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A CHURCH'S APPROACH TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

ENCOUNTERS IN SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

BY

CAROLOTTA ANWEILER

B.A., Strategic Communication, Cornerstone University, 2014

THESIS

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A CHURCH'S APPROACH TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION ENCOUNTERS IN SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of short-term mission trips by churches and/or faith-based organizations has increased tremendously (Howell & Door, 2007, Anaheier & Themudo, 2005). However, no research has been completed on the training offered to in preparation for these types of trips, specifically, training for intercultural trips. I joined a church on their short-term mission experience to examine as a participant observer how they were trained to interact with people of another cultural group and then, how the training affected the interactions on the trip.

Through the use of Grounded Theory, I examined the discourse used in the trainings offered and throughout interactions on the trip. I then analyzed the effectiveness and appropriateness of those trainings and specific lessons based on their enactment in the field. This uncovered the church's approach to intercultural encounters, showing they used a relationship maintenance strategy more similarly resembling Rusbolt's (1998) Investment Model of Communication, and allowed me to propose future research and the beginnings of a possible theory for faith-based organizations and non-profit/non-governmental organizations.

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<u>Chapter One: Introduction</u>

I attended my first Christian mission trip, to Chihuahua, Mexico, at the age of fourteen. I was not yet in high school, did not speak the country's language, and felt ill-prepared. Much of this sentiment was due to my age, immaturity, and general lack of self-confidence. Still, some of it was due to a lack of intercultural training and preparation. I was seventeen when I first noticed the naivety of some of our training, programs, and teachings—necessary as they were. "Don't say 'embarasado' for 'embarrassed'. That actually means you're pregnant" and "Kiss everyone on the cheek when you introduce yourself" were two major tenets I was taught before these trips. Any training we received was focused only on the dominant, national culture (as opposed to the indigenous communities' cultures, like the Tarahumara Indians' culture, in which we would be working), and the etiquette and language lessons taught were also mainly formulaic. *When you meet someone—do this. When you are embarrassed—don't say this.* Both of these are important lessons for approaching another culture; however, our "cultural training meetings" in which we learned such things, never actually defined culture. Neither did they teach us that we – U.S. Americans, Christians, church members, Midwesterners, middle-class folks – had our own culture(s) that included different values, beliefs, norms, etc. that influenced our thoughts and behaviors, in the same way that the host people for our mission trips had their own culture(s). The lack of definition and training on culture did not benefit members of the mission team, or the communities we visited.

These experiences are now almost ten years old, and since then many organizations have developed and now provide intercultural training to missionaries and mission groups (e.g. Mission Training International, Center for Intercultural Training, United World Mission, etc.). Christian mission organizations have improved their cultural understanding, sensitivity, and

training. I would suggest that Christian mission work has improved from its often-horrid past

(e.g. The Crusades, colonialization in North and South America, Africa, etc.). However, as with

any organization, there is always room for improvement, and there is still a lot of room for

improvement regarding intercultural training within any faith-based organizations, specifically in

Christian mission work.

 For this reason, I decided to complete my thesis by examining cultural trainings offered

for a short-term mission trip within a Christian church. Howell and Dorr (2007) a defined a

short-term mission as "encompass[ing] an assortment of possible time frames, ranging from one

week to several months. It involves a spectrum of experiences including construction, teaching,

childcare, evangelism, and social work, usually in an overseas context" (p. 238). For the

purposes of the present study, the term short-term mission work will describe these types of trips

within faith-based organizations, more specifically, the Christian church.

 Howell and Dorr (2007) go on to describe the difference between those travelling for

leisure and those attending a mission trip. The short-term mission trip participants are faced with

challenges, discomforts, and self-sacrificial circumstances that "become the 'place' for liminality

and renewal" (p. 242). Whether driven by empathy or belief, many people feel *called* to

complete short-term mission work, and much of that work is global. Additionally, for the

purposes of my research, faith-based organizations (henceforth, FBOs) described in this text will

be Christian organizations dedicated to social activism as opposed to including any and all

religious organizations. Finally, while the literature presented will discuss multiple FBOs or

FBOs in general, my study will deal with just one faith-based organization, the Southwest

Christian church (name changed for anonymity).

In studying the short-term mission process, I wanted to specifically observe any and all training offered to the team, paying particular attention to intercultural training. In order to view the most authentic short-term mission trip experience, I joined the Southwest Christian church on their trip to the Quechua[1] region of Ecuador as a participant observer.

Mission work in the Christian church has been used for centuries and many factors have contributed to its changes over the years. One such change has particularly affected the increase of mission work. Globalization has brought the needs of the world out of the periphery and into central focus, while also offering more ease and opportunities to travel to distant or international locations. This has generated an increase in both international nonprofit work and Christian mission trips. However, while this type of work has increased, research in this field is lacking.

It seems that intercultural communication scholars are overlooking an incredible opportunity for potential research Researchers are missing an opportunity to study the development of a group through their intercultural training and experiences, and then in turn, educate and help these organizations and develop their current practices. By examining this, scholars could clearly chart the cultural and intercultural understanding of a group and how it changes with different trainings. Research in this area would also allow them to examine the intersections of multiple cultures, specifically of religious cultures and national/geographical cultures, in the somewhat contained or controlled environment of a mission trip.

Research Questions:

As I will discuss in the following chapters, this study seeks to contribute to the limited conversation of faith-based organizations and their short-term mission work. Specifically it will

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[1] [1] *Quechua* is often used interchangeably with *Kichwa*, although some say *Kichwa* refers only to the language used by the *Quechua* people.

examine the training and implementation of intercultural strategies and tools during the short-term mission process. Therefore, the research questions that guide my study are as follows:

RQ 1. What intercultural trainings are offered by a specific faith-based organization in preparation for short-term mission trips?

RQ 2. How is this training informing the approaches to intercultural encounters on the trip?

RQ 3. Are these approaches appropriate? Effective?

I will analyze the current approach to intercultural engagement used by a Christian church in order to suggest possible improvement for these trips in the future. Specifically, I will analyze the preparation and intercultural training of short-term mission team members. Studying this could benefit faith-based organizations by offering suggestions for future improvement in their approaches to intercultural engagement.

Theoretical Foundation

For the reasons detailed below, I use Grounded Theory in my research. This is a general methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss, first published in 1967, who describe this methodology as data-driven, as all findings should come organically from the data. I wanted to focus exclusively on my data and to pull out themes, rather than fit my data into a pre-existing theory. I also wanted to be able to continue to ask questions of my data and my participants, returning to them multiple times, which is one component of Grounded Theory.

In Grounded Theory, researchers collect and code data early in the process to guide and direct additional data collection. Thankfully, this approach occurred mostly organically in my research. I initially collected data on this subject for coursework. I then examined it and developed preliminary themes. However, I then decided to extend my study past the single

classroom assignment, and to use it as my thesis work. Within Grounded Theory, I was able to return to my participants, and with further consent collected more data based on the discovered themes, and continue my analysis. And I knew moving forward that as themes or situations presented themselves, I wanted to be able to investigate them, and not have to simply stick to a theme because a theory suggested it. Strauss and Corbin (1994) state that, "grounded theory researchers are interested in *patterns* of action and interaction between and among various types of social units (i.e., actors)" (p. 278). I was very interested in the interactions of multiple social units, and wanted to be able to follow those interactions unbound by specific variables.

Again, this "interactive context" means not only that researchers may interact with their participants, but that they also interact with their data. Thus this theory allowed me to return to both my data and participants multiple times, doing as Charmaz (2007) puts it, "simultaneous data collection and analysis (p. 6396). For example, after I collected preliminary data for coursework, I found multiple themes within my data that I hoped to explore further, and by using the principles of Grounded Theory, I was able to do so. After the mission trip concluded, I was able to conduct a follow-up interview (Appendix A) with our leader to address some themes and collect additional data.

Finally, Grounded Theory also encourages the development of theory from one's data. As there is no theory that has emerged as of yet from short-term mission work explicitly addressing intercultural interactions, I hoped to use my findings to contribute to previous models or theories of intercultural engagement, or to begin the development of a new model or theory of the effectiveness of intercultural training for short-term mission teams. In order to accomplish this, I looked for patterns and themes that emerged in the data in order to assemble a theory or structure.

Personal Biases

While I did my best to remove biases, as a participant, as well as an observer, I must share my standpoint as the researcher. Conquergood (1991), in discussing ethnography, states that researchers should embrace their subjectivity and use it as a tool in their studies. I consider myself a Christian, and as stated in the introduction, have attended and led multiple mission trips. I believe I am biased in two ways: First, I do have a passion for mission work. I feel I have seen the benefit of short-term mission work, but I know it is not always perfectly executed. The second way in which I am biased is that I have seen and studied the many ways in which mission work has failed, hurt, offended, acted ignorantly, and been entirely unprepared to handle intercultural encounters. In studying intercultural communication, I have seen a plethora of criticism of international non-profit work, particularly when involving religious affiliations. I understand these critiques and often agree with them. That being said, I hoped to take those criticisms into my research and use them to improve these types of trips. Specifically, I wanted to examine the cultural training offered to participants of these trips and examine whether the training was both appropriate and effective for what these individuals would encounter on their mission trip.

Grounded Theory encourages researchers to embrace their subjectivity. Charmaz (2014) described how previously researchers were often encouraged to ignore their subjectivity in order to be as unbiased as possible. She stated, "researchers erased the subjectivity they brought to their studies rather than acknowledging it and engaging in reflexivity" (p. 14). Instead, Grounded Theory recognizes "the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data" (p. 14). I knew that I would be approaching my data from my own viewpoint, which values the work of short-term missions. While others would argue for an end to all mission work, my

perspective is that it can be beneficial *and* that we can critique and improve the process as a whole. As a researcher, my goal was to study short-term mission work in order to improve it, and I recognize that this greatly affected how I approached my data and analysis. For this reason, I believe that this type of data collection to be the most appropriate to complete my research goals. I will discuss more of my methodology in chapter 3, including the use of open coding in order to uncover organic themes in my data.

Significance of Study

Reiterating previous statements, the goal of this research is to analyze the approach to intercultural engagement within short-term mission work currently employed by a Christian church. Through examination and critique of emerging data, I hope to uncover possible recommendations for modifications and improvements for intercultural training in future Christian, short-term mission work. Studying this could benefit faith-based organizations by offering suggestions for future improvement in their approaches to intercultural engagement. This could lead to better intercultural training, intercultural engagement, and ultimately, intercultural relationships.

Preview of Future Chapters

Chapter 2 includes a literature review of research pertinent to this study. The following chapter describes my methods focusing on my use of Grounded Theory and process of coding. Chapter 4 contains my analysis and describes the codes presented by my data. Finally, chapter 5 concludes the study. In it, I summarize my findings, return to my research questions, and suggest a model to be used in future studies of short-term mission work.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

In this chapter I will discuss literature relevant to non-profit and faith-based organizations and their international work. Specifically I will discuss short-term mission work within FBOs, considering the motivation of such work and explaining some factors that led to the increase of these types of trips. I will then review what types of intercultural training have been employed in these settings, including an analysis of these types of trainings. Finally, I will discuss how the discourse of these organizations used in their trainings creates the reality and expectations for short-term mission teams in regards to how they approach and interact with other cultural groups.

Faith-Based Organizations as/and Non-Profit Organizations

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often evaluated in terms of their economic results (Koschmann, 2011). These organizations are assessed to see money spent, money saved, number of members, or whatever their specific desired outcome might be. Researchers spend much less time studying the qualitative results rather than the quantitative, economic results of these organizations. FBOs, which are often classified as either NPOs or NGOs, have not been studied in this way either. Burridge (2015), who specifically studies Christian missionaries and mission work, stated that much of the literature he produced, and that was produced in general, was a reflection on the lives of particular missionaries in the forms of biographies, history of missions, etc. He stated:

> For what I had found lacking in the accounts of social scientists, including missionaries, was not only a theory or logic but also some sense of the components of Christian mission: why missionaries were there at all, what led them to do what they were doing.

Too much seemed to be taken for granted and subsumed in colonialism and conversion,

and, more recently, enculturation. (p. xiii)

Much like the study of NPOs and NGOs, mission work has not been examined for its basic tenets

including its motivations, goals, training, etc. Without specific research and reflection on these

topics, there is little hope for their development.

