new culture is essential. In addition, one's attitudes toward the host culture and people in it must be healthy for adaptation to take place.

The degree to which communication continues with members of one's home culture is also an issue. Culture trainers recommend that ongoing communication with the home culture is an important element in long-term cross-cultural adaptation. This would include ongoing communication with friends and family back home.

There are practical tips for international students on developing cross-cultural adaptation skills. This advice is also helpful to teachers attempting a relationship with an international student:

- Learn the language by using it. Remember that understanding others and making yourself understood in a new language requires more rephrasing, repeating, and rechecking than usual.
- Be aware. Listen and observe carefully, paying special attention to nonverbal cues that may give insight into the process of cross-cultural communication.

- Suspend judgment. Observe and describe, but accept others and their integrity before evaluating.
- Try to empathize. Put yourself in the other person's place and try to look at the situation from his or her perspective.
- Recognize that anxiety is natural. Openness, a willingness to take risks, and an ability to laugh at one's mistakes can help you deal productively with anxiety.
- Be honest. It is usually best to admit your confusion rather than pretend that everything is all right.
- Become involved. The best way to learn about people and their culture is to immerse yourself in their daily life.

5 Conducting a Multicultural Classroom

5.1 The "Hidden Curriculum"

Every college and every classroom has a culture all its own. The "hidden curriculum" of every class is the majority culture represented by the teacher and the majority of the students. It must be admitted that an American classroom clearly reflects Western culture. Cultural development and learning happens best in a multicultural classroom.

A multicultural classroom will produce a unique cultural expression that combines all the most helpful elements of the various cultural groups represented. Whether or not the teacher values multiculturalism will directly determine whether or not the classroom will become a multicultural learning community.

5.2 East Asian Attitudes toward Education

East Asian families place a high priority on formal education. For instance, it has been shown that Japanese children begin their education at an earlier age than in the West, they show greater discipline in school, attend school longer, and do little else than study during their school years. A similar situation would prevail in other East Asian cultures.

While American education encourages competition, East Asian education teaches cooperation and harmonious interaction with other students. Avoidance of shame for oneself and one's fellow students is of paramount importance. American classrooms and teachers tend to be much more informal than a classroom and teacher in East Asia. East Asian classrooms emphasize tradition and the accomplishment of the group. The failure of a student will cause his entire in-group to lose face.

5.3 Cross-cultural Learning and Teaching Styles

Preferred learning styles vary from culture to culture. In addition, teachers tend to teach according to their own preferred learning style. A teacher in a multicultural classroom must be prepared to communicate with diverse learning styles in mind. To do so requires the development of cross-cultural teaching skills.

Western classrooms tend to prefer "field-independent" learning styles that are analytical, linear and two-dimensional. Asian classrooms prefer "field-dependent" learning styles that are relational, holistic and three-dimensional.

Preferred learning styles directly affect teaching styles. Traditional Asian classrooms tend to include repetitive memorization, special status given to the teacher, and the nonuse of questions. Asian students tend to prefer teacher-centered classroom methods. The possibility of losing face results in Asian students not admitting a mistake, not questioning a teacher, and not asking for help.

Teaching methods in a multicultural classroom must take culturally informed learning styles into consideration. In addition, difficulty with concentrating on another language for an extended period of time might also affect the conduct of the class. Lecture can be used but for fairly short periods of time and with an extra effort made to rephrase and clarify. Dialogue can be used while recognizing that direct questions would be considered inappropriate in an Asian classroom. Clearly stated indirect questions will have to be used if Asian students are to participate in the dialogue. Responses to answers given must also take the various cultural backgrounds into consideration. Questions must allow East Asian students to reflect in a holistic way, perhaps using a story or picture, or describing a hypothetical situation.

5.4 The Issue of Academic Honesty

In East Asian cultures community always comes before the individual. Individual learners function only within the larger context of community. Asian students prefer to study in groups. They would consider it disloyal to the group to not help a classmate with his or her assignments. Relationships are always

considered more important than any ideals or principles. An abstract notion of academic honesty carries less weight than helping another person.

In Western cultures, “intellectual property” is very much a part of the cultural value of “personal property” and “personal rights.” However, Asian cultures do not share any of these values. Some cultures would consider it arrogant and inappropriate to claim an idea as one’s own. No one would consider making a public (or written) statement they did not assume represented the thoughts of the whole community. Final authority is not located in any one individual, no matter how high their status.