While research on this topic has remained scarce, the employment of short-term missions

has increased tremendously among faith-based organizations. Welliver and Northcutt (2004)

found that in selected and monitored organizations the practice of short-term mission trips

increased by 630% between 1996 and 2001. Despite the growth in number of mission trips, the

lack of corresponding growth in research might be explained by the great deal of dislike, distrust,

and disagreement expressed by many scholars and individuals toward faith-based organizations

and to religion more broadly. Nash (2001) argues that religion was sorely neglected in academic

research. He stated, "I fear that those of us in higher education preparation programs throughout

the country have defined diversity and pluralism in such a way as to systematically exclude

religious considerations" (p. 9). Nakayama and Halualani (2010) stated that multiple sites of

critical intercultural communication research have been "sorely neglected" (p. 11). Lengel and

Holdsworth agreed, adding, "certainly religion, as a site of considerable interaction between

creeds and cultures, qualifies as one [such] area of neglect" (2015, p. 250), and suggested that

faith-based organizations or FBOs be studied as intercultural sites. The dearth of research on this

topic suggests an opportunity to explore this increasingly popular work.

One reason for the neglect of this topic is that many scholars argue against the

implementation of religious mission work in general, believing it is an ethnocentric approach to

both culture and religion. Burridge (2015) stated,

Within my working life as an anthropologist as well as outside it, I have heard precious

little but ill of missionaries and mission work. Whatever they might have achieved in the

past, they are now thought to be passé, parts of an outworn and mostly discredited

colonialism. (p. x)

He goes on to say that he did not find the stereotype he was shown in academia to be true in his

own research. Instead, he believed that the unfavorable depiction of missionaries stemmed not

necessarily from a dislike for them personally, but from an aversion to what they do.

Non-Governmental & Non-Profit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations are often the focus of researchers' studies. However, as

Koschmann (2011) stated, and as mentioned previously, this research is often completed through

an economic lens, even though nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are not an economically based

entity. In his article, Koschmann argued for the benefit of putting communication at the

"foundation of our investigation" (p. 1) of nonprofit organizations. He suggested this would

include the theorization of different aspects of nonprofit organizations. Koschmann further

argued that NPOs should be separate from the study of economics, as the inclusion of nonprofits

in this category would paint them solely as "failures of the market" (p. 2). In the case of hospitals

and many other agencies, Koschmann argued that nonprofit organizations are not failures of

capitalism, but instead are unique social corporations that work to provide their own types of

services.

He further stated that communication theories are needed for examining the "actual lived

experiences of nonprofit organizations" and the "processes of organizing" (p. 3), thus

demonstrating the distinctiveness of NPOs and NGOs. Again, as nonprofit or nongovernmental

organizations are not businesses, there is an opportunity to study them in a different way. These

organizations' goals often include a social activism or social justice component. Measuring

social change, rather than solely economic success, requires a different type of analysis. This

different type of measurement could include the study of number and quality of relationships

created or the results of intercultural interactions of short-term mission work. Koschmann also

suggested that communication scholars begin to study the lived experiences and the language

and discourse of nonprofits, arguing that the investigation of lived experiences calls for a

phenomenological study. Koschmann thus called for qualitative studies of these organizations in

order to go beyond the numbers or costs, as many economic studies would do. As Frumkin

(2002) argued, "the character of the nonprofit sector is rooted in service delivery, social

entrepreneurship, civic/political engagement, and even religious faith. These aspects of the

nonprofit sector shape the lived experiences of those involved and comprise their social reality"

(p. 4). The discourse of a non-profit creates the norms, values, goals, etc. that make up the reality

of the organization.

Faith-Based Organizations

Lengel and Holdsworth (2015) sought to research and analyze measures taken to enact

cultural, spiritual, and organizational change within an FBO. The measures they studied included

encouraging engagement with an increasingly diverse community and fostering culturally

specific, culturally inclusive, and culturally inspired approaches to benefit the wellbeing of

diverse community members served. Lengel and Holdsworth found that the identity of an

organization and the identities of its members, the steadfastness to which they hold to that

identity, and the amount of public religious display affect how and if an FBO is able to grow and

change and how members act within it. Because they viewed FBOs as cultures, Lengel and

Holdsworth found that the fluidity of an organization greatly affected the interactions of that

FBO and other NGOs. In other words, understanding the scope, salience, and intensity of the identity of a culture indicates how a culture will interact with other, even similar cultures.

This may seem like a simple statement. The prevalence, strength and use of a cultural identity will affect how that culture grows, changes, and interacts with other cultures. Lengel and Holdsworth suggested that FBOs and NGOs could be categorized together and that they should be described as having their own cultures. Lengel and Holdsworth stated that by viewing organizations this way, researchers could then offer a critical perspective from which the organization's interactions with other organizational cultures could improve. With this view of organizations, short-term mission teams within these organizations would also be viewed as a culture with a particular identity. By regarding a short-term mission team as a culture, researchers are able to observe some of the factors that formed the culture and then how that team culture interacted with other cultures.

Short-term Mission Work

As defined earlier, a short-term mission trip is one lasting anywhere from a few months to a week, in which trip-goers seek to enact some form of community aid. Howell and Dorr (2007) suggested that the short-term mission "has become a familiar evangelical sign within religious practice generally" (p. 238). The number of short-term mission trips has increased greatly (Welliver & Northcutt, 2004). One cause of this drastic increase is globalization, which could be defined as various phenomena leading to an increasingly social, political and economic interconnected world. In the cultural sense, Stohl (2005) defines globalization as an increasing global awareness or consciousness, a more global identity. And while globalization is nothing new, in conjunction with advances in technology it has made these sorts of trips much easier and more commonplace. In fact, Anaheier and Themudo (2005) discuss the internationalization of

the nonprofit in *The Jossey-Boss Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management,* stating

that the globalization of the nonprofit is not a "recent phenomenon" and reference the Roman

Catholic Church and Islam for their "transnational aspirations" (p. 102). Similarly, there has

been a more recent jump in the internationalization of nonprofit work. Anaheier and Themudo

stated that,

> the nonprofit sector is increasingly international in scope, and some larger nonprofits
>
> have grown into veritable global actors… By the late 1990s, the ten largest development
>
> and relief INGOs alone had combined expenditures of over $3 billion, equivalent to about
>
> half of the official U.S. aid budget. (p. 102)

Globalization has turned the world into more of a "global community," and this means that our

"neighbors" now extend internationally. Previously, nonprofit work was more often enacted

locally. However, globalization has done two things to this type of work: 1) it has made global

tragedies and despair more apparent, and 2) it has increased the both the ease of conducting

global aid and the amount of money donated to these organizations.

Empathy in a Global World

The goal of most faith-based organizations is to better the condition of others through

religion. In fact, Anaheier and Themudo (2005) explain that "the modern, internationally active

nonprofit organization emerged from antislavery societies, most notably the British and Foreign

Anti-Slavery Society in 1839 and the International Committee of the Red Cross" (pp. 102-103).

This desire to help others is born out of empathy, which Calloway-Thomas (2009) defines as

"the ability 'imaginatively' to enter into and participate in the world of the cultural Other

cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally" (p. 8). Calloway-Thomas's definition of empathy calls

for not only an emotional response, but for one of action in which one steps out of his/her own

world and seeks to understand and affect another's. Empathy is not a new motivation for social action. However, factors like globalization, media, and technology have changed how empathy looks and works today.

In her book on global empathy, Calloway-Thomas develops the idea of concentric circles of empathy, suggesting that "human beings love and are loyal to their families first, and then their loyalty diminishes as they move from the center to the periphery" (p. 4). This ripple effect idea of empathy has been accepted for centuries as even, "Stoics called this mode of thinking and behaving *oikeiosis*, that is, the notion that we prefer those closest to ourselves than those farthest away" (p. 4). However, globalization has had an intense impact on how we experience empathy and concentric circles, as the pain, poverty, and disasters of the entire world are continuously flashed across screens, reported in articles, and discussed in various forms of media.

In describing what is "new" with globalization, Held (1987) stated it is "the chronic intensification of patterns of interconnectedness" that binds us inextricably, if unevenly, together" (p. 206). DeChaine (2005) stated that globalization "alters the nature of human social life" and that it is now "impossible to ignore that… we all live simultaneously in our own communities and in the world at large" (p. 4). Globalization changes "human consciousness" including how we experience and interact with empathy. We can no longer deny globalization connects us all; as DeChaine (2005) articulated, "we all live simultaneously in our own communities and in the world at large" (p. 4). In other words, when one community is in need, we are all in need.

For example, both Calloway-Thomas and DeChaine would argue that as a person is exposed to more international conflict, he/she may feel more connected to the people and place it is affecting. Not only that, but because of technological advances, his/her friendships and family

may extend internationally. This individual can travel more easily to meet and then continue to

talk with anyone, anywhere around the world as if they were their own neighbors. These

advances expand our circles to include much more than just those who are geographically close

to us. Because globalization has changed how we experience human empathy in recent years,

more organizations are willing, wanting, and able to serve people internationally.

The Need for International/Intercultural NGO/NPO/FBO Work

As discussed earlier, in response to globalization there has been a large increase in the

frequency and scope of international nonprofit work. Calloway-Thomas (2009) reports there are

"more than 2 million community-based NGOs worldwide, 20,000 in poor countries, and about

275,000 in the United Kingdom alone" (p. 176). Further Anaheier and Themudo (2005) state that

"INGOs [international nongovernmental organizations] increased from under five thousand in

the 1970s to about thirty thousand by 2001" (p. 106). While the globalization of the non-profit

sector has been criticized (Kharas, 2007), many believe that the increase of international

nonprofit organizations is favorable. In fact, DeChaine described NGOs as "uniquely positioned

as social actors in struggles to define the contours of a new global social landscape" (p. 22). The

ability of these organizations to travel and offer aid is simpler than ever and they are uniquely

trained and qualified to offer this aid.

As international aid from these organization increases so does the need for resources like

funding, medication, and other supplies. However, monetary donations only go so far. Calloway-

Thomas demonstrated the need for outside, or international, relationships as resources. As she

stated, "we have a responsibility to share not only money, but also mental resources with

others… We already know that access to power and knowledge is an integral part of learning and

that 'being there' (in decision-making zones) is a pedagogical tool" (p. 210). She noted that

many countries/places are simply lacking the resources of personnel. Young, indigenous people

leave to get their degree, and then find that they can be paid much more to work in the country

they have moved to. Therefore, the educated or specialized young people do not return to work

within their own country/place, and that country/place is depleted of all

doctors/nurses/specialists/etc. Calloway-Thomas states that,

> "A survey found that in Ghana, '72 percent of all clinics and hospitals were unable to
>
> provide the full range of expected services due to a lack of sufficient personnel' (Garrett,
>
> 2007, p. 26). Furthermore, 'a study by the International Labor Organization estimates that
>
> 18–41 percent of the health-care labor force in Africa is infected with HIV' (p. 27). These
>
> mind-boggling statistics are designed to further illustrate that the general, universal idea
>
> of helping the poor needs to be coupled with attention to structural and systemic forces
>
> that are operative in the countries receiving aid" (p. 200).

As stated earlier, monetary donations do not increase personnel to these areas in need. Further,

personnel are necessary to help implement changes in broken structures. I bring up this point to

demonstrate the need for international nonprofit and/or mission workers. It is easy to criticize

this type of work and judge its novice intercultural competency, however, we cannot deny that

there is a need for this work.

The other side of this argument is that international social work, mission work, etc. is an

ethnocentric, savior-complex driven act (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013, DeChaine, 2005, Sinha,

2012). Calloway-Thomas cited novelist Arundhati Roy (2002) who "wonders whether

globalization is about 'eradication of world poverty' or whether it is about 'a mutant variety of

colonialism remote controlled and digitally operated'" (p. 175). Both DeChaine and Calloway-

Thomas called for the use of more critical discourse in the building of a global community.

Again, I chose to use Grounded Theory to study the intercultural training process of a short-term

mission group for this very reason. I see Christian, short-term mission work as beneficial.

However, I believe it should avoid this "mutant variety of colonialism" or ethnocentrism. It is

important that researchers study, and organizations are reflexive about, the goals of their work in

order to avoid this pitfall. The goal of my research is to present my findings in hopes it will lead

to better training and more beneficial intercultural relationships and encounters within short-term

mission work.