As a result, plagiarism, or the use of the ideas or words of another without due documentation, is a very common occurrence in a classroom with Asian students. The problem of plagiarism in many ways summarizes the challenges of a multicultural classroom. Meeting those challenges requires special commitment and special sensitivity.

5.5 Building a Multicultural Learning Community

The Christian college campus has the potential of being more than a collection of classrooms and a calendar of programs and events. Because of the unique faith commitment of students and teachers, the campus can become an empowering spiritual community on several levels.

The first level of community for an Asian student is his in-group. The immediate family, even though outside of the college campus, continues to be a

constant source of identity, support and guidance. In addition, classmates from the same or a similar culture form a kind of extended kinship group.

Each class can become an expression of Christian community, a safe place of growth and health for individual students. The various student groups can foster community in unique ways. Community building skills can be used to make dormitories a place of spiritual *koinonia*. The faculty and staff can also commit themselves to making the campus as a whole an authentic expression of community.

If teachers have certain personal attributes they will be in a good position to facilitate a multicultural learning community. These attributes includes such things as:

- Open-mindedness, the ability to keep one's opinions flexible and receptive
- Flexibility and adaptability, the ability to be tolerant of ambiguity and to not leap to conclusions
- Curiosity, a desire to know about other people, places and ideas
- Ability to communicate, verbally and nonverbally, formally and informally
- Positive regard for others, the ability to express warmth, empathy and respect
- Positive and realistic expectations, both for one's self, for the students, and for the learning process
- Sense of humor, the ability to laugh at mistakes

5.6 Recommendations for Teachers

- Take the posture of a culture learner. Be willing to spend extra time exploring the cultural nuances of your students. Consider it an adventure.
- Avoid negative stereotypes. Take time to learn the reasons why your students respond (or do not respond) in the way they do.
- Work to facilitate a multicultural environment in your classroom. Encourage the American students to be open-minded and supportive. Be open to the unique contributions your East Asian students can make to your class.
- Be aware of different attitudes toward gender and gender roles among your East Asian students. Try to foster more positive attitudes whenever possible, but do so with respect.
- Recognize that your East Asian students consider you as the teacher to be an authority figure. Do not object to them showing you more respect than you are accustomed to.
- Learn the students' names. Research indicates that learning is facilitated when it takes place in a good social climate. Something the teacher can do to help promote a good social climate is to learn the names of the students.
- Recognize the existence of cultural in-groups. Think of them as a support network and not a clique. Use the importance of groups to facilitate group work in class. However, take the time to form groups intentionally, including a variety of students.
- Be aware of the need to maintain “face” for East Asian students in the classroom. Be careful calling on students in class and asking questions such

as, “Do you understand what I just said?” Be aware that the “answer” to such direct questions should not always be taken at face value. Be aware of indirect speech patterns used by your students. Develop the skill of asking indirect questions.

- Do not be offended at the silence of your East Asian students. For many of them silence is a sign of their respect for you, the teacher. It may also be a cultural sign of humility and even maturity.
- Be aware that your East Asian students are relatively uncomfortable with too much informality in the classroom. Take time to explain that such informality, including student interaction, is not inappropriate in an American classroom.
- Be careful in the use of humor in the classroom. Sarcasm and teasing may be especially offensive to the East Asian students. However, the appropriate use of humor may still be helpful in setting the tone for the class.
- With second language English speakers in your classroom be aware of the need to rephrase and clarify more often. Speak slowly and distinctly but not more loudly. It is not necessary to use “baby talk,” just be clear.
- Provide explicit written course requirements. Second language English speakers quite often have difficulty understanding verbal instructions. It is helpful to include as many details on the written syllabus as possible and to go over the syllabus in class.

- Explain the American value placed on academic honesty. Since there is a vast cultural difference at this point, take more time to contrast cultural values while reinforcing the need for academic honesty in an American classroom.
- Use a variety of teaching methods whenever possible. Develop a repertoire of teaching methods that you can use to deal with specific learning situations.
- Try not to lecture for more than 15 to 20 minutes without interjecting other teaching techniques.
- Hand out written lecture notes whenever possible.
- Avoid the use of slang or idioms. International students have a great deal of difficulty translating slang and idioms into something meaningful to them.
- Paraphrase complex ideas. Second language English speakers can sometimes be assisted in gaining a better understanding of complex concepts and ideas if the professor is willing to paraphrase.
- Present key words and ideas visually, either by writing them on the chalkboard or including them in your presentation. Remember to leave the information up long enough for students to copy it down.
- When designing group work for a class session take the time to write questions and explain them in advance, including the reasons why you consider the questions and the group exercise important for them. Try to ask the questions indirectly.
- Allow your East Asian students to tape your lectures. This will free the student from trying to listen and take notes simultaneously. The student can

concentrate on listening to the instructor during class and then listen to the tape for further reinforcement and note taking.