Cultural and Intercultural Training

The discussion so far surrounds the concept of *culture*. The term culture is one of the

most contested terms within communication scholarship. However, most scholars can agree that

cultures are "socially constructed realities" (Berger and Luckman, 1966), and that cultures are

comprised of "patterns of meaning, values, and behavior" (Meyerson & Martin, 1987, p. 623)

(See also: Morgan, Frost & Pondy, 1983 and Weick, 1979). In order to be culturally or

interculturally competent, one needs to develop *appropriate* and *effective* communicative

practices in intercultural situations. Therefore the goal of any intercultural training in the short-

term mission process would be to teach its members more appropriate and effective ways of

approaching another culture.

For this study, I will use Spitzberg's (2000) definitions of *appropriateness* and

effectiveness:

> Appropriateness means that the valued rules, norms, and expectancies of the relationship
>
> are not violated significantly. Effectiveness is the accomplishment of valued goals or
>
> rewards relative to costs and alternatives. With these dual standards, therefore,
>
> communication will be competent in an Intercultural context when it accomplishes the

objectives of an actor in a manner that is appropriate to the context and relationship. (p.

380)

There are many tools created to analyze intercultural capability. The Intercultural Sensitivity , or

ISS, Scale measures seven dimensions of self, relating to intercultural communication. Chen and

Starosta (2000), who developed this scale, found specific, shared characteristics of interculturally

sensitive individuals. This tool is beneficial for assessment of self, but does not address self in

relation to others. The Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer, 2008) was created for

organizations and individuals to "better assess their capability for recognizing and effectively

responding to cultural diversity" (Hammer, 2008, p. 254). Dodd's (2007) Go Culture analyzes

the competency needs of individuals before they depart on a trip. These tools were created to

examine and develop the intercultural competency, sensitivity, etc. of individuals and

organizations, and could be used in order to evaluate many NGOs intercultural work. While

these tools are beneficial, they are lacking in that they do not offer any training for religious

individuals or groups. They may say that an individual is competent in this or that they are

lacking in this area, but they do not offer any guidance for potential faith based development.

Identity/Culture of Organizations

DeChaine (2005) and many other scholars, describe social realities as being created

through discourse. For my research, discourse will refer to any and all communication that

informs participants of the group's identity, goals, and standards. Organizations thus create their

own reality, identity, and even cultures through discourse (Koschmann, 2013). McGee (1980)

stated that this process trains people through "a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides,

warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior or belief" (p. 6). These symbols and words create a

rhetorical culture within NGOs and can be used as a persuasive tool by the organizations as well.

McGee and DeChaine suggest that this discourse becomes an initiator for action. In other words, the discourse within these organizations not only informs their identity and goals, but also creates the social reality of members that propels them into action. The discourse thus serves as training for how members should behave. In summary, this discourse affects many attributes of an organization including how its members see themselves, how they see others, how they act individually, and they enact the organization's goal(s). The identity that organizations create for themselves and how they identify those that they help also greatly impacts the effectiveness of their work. (Chen & Collier, 2012; Koschmann, 2013)

Chen and Collier (2012) stated that nonprofit organizations are often formed by people of a higher class than those they are serving, and those of the higher class habitually become too constricted in their viewpoints. The researchers stated that cultural identities are formed through discourse, and often times this discourse creates limited "identity positions" for individuals seeking help from these nonprofits. Calloway-Thomas also found that many NGOs' views of their clients were not very accurate or optimistic. The cultural differences between members of an organization and those they served often divided these groups further. As Calloway-Thomas stated, "when humans order their lives 'this way' and not 'that way,' whatever THE way is, the very act of ordering can foster a mine/thine split that erodes empathy and creates conflict and anguish…" (p. 2). DeSoto (2000) agreed, stating, "charitable organizations have so emphasized the miseries and helplessness of the world's poor that no one has properly documented their capacity for accumulating assets" (p. 184). If one simply identifies another culture as poor, impoverished, in need, they are not only elevating their own culture or identity, but are also ignoring the many other aspects of the Other's culture. By not addressing their clients' positions, the organizations were unable to help individuals with any problems related to their identities. In

order to achieve the goals of their organization, members must first recognize the identity

positions both they and their clients hold. For example, if a mission team does not recognize the

different social classes of a culture, they may not be able to offer plausible suggestions or help

for an individual in need. In other words, to suggest that members of a rural village should use

clean water is to assume that they have the ability to get clean water. Or to suggest that someone

go to court is to assume they will be allowed in court, have the agency to present their case in

court, and even that they can afford to go to court. An example in the opposite direction, if an

organization describes a group as simply poor or unintelligent, they are wrongfully limiting the

people, and will not offer the venues of aid that they might offer to a wealthier group or a literate

group. Viewpoints like this impede the work of these NGOs and demonstrate a need for

members to know and understand the identity (or culture) of their organization, themselves, and

their clients, and much of this identity is informed by discourse within the organization.

Some of this instruction through discourse may occur unbeknownst to leaders and

members alike. For example, by casually sharing with our mission team that the Mexican team

would always be late and that they were on "Mexican-time", our leaders unintentionally taught

us that this was common knowledge and that it was appropriate to talk or joke about. While this

lesson was not necessarily their intent, it still informed the identity, reality and actions of the

group. We believed we were the responsible, punctual group, that this situation was common

knowledge, and that we were allowed to joke about it. Thankfully, strategic trainings are often

also implemented within these organizations. However, both formal and informal discourse

informs the organization's culture or identity, and it is therefore important to critically evaluate

training through the discourse of an organization. The discourse produced may support or

obstruct the organization's desired identity and goals. It is pertinent to look at these

organizations' discourses individually, as Koschmann suggested, and as an in-group member to see how their discourse creates, maintains, inhibits, or supports the identities, goals, and the overall reality of the organization.

Approaches to Culture within FBOs

Koschmann (2013) also studied identities within NPOs, but specifically looked at the "negotiation of identities" that occurs when faith-based organizations participate in social activism. Koschmann described his time working with both Christian and non-Christian members of both a church group and a nonprofit organization fighting child trafficking in Mexico. His research focused particularly on the Christian members of the group and how they negotiated their religious identities in that context. Koschmann found two ways in which members coped and enacted their religious identities; he described them as "faith as discourse" (p. 115), in which even non-Christian members used terms like *redemption*, *restoration*, and *abolition*, and "faith as sensemaking" (p. 115) in which mostly Christian members used terms like *calling* and *divine plan* to explain and handle frustrating circumstances of their work.

Words like *calling* and *divine plan* among Christians suggest a directive by God to do a certain thing. Within short-term missions, many individuals describe a calling to social action, often in an intercultural setting. Howell and Dorr (2007) found that the participants in their study used similar language. The researchers examined applications of Christian college students wanting to attend short-term mission trips with varying organizations. They found that many narratives and descriptions given by these applicants framed the short-term mission experience as a sort of "pilgrimage" or the "ritualized travel of the religious adherent to a place endowed with sacred significance" (p. 241). This type of discourse suggests that mission-trip-goers feel

commissioned in their work, as if they were chosen for this task. This is one possible approach to intercultural situations within mission trips.

Many students in Howell and Dorr's (2007) study also stated a desire to expand their "comfort zones," as most of the trips were international. Students expected to encounter cultural differences, and each organization held meetings every Wednesday night of the semester to train and prepare the group for these experiences. This discourse, including the trainings offered, suggests that both the students and the leaders knew intercultural encounters would occur, and that it was important to train for them.

Loenhoff (2011) argued that not just training, but the specific type of training offered is important. She suggested the use of tacit knowledge in trainings, arguing "that which is constitutive for a common praxis is not a knowledge of facts, but a non-verbalized sense for the appropriateness of actions" (pp. 58-59). Loenhoff argued for the use of tacit knowledge in preparing teams for intercultural encounters. She stated that,

> The evaluation of intercultural training programs shows very clearly that those concepts which primarily rely on the communication of explicit knowledge of values and convictions, are of relatively little use for the participants They often offer no more than stereotypical descriptions that disseminate illusory certainties. (pp. 62-63; see also Mendenhall et al., 2004; Morris & Robie, 2001)

This type of explicit knowledge encourages the "prescriptive" type of training mentioned earlier: *If someone does this, then do that.* Leonhoff argued that most previous intercultural trainings, taught this explicit, static form of intercultural communication. However, offering training in both tacit and explicit knowledge of culture could be beneficial to an organization. This is another often-used approach to intercultural encounters.

The way groups talk and teach about culture shapes members' reality and expectancy of their upcoming trip and intercultural interactions. As many individuals have little or no experience with the culture with which they will interact, the language and discourse (Koschmann, 2012) employed in these trainings and in any meetings leading up to the trip greatly inform the groups' realities and their actions. The language used by the group will greatly impact not just individuals' views of cultural Others, but also how they should interact with them throughout the trip.

Conclusion

Intercultural communication is widely studied in many different contexts. However, the relationship between academia and many faith-based organizations is further polarized by the lack of literature regarding short-term mission trips. Globalization has changed how empathy is put into action by NGOs, NPOs and FBOs. It has increased the implementation of international or intercultural work; specifically it has increased the use of short-term mission trips within FBOs. Without the appropriate research and training methods to approach other cultures, organizations are left with inflexible, prescriptive instructions for their participants. This type of training does little for the participants and even less for those they interact with. Instead, researchers argue for the incorporation of tacit knowledge (Loenhoff 2011).

Chapter Three: Methods

Because of my own experience and further research, I wanted to study the trainings offered, if any, by a church in preparation for short-term mission work. And further, to evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of these trainings in hopes of bettering these processes in the future. This chapter will describe the overall process of my research, including the data collection, use of theory, and the coding procedure.

Procedures

I joined a Christian church in the Southwestern United States on their short-term mission trip to the Quechua region of Ecuador in 2016. I was also in contact with the two leaders (pastors) of the Christian organization that we partnered with in Ecuador. The two Ecuadorian pastors created this organization in 2006, and the organization has been working with the Quechua people for its entirety. The Quechua people extend into multiple countries in South America, including Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Argentina. This organization and the church will not be named specifically throughout this study; instead, I will refer to them as the "Ecuadorian Organization" and the "Southwest Church."

For the purposes of my study, I specifically examined all training leading up to the short-term mission trip, looking for patterns and themes in the discourse of the leaders and team members throughout our training. I then went on the trip itself. There, I both participated in all activities and examined the many themes that occurred on the trip. I recorded these experiences and situations in personal annotations each night. I then compared the themes discussed in training and the themes that arose in actuality on the trip. I examined these themes to see if the trainings were effective in preparing the team for the intercultural interactions they experienced. After a preliminary examination and comparison of these themes, I conducted a follow-up

interview with our team leader to better understand some of the actions of our team both in their

own right as well as in comparison to the instructional themes we developed in trainings.

Data Collection

I applied and received IRB approval to complete this study with human subjects. I was

also given permission by our team leader, the missions director of the church and the Ecuadorian

pastors, to take notes and video-record group meetings leading up to the trip. I received consent

from each individual participant, as well as from both organizations as a whole, to complete this

study and to publish the data. Consent forms were prepared in both English and Spanish and

signed by the SW Church members and the Ecuadorian leaders. While on the trip, I continued

my note taking and conducted informal interviews with both the mission team and the

Ecuadorian organizational leaders. I took notes on all interactions, but did not record or

specifically study any Ecuadorians/Quechuans that the mission served. Therefore, I did not need

to receive consent from them, as they were not the main subjects of my study.

I completed a qualitative study of this trip by using Grounded Theory in both data

collection and analysis. Data collected over the course of this study included: mission trip

paperwork and material, video recordings of planning meetings, notes taken during meetings and

enactment of trip, and brief interviews with participants.

Participants

All of my participants consider themselves Christians, meaning that they worship the

Christian God (Yahweh), and believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. The team was made up of

eight adults ranging in age from 18 to almost 70. Again, our church team later joined up with the

two pastors who led the organization in Ecuador, who were also Christians. Each of my

participants had previously participated in short-term mission trips, many to the same location

where we were going on this trip. The church and the leaders of the Ecuadorian Organization had over a 15-year relationship, and the church and many mission teams had supported them both monetarily and through these mission trips throughout those years.

The Mission and its Organizations

Here, I will share more information on the two organizations involved and the mission trip in general. The SW church is a non-denominational Christian church that has two main missionary partnerships, one being the Ecuadorian Organization. In their many years of relationship, the church has helped the organization by funding and traveling to work on many projects with the organization. This year, the church wanted to work alongside the Ecuadorian Foundation to offer a range of services to members of multiple Quechuan communities. Specifically, our group brought supplies for the organization's work, taught Bible lessons, supplied crafts and snacks for children, conducted adult Bible studies, provided some health care, and planted fruit trees in these communities. We were in the Quechuan region of Ecuador for seven full days, visiting at least one community each day. During this time, the team interacted with people of all ages. Much of our experience consisted of preaching, handing out food and supplies, and playing games or singing songs. However, we were confronted with several situations that were outside of our planned activities that affected our goals and agenda.

The pastors of the organization were both Ecuadorian and had been working with these indigenous communities for 15 years, but only for ten as members of a recognized organization. Their organization had multiple "shelters" in this region in which other Ecuadorian missionaries worked and lived full-time. Their main goal was to connect with the people of these communities, ask about their needs, and help them fulfill those needs. Some successful projects included building and staffing several schools and other projects, including a farm, in the area.

This created an education system and job opportunities for the communities. The organization also tried to complete projects like installing clean water wells to these communities, however this endeavor was not as successful. Overall, their goal was to serve the Quechuan communities in Ecuador and to preach Christianity.

Research Method

Previously I discussed my data collection, but I will now describe how I personally approached this research. As a participant-observer I was able to receive a clear picture of what these mission team members experienced. I was taught and trained just as they were, and I was able to ask questions and participate without just being "the researcher." As previously discussed, I was able to video-record and take notes during all meetings leading up to our travel. While in Ecuador, I recorded all of my notes at night after the events of the day. I was able to participate in activities during the day that I would later reflect on. I held casual conversations that would also later inform my research notes. Again, my goal was to keep the experience authentic and also to not disturb the team in order to minimize the occurrence of the so-called Hawthorne effect, in which individuals know they are being studied, and therefore act differently than they would normally (Chandler & Munday, 2011). As I have stated, I wanted to observe a typical short-term mission trip experience and did not want my presence to affect people's behaviors. I specifically did not want the team leaders to change how they taught about culture because they knew I was studying their training on culture. I did, however, agree to discuss all of my findings with the church before publishing my results. I deemed this appropriate as Strauss and Corbin (1994) state, "researchers may give information back to the actors in the form of a final theoretical analysis" (p. 280).

Being a participant and working toward a common goal with the team was the best way to see in-group interactions and to keep the group dynamic as close to "normal" as possible. When describing Grounded Theory, Strauss and Corbin state, "theories are always traceable to the data that gave rise to them—within the interactive context of data collecting and data analyzing, in which the analyst is also a crucially significant interactant" (p. 278-279). I knew that my presence would be obvious as a researcher; however, my presence served a purpose as a participant. Not only this, but, as a participant, I was able to more easily ask questions and interact with my participants and my data. As discussed previously, the discourse of a group creates the reality of an organization. To study these phenomena from the outside looking in or with a set questionnaire would provide a much less nuanced understanding of the organization than experiencing it as a member, calling for a qualitative, in-group study of nonprofit organizations. A critical intercultural approach would be appropriate to study how their language and discourse inform and create their lived experiences. For this reason, I chose to be a participant observer in this study. Only by becoming a member of the group and participating in these shared experiences could I truly investigate the realities of short-term mission team. I believe this led to a more meaningful and holistic understanding and experience of the process.

Koschmann (2012) described his observation of a short-term mission trip as a "micro-ethnography" because of the short time period and limited number of participants involved. Micro-ethnographical studies occur on a more personal level other ethnographical studies. Jeffrey and Troman (2004) described multiple characteristics of ethnographical studies. In describing "time modes" used in ethnographical studies, they described what they called a "compacted mode".

A compacted mode involves a short period of intense ethnographic research in which

researchers inhabit a research site almost permanently for anything from a few days to a

month. Researchers live the life of the inhabitants as far as is possible. A researcher on a

project designed to gain a whole picture of a community or institution would, if possible,

seek access to as many site contexts and people as possible. (p. 4)

I did not complete an ethnographic study, however, I participated and interacted closely with all

those included in my study and was fully immersed in the experience for a short period of time,

similar to Koschmann and Jeffrey and Toman. I did this by acting as a participant observer,

participating in any and all events offered during the short term mission trip process, including

trainings, meetings, and the trip itself. Instead of completing an ethnographic study of this trip, I

used Grounded Theory to both collect and analyze data.

As previously stated, Glaser and Strauss developed this methodology in 1967. They

suggest that certain procedures make this methodology effective, including: "besides the constant

making of comparisons…the systematic asking of generative and concept relating questions,

theoretical sampling, systematic coding procedures, suggested guidelines for attaining

conceptual (not merely descriptive) 'density,' variation, and conceptual integration" (pp. 274-

275). I wanted to focus exclusively on my data and to pull out themes, rather than fit my data

into a pre-existing theory. I also wanted to be able to interact with my data and my participants

organically, and possibly develop an initial model or structure of a theory from my research. I

also found this method complementary to my study as there are currently no theories specifically

designed for Christian, short-term mission work and intercultural training. Grounded Theory is

specifically suited for the development of new theory. As Foss and Waters state, "In an area

where very little research has been completed, the grounded-theory method allows you to

provide a comprehensive theoretical description of the phenomenon, offering the prospect of locating most of its significant features" (2007, p. 147).

Data Analysis

I completed the following steps in compliance with the Grounded Theory method. I transcribed all recordings and interviews taken before and during the excursion, I coded all transcriptions and notes, I sorted all codes into key variables, I compared key variables, combining redundant codes into themes until no further concepts can be formed, I gathered support for each variable with data and research and developed them into themes.

Coding

In the analysis of my data, I first used open coding. Blair defines open coding as, "applying codes that are derived from the text (emergent codes)" (2015, p. 17), meaning codes that present themselves organically from one's data. This can be done in a number of ways. Glaser (1978) suggests that open coding should be completed line by line. However, Corbin and Strauss (1990) suggest this process should happen by grouping "conceptually similar events/ actions/ interactions" (p. 12). As phrases and quotes can vary in length, I decided to code in the latter manner. I went through my data and began applying codes to common phrases, ideas, and/or occurrences, and labeling them accordingly.

This type of coding could be seen as subjective, as researchers could potentially pluck any piece of data for any reason. However, the process itself is formatted to protect itself from bias. As Corbin and Strauss state, "open coding and its characteristics of making use of questioning and constant comparisons enable investigators to break through subjectivity and bias. Fracturing the data forces examination of preconceived notions and ideas by judging these

against the data themselves" (1990, p. 423) Any and all data must be combed through, multiple

times, and are then grouped together for the second and third phases of coding.

The second and third coding stages in Grounded Theory include axial and selective

coding. In these stages, coded data begin to be sorted into categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998)

describe axial coding as grouping codes into "categories [that] are related to their subcategories

to form more precise and complete explanations" (p.24). After this initial grouping, I gathered

each code that I had previously labeled similarly. Each code was continually compared to the

codes around it to be sure it matched the emerging category in which it was placed. Some

categories were then able to be merged, while others did not have more than one or two codes.

These categories were eventually removed as they did not represent a majority of data and/or

were not adequate in answering any of my research question. Finally, during selective coding,

"categories are organized around a central explanatory concept" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.161)

or theme. These themes are then considered within the larger context of the study, specifically in

relation to the research question(s) in order to develop any findings from the data. For my study,

this meant that themes that emerged from the training were compared to themes that emerged

during the trip itself. I will provide a description of each of these themes in the following

chapter.

Preview of Future Chapters

The fourth chapter of this study will describe and analyze the themes discovered in the

Southwest church's (henceforth, "SWC") and the Ecuadorian Organization's approaches to

intercultural engagement. Each code will be defined and then analyzed by examining the

practices, underlying assumptions, and deeper ideologies as evidenced by my research and

experience in the training of the organization. I will give specific examples of intercultural

interactions that occurred on this trip in order to compare the instruction given in training to the application of those trainings in the field. These comparisons will serve as my data.

The last chapter of my thesis will discuss the findings of this study. I will circle back and make connections between my findings to things discussed in the literature review and my analysis. My project will conclude by determining how the SWC and Ecuadorian Foundation addressed and trained for intercultural engagement and whether the approach fits into a previously labeled model, extends a model, or created the need for a new model. I will also discuss my use of participant observation and any possible effects this may have had on the study. I will examine my case for studying FBOs, NGOs, and NPO's as cultures, having their own identities and dialogue that informs their goals and actions, and reflect on the benefits/disadvantages of examining organizations this way, specifically sharing any experiences that demonstrated this type of organizational culture. And most importantly, this discussion will be informed by the answers found to my research questions.

I will discuss in detail what intercultural trainings were offered by the SWC in preparation for their short-term mission trip to Ecuador and how these trainings informed the approaches to intercultural encounters by members on the trip. I will reflect on the both organizations' approaches to intercultural engagement, considering, again, their practices, underlying assumptions, and deeper ideologies. By offering specific examples, I will first analyze whether these approaches aligned in both the training and application of this trip, and then whether these approaches were appropriate and/or effective in this context. The appropriateness and effectiveness of the current intercultural training and approaches to intercultural engagement will be assessed based on both the operative definitions offered in the literature review and on the outcomes of this trip.

   I will conclude by discussing possible suggestions for these organizations that could improve their approaches to intercultural engagement within short-term missions. As this is a case study, I will keep in mind the particularities of this Southwest church and Ecuadorian foundation, but also try to propose broader applications if appropriate.

Chapter Four: Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the themes that emerged from my data through the aforementioned coding process. I did not complete my coding line-by-line. Instead, as I read through meeting transcripts and my own notes, I grouped similar statements, situations and interactions into further categories and themes. These categories were then further grouped with other categories to develop themes. Some categories however, did not contain enough data or did not relate to the goals of this study. These categories were discarded. I will describe the major themes and subcategories found through my research.

Themes

I found two major themes and multiple subcategories in my coded data. The first theme included all data referring to *Approaching Differences* and the second, *How to Act*. The theme *How to Act* was then further divided into two categories with multiple subcategories: 1) *Training Attitudes* and 2) *Performing Service*. Finally, a third, though less prevalent, theme was examples of *Dyadic Cultural Training*.
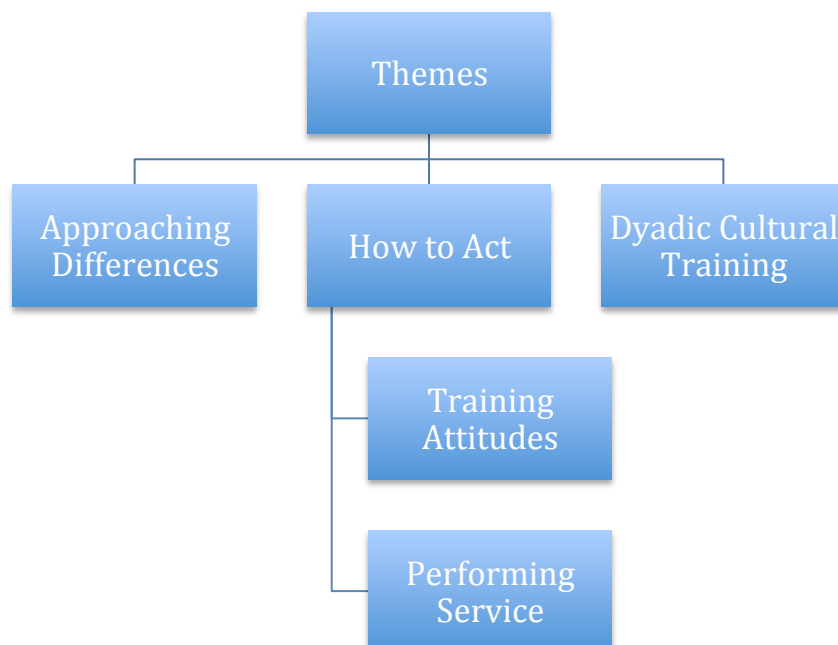
Approaching Differences: Description

The first major theme that presented itself was the approach to change taught in our training. Our leaders and other team members were constantly bringing up cultural differences between our group and the Ecuadorians and Quechuans. Some of these cultural differences touched on specific values or morals within the Christian faith. However, it was made very clear that our goal was not to impose change of cultural practices on these people. This included conversations about the core beliefs of the Christian faith, specific cultural practices and morality, and our role in this trip.

Approaching Differences: Analysis

While this theme encompassed a majority of our training, it was not in the way I had expected. Our leaders explained time and time again that it was not our goal to change these communities' cultures. Our leaders and team continually contrasted how mission work was previously practiced (and may still be, by others), and how we were to no longer adhere to that mindset.