- Use study questions as guidance for an exam. Providing study questions before exams are particularly helpful for international students.
- Allow students to use Foreign Language/English dictionaries during an exam. To force a non-native English speaking international student to take examinations without the use of a Foreign Language/English dictionary puts him or her at a distinct disadvantage.
- Try to write culture-neutral exams. Evaluation instruments should never be considered culturally neutral. No matter how “objective” the format, while a test may be valid for members of one culture, it may not measure what it seeks to measure in another. Second language English speakers seldom understand the little nuances of the English language that make a true-false or multiple-choice question more than a guessing game. In addition, many international students have difficulty completing examinations in the same length of time as American students. It is important to allow international students more time to complete examinations.
- Encourage your students to form a study or support group outside of class. It is best to have members of one’s own home culture as well as culturally sensitive students from the host culture as members of the study group. Help facilitate this process if necessary.
- Encourage your student to find an appropriate tutor. One-on-one assistance from a student or staff member, if that tutor has acquired necessary cross-

cultural skills, can be very helpful to international students. Help the student find a tutor if necessary.

- Recognize that the East Asian students will have a well-developed facility for rote memorization. Their ability to do well on an exam does not necessarily imply high levels of comprehension. Try to move them forward in the direction of critical thinking, but do so respectfully. Take extra time to explain the concept and process of critical thinking. Reinforce it positively whenever you observe it.
- Initiate contact with students who are having difficulty. Remember that in many cultures an offer for the international student to “come by my office” if they are having problems is usually not considered to be a legitimate offer of assistance. “Can you come to my office this Friday at 10?” is considered a legitimate offer to provide assistance.
- Look for signs of culture shock in your students. If they are showing stress related signs consider taking the time to talk to them about their experience. Consider including an intermediary.
- Assist those who have failed. In cases of academic failure, assess the causes, try to find learning problems and alternative courses of action. The problems of the international student may be different from what appears on the surface.
- Academic excellence is a very high value for your East Asian students. It reflects not only on them but also on their family and their entire kinship group. If they take the time to discuss their grades with you, do not misunderstand their intentions. They are not necessarily asking for special

favours. However, if they feel they have a close relationship with you or if they look at you as a patron, they may ask for special help. While explaining the need for fairness, take the time to assist them in their pursuit of excellence.

- Get acquainted with the International Student Adviser and offer to assist with the task of building a multicultural community on campus.
- Seek out opportunities to interact with other members of the faculty who are seeking to learn cross-cultural skills. Encourage each other as you learn together.

6 Faculty Relationships with East Asian Students

6.1 The Challenge of Cross-cultural Faculty Relationships

The way American teachers conduct relationships with American students is vastly different than the way Asian teachers conduct themselves with Asian students. East Asian culture defines certain rules for faculty-student relationships. *Rules of Deference*: Relationships between teachers and students occur in the context of ascribed status in Asian cultures. *Rules of Propriety*: The degree to which a teacher conducts himself or herself in a formal or informal manner varies greatly from culture to culture. East Asian students expect their teachers to be more formal than they are perhaps used to. *Rules of Privacy*: The extent to which self-disclosure is appropriate is also cultural. East Asian students would expect their teachers to be more private.

East Asian education defines specific cultural roles for teachers. These roles are very different from those anticipated in an American classroom.

Teacher as Authority Figure: In Asian cultures teachers are viewed as authority figures in society as a whole. This will influence the way teachers relate to their students. *Teacher as Mentor:* Other Asian cultures look at their teachers as a personal guide or tutor. *Teacher as Patron/Parent:* In some cases a teacher may become a parent figure. If a teacher develops a personal relationship with an East Asian student, he or she may actually become a member of that student's kinship group.

The personal qualities needed for relationships with international students are: cross-cultural sensitivity, personal warmth, and a willingness to help and be patient. With these qualities any teacher can develop a personal relationship with an East Asian student.

6.2 Faculty Partnership with the International Student Adviser

A central element of any multicultural learning community is the International Student Adviser. It is the job of the ISA to provide international students with assistance in realizing their academic objectives. This includes such things as immigration advising, orientation, advice on financial issues, cross-cultural counseling, and mediating with college faculty and staff.