Not Seeking to Change Culture

First, our team leader discussed in different words, ethnocentrism, and stated that while we are all guilty of believing our perspective is the correct one, this is not the right attitude with which to approach another cultural group. She stated, "Allow them to become followers of Christ in their own culture." In other words, the leader asked us to be reflexive about our perspectives when visiting these people, and not to judge their circumstances or actions from an ethnocentric viewpoint.

We were not citizens of Ecuador or the indigenous tribes in which we would be working. We had little power to create change, little knowledge of how to do so, and little time to do it. It

was not our place to suggest change; it was simply our job to help in whatever way we could. Our leader was not the only one to make this claim. Multiple times on our trip, Ecuadorians and Quechuans alike talked about Spanish Catholics that had arrived and tried to quickly change Ecuadorian and Quechuan culture, only to leave just as quickly, or to cause even more problems because they did not understand this culture. Then, while in the jungles of Ecuador, we saw multiple Catholic churches that were vacant. Catholics constructed these churches, but their short-term stay in a village and their misunderstanding of the people and their practices did not create lasting change. Our goal was to support the local foundation and local people in their current, and long-term endeavors.

Second, we could not change their culture even if we wanted to because it is so complex. To address or change one issue actually means addressing countless related issues as well. This theme arose many other times throughout my research as well: *X causes Y which leads to Z*, and so the cycle continues. For example, alcoholism is widespread amongst the Quechuan people. During our time there, we were told that yuca is the major form of sustenance among the Quechuan. *Yuca* is a root vegetable that grows well in that region, similar to a potato. The yuca plant is very cheap and very plentiful. And most mothers and fathers work on yuca farms from early in the morning until late at night. Mothers will often boil yuca at one point in the week for her children, and they will continue to eat the yuca throughout the rest of the week as their parents are working. The yuca will begin to ferment and become alcohol during this time. Not only that, but many Ecuadorians make and consume *chicha*, which is a fermented yuca drink. In fact, chicha is often a drink given to special guests or consumed in times of celebration. Chicha is made by boiling yuca, chewing the yucca, spitting it into a cup, and repeating this process. The starch and saliva enzymes create a simple sugar that works as a starter and speeds the

fermentation process of the yuca. Children may drink chicha and eat fermented yuca for most of their diet. This can cause children to become addicted to alcohol at a young age, and I was told by the leaders of the Ecuadorian foundation, it often does.

In a study of 300 children in Northern Peru, Ubilus, Estrada, Arce et al. (2017, p. 1) found that "35% of mothers perceived that chicha is nutritious and helps growth." However, over 6% of mothers also stated that they knew chicha "could cause risks because of the alcohol included in the drinks" (p. 1). This perception of chicha is deeply rooted in these communities. In the same study, 84.7% of mothers stated that they also drank chicha as children. Children who become addicted to alcohol grow up to be adults who are addicted to alcohol. The prevalence, accessibility and low cost of this vegetable and drink add to the ease and continuation of this practice. These adults feed their children what is available and what they can afford—yucca— and the cycle continues. Unfortunately this cycle goes in tandem with other cyclical issues, including abuse and child prostitution. As outsiders, we would not begin to know how to make effective interventions.

Again, our team was instructed that we were not to criticize this practice or suggest the Quechuan people stop drinking chicha or sharing it with their children. While alcoholism is a moral issue, we were only to share the major tenets of our belief, and to help in any way we were asked. Our leaders offered multiple examples of how we should not enforce our own values, practices or norms on other cultural groups, even if it was meant to help. The US team leader remembered a time when their team wanted to offer hygiene training for different Quechuan villages. These trainings would cover boiling water and personal hygiene to prevent parasites and lice. However, the Quechuan people have their own ideas about hygiene and perspectives on treatments that have been practiced for many generations. Our leader stated that one reason this

training would not be successful is because it would suggest that those with lice cut their hair. In

Quechuan culture, long hair for women is a sign of beauty and maturity. To suggest they cut

their hair is to suggest they choose to lower their social status or marriageability. To suggest they

do not make chicha is to suggest they do not drink a valued beverage. To cut your hair could

mean losing a potential marriage and friends would likely lead to social criticism. To not make

chicha and offer it to your guests could be offensive. Trying to enforce these types of changes

could affect many parts of their lives that we are not aware of. Our outsider instruction, while

well intentioned, could cause more harm than good.

And third, our leaders understood and explained to us that the reality of a group or culture

is socially constructed. In a follow-up interview, one leader stated that if change were to occur

with different cultural practices, the change would have to come from within that cultural group.

Only those within the group are the ones who have the knowledge and, at times, the agency to

change the behaviors or beliefs of their group. They are a part of the discourse that creates the

group reality. The morality or code of conduct followed by a group is also created through

discourse within the group. Therefore, it would not be beneficial for a mission team to impose

their own morals onto another cultural group.

Much of the post-trip interview concerned the confrontations we had with childhood

prostitution. Multiple times on the trip, individuals from the Ecuadorian Foundation would point

out children to us that they knew were being prostituted by their parents. This was heartbreaking

and appalling to the entire group, but when faced with this situation, our leaders' response was

simply to pray. I wanted to understand why further action was not being taken. This leader

explained that in the schools of the foundation, they had begun "teaching consciously, to the

little girls how to avoid sexual abuse. And to encourage them to report it and come seek help."

But further than that, it is difficult to handle these types of situations. The Quechuan region is self-governed; they do not abide by Ecuador's national law. In this indigenous territory, the family, or possibly the local school is the closest thing to a government that they have. With this in mind, there is not really anyone to call to report the abuse, no Child Protective Services to remove the child, and really, nowhere for the child to be taken after they were removed from danger. Rather, the highest authority is the parents, or specifically the father, and they are often the very people who are putting their child in this situation.

This issue could again be situated in a larger cycle of many Quechuans' lives. There is a reason why this behavior happens—a reason why parents allow this—a reason why it is not addressed within the larger Quechuan culture. This practice would be unacceptable in many other cultures, however, through their discourse about this topic, it has become tolerable. The leader stated in this interview, "So if they, as a group, believe that this is okay, then it's okay." They, as a group, have created the reality of this practice and its acceptability. I stress that this does not mean they chose this practice, but rather, most likely, allowed it to form from other issues and/or out of necessity. But it has nonetheless become acceptable. Regardless, this is one area in which a theme of our training was carried out in the context of the trip. We were not to bring about change in a direct way, but rather we had to wait for change to be desired from inside a cultural group.

Our leaders were clear then, in both their words and actions, that our goal was not to change Quechuan culture. Regardless of the contradiction to our religion or morality, we were not to assert change. We were not a part of their group, our time was limited in this space, and it was not our place to push change. This theme was enforced in training meetings and within specific situations on the trip. Our leaders emphasized that we were not to motivate change;

instead, we were trained on how we should act. More specific examples of this training will be discussed in the Analysis chapter and related to the overall findings of the study.

How to Act

The second theme found in the data included all the training and discourse describing how to act during this trip. Within our training, words like *guidelines, rules, principles*, and *suggestions* often signified this type of training. In our longest and most in-depth training meeting, our team was given a handout that provided "The ABC's" [to Short-term Mission Work], (DELTA Ministries International, 2006), which is included in Appendix B. Each letter stood for a particular word or phrase that we should adhere to during our trip. All of our training before, and continual guidance during the trip created specific themes that our actions should follow. The first theme within this schema was *Training Attitudes* and the second, *Performing Service*.

The majority of our training on how to act revolved around Training Attitudes. This included subcategories like *Forming Relationships*, *Serving and Humility*, and *Reflection and Reflexivity*. Each of these was described in training, and then experienced during our time in Ecuador.

The second major subcategory of our training on how to act was *Performing Service*. Service here describes the work that was enacted on the trip, for example, our team taught classes, handed out food, planted fruit trees, and helped in various other activities. This theme also explained how we should protect others and ourselves from inconsiderate actions or comments. Therefore, the category of training attitudes focused on how we should *be* and the theme of performing service explained how we should *do*, meaning, how we should act. These subcategories were observed both in our trainings and in different circumstances on the trip.

Finally, our training also included some *Dyadic Cultural Training*. In this chapter I will provide a brief description and subsequent analysis of each subcategory.

Training Attitudes

Forming Relationships: Description

Forming relationships with those outside of our team was very important for our group. Many times in the past, short-term mission teams traveled to the Ecuadorian Foundation to help with projects of manual labor—to build a school, shelter, church, farm, etc. However, our leaders described the goal of our trip as "a ministry presence trip" meaning "we are there to support the people and develop bonds and friendship with the people there." We were encouraged, even when talking about our other smaller services, to think of this "ministry of presence" as "the most important [goal] that we [had]." In our ABC's, *M* was for *mingle*, and we were encouraged to have openers for conversation, sit amongst the new people we were meeting, and to even use photos of our own families as conversation starters. We were reminded that despite the language barrier, "love translates" and to say things like, "No hablo Español, [pero] mucho gusto." (I don't speak Spanish; but nice to meet you.) The encouragement was to have a friendly, open, and humble attitude.

Humility was especially highlighted on the last night of our trip when we asked one of the Foundation pastors if he had a "plan" to form relationships when he went into the Quechuan communities of the selva (jungle region), and he said he did not. Instead, he said that every community was different and every approach to any relationship needs to be based on the situation of that culture. His only semblance of a plan was to listen first. When seeking to form relationships, he knew he must build a relationship of trust, and then he would be able to listen and discover people's needs.

Forming Relationships: Analysis

Our instruction on how to form relationships was important for a number of reasons. First, as this church had worked with the foundation and the surrounding communities for many years, it was important to continue forming relationships in order to continue this partnership. However, it was specifically important to form relationships with the community to get them to disclose their needs. As the pastor of the foundation stated, he needed to listen to a community to discover their needs and how a relationship between the community and the foundation/church could occur.

This approach to forming relationships involving disclosure is an example of Social Penetration Theory by Irwin and Altman (1973). In this interpersonal theory, relationships develop through the act of disclosure, or sharing about oneself. This theory suggests that most relationships grow through disclosure reciprocity, i.e. one person shares something, then so does the other. Further, as disclosure continues, the content of disclosure moves from more shallow material to deeper, more personal or intimate content. Both the pastor of the foundation and the team leaders applied their trainings and their own approach of intercultural interactions to this theory. They knew that for the work they were doing to be beneficial, they needed to discover the needs of the community, and in order to discover those needs, relationships needed to be formed.

For our church team, the level of disclosure did not need to be very deep. Our leaders knew we could not force self-disclosure, nor should we disclose too much. Hendrick (2004) said, "disclosure and nondisclosure are both necessary for relationship satisfaction and that each is important under different conditions" (p. 128). It was appropriate for our team, because of the short time we were there, that the disclosure be kept to more *surface talk.* Hendrick defined

surface talk "as contrasted to deep disclosure, is the substance of everyday interaction, surface talk helps maintain an acquaintanceship network," (p. 127). Surface talk could include the use of our team's limited knowledge of Spanish, playing soccer with children, and sharing photos of our families, which were all encouraged by our leaders. These interactions would contribute to our goal of this type of *acquaintanceship network*—a working relationship with some level of trust. While we were in the same physical environment as the other party, the Ecuadorian and Quechuan people, this was what the church wanted to develop. Then, continued and furthered relationships would be carried out by the workers at the foundation, and possibly by those who returned in following years.

Again, as a group, we were also encouraged to form these relationships. We were encouraged to sit amongst the locals in church services and during meals to create bonds and relationships. We were urged to bring photos of our families in order to spark conversations or bring a soccer ball to begin a game with local children, all in order to form these relationships. One woman said, "Last year I was so hesitant to bring photos because I felt like that was self-absorbed, but it was such an opener. You sit down and start looking at pictures and all of a sudden you have ten little kids around you looking too!" Another member said, "Last year I played soccer with Alex (name changed) for two hours, and we didn't even say a word, but it was awesome!" On the trip, our leaders required us to sing songs with all of the children as well, all for the sake of relationship building. It was also important that our team continued the ongoing relationship of the foundation, church, and Quechuan community. The church wanted these relationships to continue to grow, and for that to happen, our team needed to self-disclose, even by way of playing silly games or sharing photos.

The foundation's relationship with the community, however, required deeper levels of disclosure. The foundation had to approach these relationships with the goal of discovering the communities' needs. Appropriately, since they speak the same language, are located in the same area, and are there long-term, this level of disclosure should occur more easily. However, this longer-term, more intimate relationship requires more relationship maintenance. Canary and Dainton (2003) define relationship maintenance as "the behaviors that people utilize to sustain various relationships" (p. xiii). There are multiple strategies regarding how to enact relational maintenance; however, one strategy seemed particularly relevant to the relationship between the foundation and local communities—the concept of *minding*. Harvey and Omarzu (1997) invented the concept of *minding*, which "involves a high level of caretaking, staying close to, renewing attachment with, and, in general, attending to one's partner" (Hendrick, 2004, p. 122). Workers of the foundation use more of this type of relationship maintenance strategy in order to achieve their goals with and for these communities. The more intimate relationship with the community is required of them to discover the communities' needs. Achieving these goals would also create relationship satisfaction for the foundation and the community, as the foundation would understand and productively aid the community and the community would feel heard and have a need addressed. Both the church team and the foundation knew that even these working relationships require relationship maintenance in order for each group to achieve its goals. Therefore, each group approached the relationship in a way that was in line with their desired relationship goals.

Serving and Humility: Description

In the ABC's, *E* was for *Eyes for Others* and *H* was for *Humility*. We were told many times to "consider others more important than yourselves," and to "look not only at your own

interests, but to the interests of others". This included instruction like, "constantly be aware of our hosts. How can we help our hosts?" and "[you] just always want to be looking for opportunities to serve." We were described as teammates, and told to look out for each other and the locals we would interact with. *O* was also described as *Opportunity*. We had an "opportunity for ministry" and were told to not only serve the locals, but to be like the local Quechuan people as they were "always actively serving one another."

However, the warning along with this piece of training was to *W—Watch and wait.* We were told we wanted to have a "spirit of humility that Christ had". In order to best serve people, and avoid "cultural faux pas," we were to think of ourselves as *servant-learners*. This meant we were to think of ourselves on this trip, in this new country, in this new community, not as experts, but as learners. We were to "Learn about the heart of the people. Learn about their needs. Learn about their challenges…Engage with the people there." This was described as the "heart attitude" we should have while there. The idea of humility in this form was to "step back and watch," to then make an informed decision.

We were reminded of this training in many group settings on the trip. When at the shelter in which we were staying, we were reminded to take quick showers, as to save the limited water for others. We were encouraged to help serve and clean up all meals. We were to be considerate of our hosts and to follow their leads. This attitude of serving and humility was not always easy or simple. Our leaders encouraged us to be *reflexive* about our own attitudes and actions, and stated that we would always be a *reflection* of the Ecuadorian Foundation, our group, and Christ or our religion.

Serving and Humility: Analysis

Serving and humility were mentioned constantly in our training as well as on the trip. This is a typical Christian principle, and, as we were on a mission trip, the goal is often to provide service to others. However, most of the talk about serving was about having an attitude of service or a readiness to serve, and not actually about doing the service. It was this attitude of humility that was highlighted.

One of our training examples was how to act if they placed an entire fish, including the head, on a plate in front of you. Again, we were told to watch others, follow their lead, and to seek to not offend the host at all costs. This scenario actually happened on our trip. The fish placed in front of me, however, was not fully cooked. I did my best to follow our training, picking at pieces of this entire fish, but knew that eating much more of it might make me sick. I was encouraged (and teased) by our host and team to eat more. I could tell this situation could have incited a bigger issue, specifically, it could have been perceived as disrespectful by our host. Thankfully, later in the meal, the host noticed that my fish was not well cooked. This helped save face for everyone involved. However, my team and leaders thought it was appropriate for me to eat raw fish in order to adhere to this training.

The idea of "saving face" is one often associated with intercultural communication as well as conflict management. The concept of face is that we each have an idea of who we are based on both our own opinion, the opinions of others, and our perceptions of the opinions of others. *Saving face* often refers to salvaging the pride of others, or yourself. In this scenario, I was faced with an intercultural conflict, which Ting-Toomey (2005) defines as "when our cultural group membership factors affect our conflict process with a member of a different culture on either a conscious or unconscious level" (p. 72). In this situation, my conflict was not necessarily directly with someone of another culture, rather it was a *content conflict goal* based

on how to handle the uncooked meal in front of me. We were taught in all interactions to take the

orientation of *other-face,* meaning "the [protective] concern or consideration for the other

conflict party's image" (p. 74) and this standard was upheld in situations on the trip.

Specifically, our leaders trained us in meetings to always defer to the locals' judgments.

Our leaders stated,

> So when they dump a huge load of rocks outside the fence and then we spend an
>
> hour/hour and a half moving it inside with a wheelbarrow, and then they say, "Okay, now
>
> we're going to divide them into piles." And we're thinking, "Couldn't we have done it
>
> that way when we first carried them in?" We just do what we're told and we don't
>
> complain.

Our leaders shared that they had previously taken engineers or dentists to these communities to

offer help, and often the people still elected to do things in their own way. They said, "On work

projects we take down people who have skill sets and we get down there, and we think we have a

skill set to offer, and they do things completely differently." The leaders said, "They just have

better ways to do [things], and you…. do whatever they ask you to do." This attitude was also

encouraged when considering our discourse on the trip. We were told not to bring up U.S.

politics (which was relevant as it was nearing the 2016 presidential elections). However, our

leaders cautioned us that, "Their view of politics is different than our view of politics, their view

of war is very different… Especially because in the political arena in Latin America there is a lot

of blame cast on the United States for where they are now." We were encouraged to avoid those

conversations, even if asked to discuss them. One leader suggested saying, "Phew, I don't want

to touch that mess [politics]."

We were also given biblical passages that re-enforced this teaching. In one meeting, our leaders quoted Ephesians 4:2-3, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." One leader said, "Paul [the author] is really exhorting people to unity, to elevating others above themselves and just a real spirit of humility." The goal of our trip was, again, to form relationships, and in order to do that, our leaders wanted us to put the feelings and perceptions of others before our own in order to achieve this goal.

On one hand, this type of teaching suggests modesty and conscientiousness, which I believe our leaders were trying to evoke in us. However, on the other hand, this guidance was given to us in order to avoid and conflict and/or cultural faux pas. If we were always submitting ourselves to the leadership of others (the pastors of the foundation and the Ecuadorian people), we would not have the opportunity to get ourselves in trouble. And if we were always following the lead of the locals, hopefully we would not embarrass the church, the foundation, or ourselves nor would we offend anyone. If we watched others, we would not act ignorantly or from our own cultural understanding, but instead be able to mimic them, we might continue to be accepted by their community, to continue working together in this capacity.

Reflection and Reflexivity: Description

This theme was introduced at the very beginning of training. We were told that we were "image bearers," "representatives," and should be "reflecting" God. *Y* in our alphabet stood for "You are never, not a role model", or, grammatically speaking, *you are always a role model*. Anywhere we went on the trip,in any situation we were in we would be a representative of God. Our leaders told us, "When we're on the plane, when we interact with people, how we mingle, how we consider others more important than ourselves," we were to always have the attitude of

being a representative, realizing that we were a reflection on our church, the foundation, US

culture, our religion, etc.

This attitude would make us both contemplative and reflexive about our actions,

specifically in interculturally diverse interactions like, "when they put the whole fish and head,

and the fish is staring you in the face—or the monkey arm." We were told, "How you react in

those situations [is important]." In specific situations on the trip, we would see certain cultural

practices, different from our own, and were encouraged to consider why these took place outside

of our own point of view.

We were being "allowed" to do this type of work. Therefore we should be "grateful" and

conscientious of our actions and how they affected others. And this often times meant to be

reflexive in our intercultural encounters with "fish heads" and "monkey arms", and to understand

that we our actions and attitudes reflected on all of our respective cultures/organizations.

Reflection and Reflexivity: Analysis

Similar to the concept of saving face, the goal of this type of training is to avoid conflict

and represent our organization well in order to continue a relationship with the foundation and

the Quechuan communities. Our attendance on these trips and our efforts to accept their practices

were *assurances*. *Assurances* are one of five strategies that Canary and Dainton (1991) offered as

approaches to relationship maintenance. Hendrick (2004) describes *assurances, saying they*

"[express] commitment, faithfulness, [and] love" (p. 121). In this case, our goal was to assure the

foundation and community that we were committed to continuing these relationships, and we

were committed to keeping them agreeable. This meant that we must do our part to be reflexive

and not judgmental of their cultural practices. Another one of Canary and Dainton's five

approaches is *positivity*, or having a good attitude. Our reactions to cultural differences would be

seen as a reflection of our organizations. We needed to react positively in order to benefit the

relationships between our organizations and the communities. Our leaders encouraged us to eat

as much as we could at every meal, even if we did not like it. We were encouraged to keep things

clean in the shelter we were staying in—taking off our shoes before entering, tidying up our

rooms, etc. Every little thing we did on this trip should be a "reflection of Jesus." Another leader

reminded us that "Jesus was a missionary to other countries and cultures" as well. We were to

follow his example. Our actions reflected on the rest of the team, our church, and our national

culture. We were reminded at one point to not be "ugly Americans" by making too much noise.

We were supposed to represent ourselves well. The encouragement of these attitudes was always

for the purpose of relationship maintenance.

Performing Service: Description

While the majority of training focused on attendees' attitudes, our leaders also talked

about performing service while on the trip. The letter *V* in our ABC's stood for *viewpoint*. We

were asked what our "goal" or, appropriately, our "mission" was. The title of a "mission trip"

even implies that there is an objective to complete. While this trip was not planned to include

much physical labor, our group spoke a lot about the "work" we would do. We were asked to

share our "reports" after the trip, as if it were work. We were also warned about cultural habits to

look out for when completing our work, like being too "goal-focused" like US Americans where

we are a "culture of doers."

Performing Service: Analysis

As described previously, the goal of our trip was defined as a relational type trip. This did

not include much labor, but our team and leaders still talked often about our projects as a service

to be done and previously completed projects. However, whenever these projects were discussed, the intended lesson always returned to our attitudes.

One leader shared a story of a previous trip when half of the team was supposed to spend time with children, and half of the team was supposed to lay a small portion of concrete. Instead, the entire team became so involved and wanted to work on and complete the concrete, that no one spent time with the children there. The team was so "goal-focused" that they "missed the site that was the most important." This "past mistake" informed how we should view our work. Not only did this stress, again, the idea of watching and waiting or following the direction of our hosts, but it also stressed the importance of people-first. Just as the pastor had previously described in how he approached communities, and just as the foundation warned against being like the Catholic priests who came, built churches, and left, our service was to people first. We were to form relationships to discover the true needs of the community. Only then would our acts of service truly benefit them.

Our leaders stressed that our project was "spending time with people." Again and again this was labeled as our goal. And while never explicitly stated, this discourse suggested the idea of being present with these people. The church could have easily sent money to pay for physical tasks to be done, but instead, they chose to send a team. None of us were master-carpenters or tradesmen. We were not sent because of our skill set. We were sent to spend time with and to continue and extend the church's and the foundation's relationship with the community.

Again, these types of relationships require relationship maintenance. When considering this goal, and the creation of the reality of this goal through discourse, it is clear that the church and the foundation knew that communication was necessary in continuing a relationship, even this type of charitable or working relationship. The goal of most relational maintenance strategies

is not just to continue the relationship, but also to make it a good, healthy, or enjoyable relationship.

Canary and Dainton (1991) suggest five strategies for relational maintenance. Hendrick (2004) described "assurances (expressing commitment, faithfulness, love); network (involvement with social networks); openness (disclosure and other communication); positivity (being upbeat and cheerful); and tasks (sharing household chores)" (p. 121). Each of these strategies is important to a relationship. However, in an earlier study, Dainton and Stafford (1993) found that "sharing tasks [or the task strategy] was the maintenance behavior most frequently mentioned by participants" (p. 121). It would make sense then that our church stressed this behavior in their attempt to continue a relationship. Our group needed to show a desire to maintain this relationship, and one of the best ways to accomplish that was to be sure we were seen as helpful.

In 1993, Acitelli developed the idea of *relationship awareness*, or "a person's thinking about interaction patterns, comparisons, or contrasts between himself or herself and the other partner in the relationship" (p. 151). Someone who practices high relationship awareness should have a better understanding of where they "stand" in a relationship with someone or the status of the relationship. In this situation, both the church and foundation need to know how their roles in the relationship are working with each other and with the communities they want to help. Hendrick suggests that in order to have better *relationship awareness*, it is important to think in terms of "we" and "us," instead of "I" and "you." It would be difficult for the church, or the foundation for that matter, to think in terms of "we" and "us" with the Ecuadorian community, if we had no relational connection to them, and vice versa. Without that relationship or ability to form goals as a "we" and "us, it would be difficult for any of the three parties to reach their goals. It would be difficult to convince the church to send help in any form and difficult for the

community to accept help in any form, if there was not a bond or a feeling of "we're in this together." As mentioned previously, some of this sentiment naturally occurs through empathy, particularly today, as globalization has expanded the reach of our empathy (Calloway-Thomas, 2009).