The ISA is in the best position to encourage cross-cultural relationships on campus. Being aware of the cross-cultural challenges in student relationships is very important. Encouraging the formation and healthy functioning of a multicultural community involving both students and faculty is the unique

opportunity of the ISA. However, these goals cannot be achieved without the full participation of the faculty at every point.

6.3 The Process of Building Faculty Relationships with East Asian Students

Because a student from an East Asian country comes from a collectivistic cultural perspective, their teacher is a person of status in their lives. Building a relationship with them takes time and patience. East Asian students respond to sincere and consistent personal interest in their lives accompanied by practical acts of services. Since the classroom is a formal context by definition, a personal relationship with an East Asian student must be formed outside of class.

American faculty desirous of forming relationships with East Asian students must commit themselves to the process of cross-cultural training. Culture learning is a lifelong adventure requiring a lifelong commitment.

6.4 Recommendations for Teachers

- If you want a relationship with an East Asian student, be willing to initiate contact with them. Then be persistent—some may need two or three clear contacts before they feel the freedom to respond.
- Be willing to take time outside of class to do so. Formal classroom contexts are not conducive to building personal relationships.
- Realize that Western style relationships may not work with your East Asian students. Do not be disappointed if they do not understand a more traditional

advisory or mentor relationship. Be prepared to function as an authority figure or tutor or patron.

- Be willing to engage in relaxed times of conversation. Do not spend personal time with your student if you are in a hurry.
- Be prepared for more formality in your relationship with an East Asian student than you might have with an American student, especially in a group setting. Do not object to the formality, recognizing that there will be greater comfort and informality the more intimate your relationship becomes. Be prepared to learn the appropriate protocol, especially for social events.
- Look for common ground with your East Asian student. Your faith in Christ is the starting place. Find other areas of interest you share in common.
- Express appreciation for specific aspects of your student's home culture.
- Take the time to relate to the East Asian student community as a whole. Attend some of their social functions.
- Be careful of physical interaction with East Asian students, especially those of the opposite sex. Physical expressions of affection may be appropriate after a deeper personal relationship has been established.
- Learn the value of an intermediary. Another East Asian student on campus, ideally one who is older, been on campus for awhile, and who is the same sex, can be very helpful in the early stages of your relationship. He can also help with more difficult communication problems, conflict resolution, etc.
- Be aware of the significance of gift giving. Your East Asian students are not attempting to bribe you. They are communicating their respect for you.

However, in some cases they may also be establishing a degree of obligation to them. Accept and give gifts thoughtfully.

- Remember the importance of maintaining “face” in your relationship. Be careful to communicate respect to your students. Be sincerely complimentary whenever possible.
- Your East Asian student will tend to take your verbal communication too literally. Be sure you do not make promises (or imply promises) that you cannot keep.
- Learn to listen to verbal communication cross-culturally. Recognize the importance to your student of communicating respect to you, of being complimentary, polite, etc. In the process your student may not always say exactly what he means, especially if answering a yes or no question. Take time to clarify what is being communicated.
- Do not expect high levels of self-disclosure from your East Asian student. They will communicate personal needs to you only if your long-term relationship with them has resulted in you being “adopted” into their kinship group.
- If correction is needed, try to avoid direct accusation or conflict resolution. The need to preserve face is once again very important. Indirect questions, questions stated positively, and the involvement of an intermediary are important.

- If you are seeking a more personal relationship with an East Asian student, be prepared to spend more quality time with them. Be consistent and faithful in your relationship
- Be aware of the possibility of being “adopted” into an East Asian student’s kinship group. Do not pursue a more intimate relationship with him unless you are willing to become part of his family.
- Consider having your East Asian student to your home for a social occasion. Invite at least one other Asian student to make a small group.
- Communicate invitations clearly and carefully, preferably in writing.
- Communicate self-disclosure, but do it slowly and carefully.
- Express sincere concern and commitment to your East Asian student, and do so often.
- Demonstrate your concern in practical ways. Be prepared to serve your student, especially when they have a personal need such as illness.
- Communicate your interest in your student’s family and ask about them every time you are together.
- Be willing to assist in your student’s transition home, helping them through reverse culture shock. Keep in touch with them after they return home.
- Take regular time to evaluate your relationship. Ask questions of yourself as well as your student.

Conclusion

It is possible to provide an enriching educational environment for East Asian students on an American Christian college campus. It requires vision, commitment, and an understanding of certain cross-cultural skills. With the investment of a little bit of quality time and effort, a true multicultural learning community can be established.

Recommended Reading List

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