Dyadic Cultural Training: Description

Much of our planning meetings revolved around cultural training. One meeting was even specifically titled our "Cultural Training Day." Every time we met, our leaders shared insider knowledge about Ecuadorian or Quechuan culture and how it was different from our US culture. The dyadic cultural training included descriptions that separated or polarized cultures. As stated earlier, in these trainings US Americans were described as "doers" and "goal-focused." We were also told that "We are efficiency people in the United States," suggesting that Ecuadorians or Quechuans did not necessarily value efficiency. The leaders also demonstrated a typical Ecuadorian greeting by hugging and kissing cheeks and stated, "They are warm-culture people… this is how they greet you." While others from the US were described as "very formal…reserved…not typical warm-culture…" These teachings were not focused on our attitudes toward another group or culture, but rather, they were concerned with our specific actions or mannerisms.

Many of these "teachings" were off-hand comments that did not take up much of our meeting time. However, I would suggest they did affect our view of Ecuadorian and Quechuan culture. On one hand, these teachings were enlightening, but on the other, they may have contributed to a distorted view of the culture. For example, suggesting that US culture places value on efficiency in their work and Ecuadorian/Quechuan culture does not, could create a view

of the people of those cultures as not savvy, impractical, or a worse perception like lazy or unintelligent.

Dyadic Cultural Training: Analysis

This category included the training of explicit knowledge rather than tacit knowledge that Loenhoff (2011) suggested for intercultural trainings. Again, explicit knowledge involves prescriptive-type teaching rather than teaching that helps increase one's cultural competency. Teachings like this may help someone seem more culturally competent, but they may not understand how to approach and interact with another culture on their own. Instead, they are following explicit directions instead of navigating the intercultural encounter on their own. Also, many of these teachings are so prescriptive that they do not allow for variance, meaning these narrow descriptions of a culture or cultural practice leave little to no wiggle room for difference among cultural members nor do they describe the culture/practice as dynamic, or able to change.

As discussed in the literature review, some of this training is necessary. For example, we were told that it was a common superstition in Quechuan culture if one heard a cat scream it meant that someone in his or her immediate family was going to die. We were also told that if someone was bitten by a snake, they could not go anywhere near a pregnant woman because this would activate the venom, and they would die. This would be important information for us to know if we were to ever encounter these situations. For example, if a snake bit one of our team members, we knew we should not take him or her to the home of a pregnant woman. Doing so could have panicked the family and been seen as disrespectful to them. This was a beneficial teaching, and it did prevent us from potentially causing harm and/or hurting relationships. However, it only helped in the most specific of situations, and it did not inform our overall approach to the culture, just the approach to the situation.

While some of these trainings may be beneficial, or even necessary, organizations should take caution in how they discuss these topics. The discourse used to describe a cultural trait or practice helps create the reality of how people see that culture and its ability to vary from that trait or practice. Thankfully, our trainings offered enough training on the overall approach to cultures that I do not think this harmed many, if any, of our perceptions of Quechuan culture.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

This final chapter of my thesis will describe the "so what?" of the outcomes of this study. I will discuss what these key findings mean in relation to my research questions, recommendations for future intercultural short-term mission work training, and initial thoughts on a possible theory, again, for intercultural short-term mission work training. To remind the reader, my research questions are the following:

RQ1. What intercultural trainings are offered by a specific faith-based organization in preparation for short-term mission trips?

RQ2. How is this training informing the approaches to intercultural encounters on the trip?

RQ3. Are these approaches appropriate? Effective?

While these were my research questions, I actually found that the intercultural training offered by the SW Church was not related to any intercultural model, but rather, an interpersonal model of relationship maintenance. By asking these questions, I examined the training of the SW Church team and their guidance before and during the short-term mission trip. In looking at common phrases, statements, beliefs, and ideologies shared in the training and while on the trip, I did find a specific approach encouraged for the intercultural encounter of the group. This approach and the trainings offered, however, were very effective and appropriate for the goal of the trip, which I stated was a "ministry of presence" trip. The church's and the team's goal was to continue a satisfactory relationship with the Ecuadorian Foundation and the Quechuan people.

There was a reality created in trainings—a guide to how things should be performed and completed. While some of these instructional themes were practiced in the setting of the mission trip, some were not. I will discuss these contrasts individually throughout the chapter. However, I would like to start this chapter by sharing two major findings of this study, and areas from which I believe a theory for short-term mission could develop.

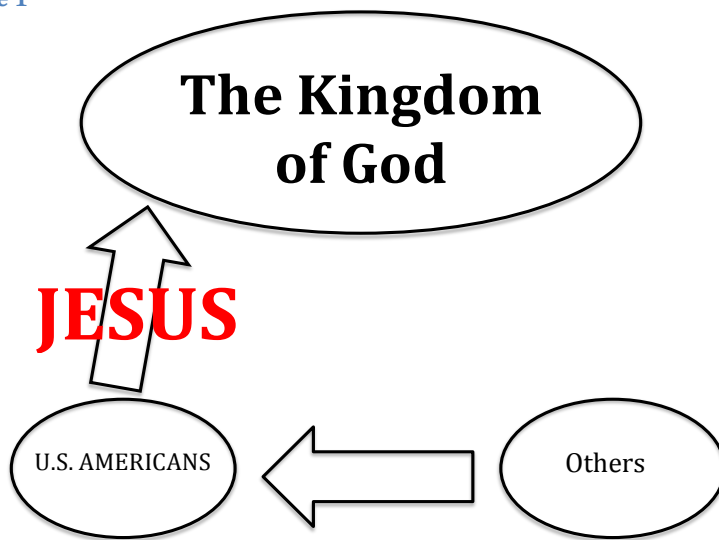### Approaching Change in Mission Work

In reviewing all data collected for this project, I was surprised by the themes that did *not* come up. For example, I expected to find rhetoric describing the people of the communities that we helped as *lost, hopeless*, and possibly describing them as *less intelligent*. However, phrases indicating these types of circumstances were used only to describe *our* team. For example, we were told to "stand back and watch" to better assist the Ecuadorians in their work. We, the mission trip team, were also described as the "lost and broken people" in need of saving (by Jesus Christ). I wholeheartedly expected these sentiments to be reserved for the Ecuadorian and Quechuan people. And this discovery, which I expected to be a bulk of my findings, was just a minor theme in my data. Instead, as stated previously, I found that most of the discourse in our trainings described what we were *not* to be as a team, but instead, how we should act.

The first major surprise and theme within training was how we were told to approach cultural differences. When approaching differences between cultures, we were told not to initiate or encourage change. As discussed in the previous chapter, were given this instruction for a number of practical reasons. However, a larger theme and motivation for this training became evident—one that affects how mission work was and is done in general. I have labeled this the gatekeeper analogy.

Gatekeeper Analogy

The gatekeeper analogy occurred each time our leaders and trainers reminded us that we were not the *gatekeepers* for religious salvation. This meant that it was not our job to change these people, to tell them what they were doing wrong, nor to tell them how to live their lives in order to be a part of the Christian faith and thus be "saved." It was not our job to decide whether they were in or out. I specifically use the term "gatekeepers" because of a diagram that was shown to our group multiple times. A leader of the SW church shared this image with us in a number of meetings in order to explain the difference between being, what I label a *gatekeeper* and being a part of this mission team. (Figures 1-3)

Figure 1

The Kingdom of God

JESUS

U.S. AMERICANS   Others

The first figure shows how mission work has approached change previously, and still is being approached by some churches or mission organizations. The circles represent people groups or cultural groups; in this case, U.S. Americans defines the missionary group. In Figure 1, we see that previously missions groups believed that in order for a people to have salvation in the Christian religion, they must first change, and be more like their the missionary's cultural group, before they would be accepted into Christianity and thus experience salvation. Returning to an example I used previously, this was the mindset used throughout the crusades by both Catholicism and Islam. "U.S. Americans" could just as easily be replaced with "Spaniards" or "Italians" or "British" making the "other" cultural group, "Muslims" or "People groups in

Africa." This is colonialism. One group infiltrates another, demonstrates control and power, and

forces the other group to take up their cultural norms and behaviors, usually with much brutality.

This was often done in the name of religion, when the group in power would force the other

group to convert, first to their cultural ways, and then to their religion. In this process, the

cultural practices of the overpowered group were understood as immoral, and this was also used

as the motive to "save" or "convert" this group to different cultural practices and a different

religion as part of that. Much of the crusades and mission work in the past sought to change the

practices of different cultural groups and to assimilate them to their own practices, and often,

place them under their power. The leaders of this trip were not concerned with changing cultural

practices, in fact, they warned against it.

Change

However, we see in Figure 2 an X over the arrow that demonstrates this conversion of cultures. This is because, as the Christian Bible is interpreted today, there is no need to convert someone from their specific culture in order for them to be saved. In our training, the church leader quoted a passage of the Bible to demonstrate this point.

Figure 2

The Kingdom of God

JESUS   JESUS

U.S. AMERICANS   Others
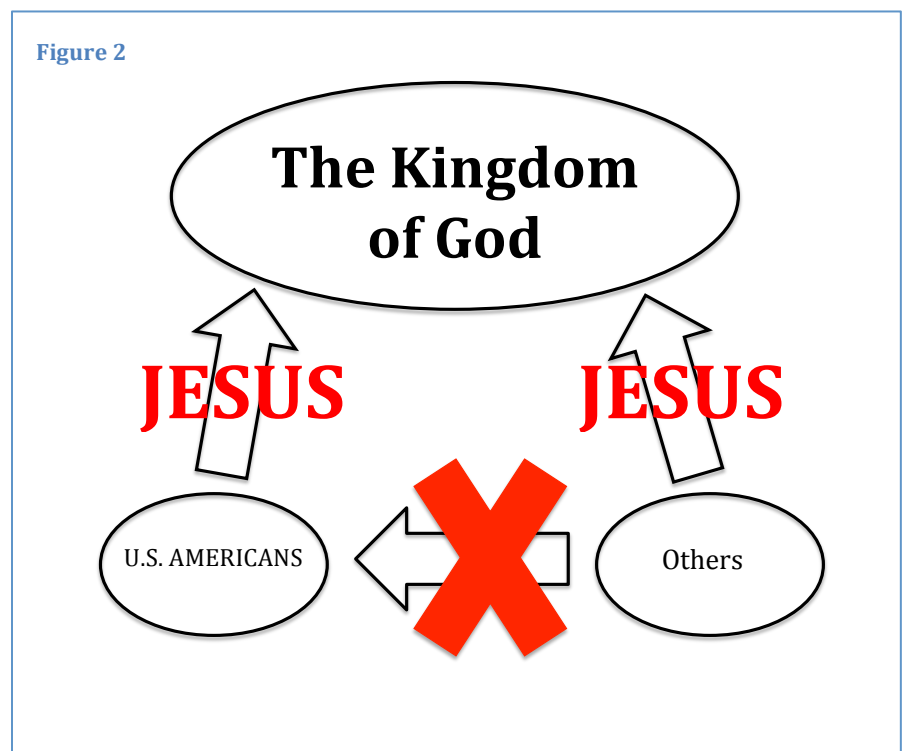
Acts 15 discusses the cultural practice of circumcision. The debate between Christian leaders at

Figure 3
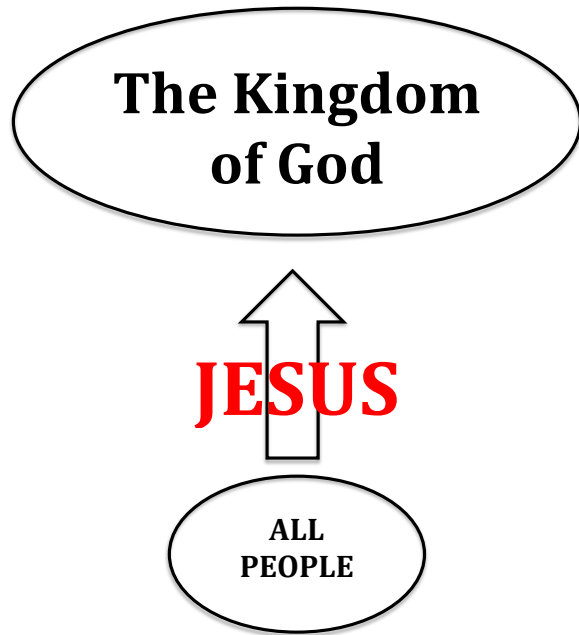
the time was whether all those who converted to Christianity, specifically Jewish people at that time, needed to be circumcised after their conversion. The Christian men of the time were all circumcised for both health reasons as well as an outward mark of their Christianity. So some Christians believed that even adult men who converted to Christianity *must* be circumcised in order to be Christian. Others said this was not necessary. They claimed that this cultural custom was not necessary for salvation. The only necessity for salvation was the belief in Jesus Christ as their savior and thus, receiving the Holy Spirit of God. The passage details the decision that it was not necessary to conform to this cultural practice in order for someone to become a Christian. "God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15: 9-10, New International Version). The writers of this passage, and the leader of the SW Church believed that it is a personal faith in Christ that will give a person salvation, not the changing of this cultural practice. Thus, figure 3 represents that through Jesus, all people may be saved, regardless of cultural practices or cultural groups.

The SW church leader quoted another Bible passage from Revelation, in which the author describes a vision of heaven saying, "After this I looked, and there before me was a great

multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before

the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches

in their hands" (Revelation 7:9, New International Version). The SW church leader emphasized

the idea that "every nation, tribe, people, and language" was represented in heaven. Each and

every cultural group was welcomed into heaven, without changing culturally.

      In a following meeting, our team leader distributed copies of a Christian creed. These

creeds were established at different conferences in which religious leaders decided on the

cornerstones of different religions within Christianity (e.g. Catholicism, Protestantism, etc.). Our

leader shared *A Brief Statement of Faith* (1963), which was written specifically for the Protestant

Christian Church. She then had us find and underline each of the beliefs in this creed that were

mandated as central to the religion. We also compared this creed with the Nicene Creed (1907,

S.P.C.Kc) and the Apostles' Creed (1873, S.P.C.K.), which are both more related to Catholicism.

A Brief Statement of Faith (Appendix C) asserts a number of claims that we underlined as a

group, and which I will include here.

> We trust Jesus Christ, [that] Jesus was crucified, [that] God raised Jesus from the dead,
>
> delivering us from death to life… We trust in God, [that we deserve God's condemnation,
>
> yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation… We trust in God the Holy
>
> Spirit, with believers in every time and place, we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
>
> can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord… (Apostolic Christian
>
> Church Foundation, p. 1-3)

      Our leader then asked if any of these core beliefs discussed divorce, alcoholism, or a

number of other activities that may be deemed immoral in the Christian faith. We responded that,

no, they did not. She asked if this discussed any cultural differences or stated that we should all

act the same. Again, we replied, it did not. She then stated, "We can only teach fundamental

truth." Our leader then explained that we were not aiming to change their culture or cultural

practices on our mission trip. We were only there to help the foundation and to share the core

beliefs of Christianity.

This approach to cultural differences was steadfast throughout the trip. The most

prominent example of this was when we were told that some local children were being

prostituted by their parents and/or being sexually abused by parents/family members. As I

discussed earlier, we did not take action to change the situation. Instead, as a Christian group, we

stopped and prayed for the children and their families. In Christianity, we do believe prayer is

taking an "action," but it was not any action that would directly affect change. This issue clearly

went against Christian doctrine and most people's moral standards.

I was somewhat troubled by the approach of our mission team and the organization in

regard to the issue of child prostitution. This seemed like an issue in which it would be okay to

insert ourselves and take children out of these dangerous situations. But our leaders and the

leaders of the organization followed their commitment to not push change. I conducted a follow-

up interview with our team leader to learn more about this decision and approach. Just as our

trainings suggested, our leader reminded me that it was not our place to incite change, this was a

complex issue, and change would need to come from within that cultural group. I was relieved to

hear that the schools run by the foundation were teaching students that this behavior was not

okay or safe. They also encouraged students to seek help from them if any type of abuse was

happening to them at home. As the teachers and school officials held a lot of power in the

community, this lesson held more weight coming from them. The teachers and principal of one

community had already helped two girls leave their home and enroll in Ecuador's child foster care system, because their father and uncle were abusing them.

While we were only present with these people for a few days, the teachers ate, slept, and lived there. They were also Quechuans or Ecuadorians. They were members of this cultural group. They had built this reality of a cultural practice, and we were not a part of that reality-making. Thus, we should not be a part of the reality-breaking. It is easy to see how this message would be more persuasive and better received when shared by the teachers rather than us. Our leaders and the leaders of the foundation agreed that we should not be the ones to critique cultural practices, and this training was enforced throughout the entirety of the trip.

Much of my attention in this study was placed on cultural training and approaches. Future studies could benefit by looking more closely at the religious/cultural aspects of mission trips. For example, religious conversion and persuasion seem to be in direct contrast with the training to not change a culture. Further, offering services like food, clothing, schooling, etc., while it may not be intentional, is persuasive or even coercive in converting someone to a religion. The ethicality of how churches or FBOs train for and convert individuals (and individuals of other cultural groups) would be a noteworthy area of study.

How to Act

The second major theme from my data was the training of attitudes and actions. Many of these subcategories of training attitudes and actions overlapped. For example, this approach to forming relationships reflects the subsequent training and coding for humility and service. And the instruction to listen to a community's needs in order to develop a relationship reminds us again to be reflexive in our serving, not just diagnosing the needs of a community from our own perspective.

Much of the church's training demonstrated how we as team members should act. In analyzing this theme, I found that all of the instruction we were given was to help maintain our relationship with the foundation and the Quechuan communities. The foundation also approached their work with the ultimate goal of maintaining relationships. However, the foundation also sought to increase the depth and breadth of disclosure in their relationships with the Quechuan communities. This followed the theory of social penetration in which parties disclose more information in the process of the relationship. Both of these approaches, however, used relationship maintenance strategies.

Relationship Maintenance

I found that many of my codes and subcategories could be placed in multiple themes. The teaching and training we received was all interwoven in order to give us a well-rounded approach to another culture. The teaching did not focus solely on actions, or solely on attitudes. The myriad teachings all shared a common goal: relationship maintenance and relationship commitment. The reason for our team to take this trip was to maintain the relationship between the church and the foundation and ascertain, or check up on, the relationship of the foundation with the communities in which they work.

Canary (1993) suggests four definitions for relationship maintenance. First, relationship maintenance seeks to, appropriately, maintain the relationship—to keep it going. Second, relationship maintenance aims to have some consistency in the relationship. Third, relationship maintenance means making sure the relationship is satisfactory for both parties. And finally, it means when there is conflict, repairing the relationship. Different strategies are then used when seeking to maintain a relationship. In my data, I found that most of the training given to us was strategy in how to continue or maintain our (the SW church's and the foundation's) relationships.

But not only did our leaders, the church and the foundation want to continue the relationship,

they also wanted to ensure that it was productive and satisfactory for all those involved. This

meant that the church wanted to see the productivity of their funding through the foundation, but

they also wanted to know who and how their contributions were helping, while the foundation

wanted to prove to the church what they had accomplished with the funding and wanted to

continue relationships with the Quechuan people keep working in their communities. Both the

church and the foundation wanted to maintain the relationships they had with each party, but not

only that, they also wanted to make sure these relationships were satisfactory.
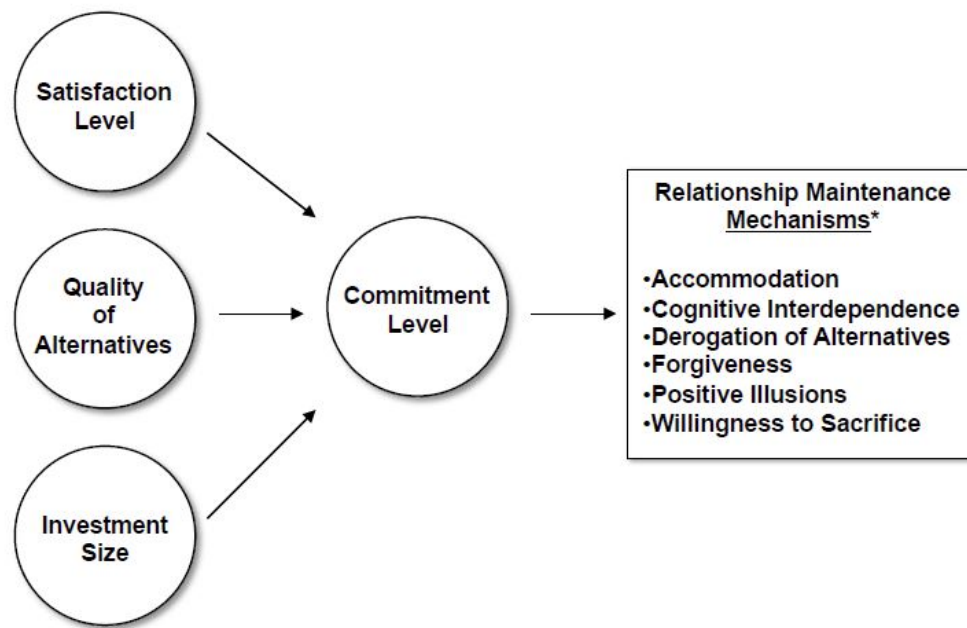
Relationship Satisfaction

While relationship satisfaction is often used in studying romantic or familial

relationships, I suggest it is also appropriate here. First, the Quechuan community must be

satisfied with the relationship in order to continue to let the church and foundation into their

communities. Second, the foundation must believe that the money and teams we provide them

are worth the upkeep of the relationship. And the church congregation must perceive that its

money, time, and other resources are being put to good use in order to continue its charitable

relationship with the foundation and these communities. In order for that to occur, it is important

to send groups who can then report back about what they have seen and experienced. They must

communicate the work that is being done and the relationships that are continued through the

support of the church in order for the church to have relationship satisfaction and continue that

relationship.

Again, as this was not the major focus of my study, further research could be done to

measure relationship satisfaction of donors, churches, and their audiences. One way to measure

the satisfaction of each party would be to use the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) by S. S.

Hendrick and colleagues (S. S. Hendrick,1988, and Dicke, & C. Hendrick, 1998). However, this relationship is also somewhat professional, and not solely personal. In researching this topic, I first thought a new scale might benefit the analysis of these types of working relationships. And while that may still be true, I also found the Investment Model by Caryl Rusbult (1980) was easily applied to the goals of both the church and foundation.

The Investment Model

I described relational maintenance previously as what a person or people do in order to maintain a relationship. However, this type of maintenance does not have to mean anything more than the relationship persisting. Maintenance can, but does not have to mean that the relationship is thriving or satisfactory nor does it directly indicate that the relationship will continue. There was something different about this trip and the motivation behind our specific training. While relationship maintenance strategies may be helpful, and using a relationship assessment scale would be a proactive tool to help leaders train their team members, with the limited time we had these scales and models were not entirely appropriate for this context. We were not trying to maintain personal relationships with the foundation or community. Instead, we were more like ambassadors of our organization. We were sent to help, yes, but more so, we were sent to ensure commitment to the relationship. For this reason, I wanted to find another model that discussed a continued relationship with effort from both sides to make it the best relationship it can be. This was what I saw come out of our training. Everything we were taught was to sustain, not harm, and even to better the relationship with the foundation and those we were supporting. And our team was sent in order to ensure the commitment of the SW Church and also confirm the commitment of the Ecuadorian Foundation to the relationship. The idea of *commitment* is key.

Relationship Maintenance
Mechanisms*

•Accommodation
•Cognitive Interdependence
•Derogation of Alternatives
•Forgiveness
•Positive Illusions
•Willingness to Sacrifice

Figure 4

In researching the idea of relationship commitment, I found the Investment Model

(Rusbolt 1980), which assesses relationships based on four characteristics: satisfaction,

investment size, quality of alternatives and commitment (Figure 4). The Investment Model

suggests that if the first three characteristics (satisfaction, investment size and quality of

alternatives) are judged positively, then commitment is predictable. As Rusbolt, Agnew, &

Arriaga, (2011) stated,

> A major premise of the investment model is that relationships persist not only because of
>
> the positive qualities that attract partners to one another (their satisfaction), but also
>
> because of the ties that bind partners to each other (their investments) and the absence of
>
> a better option beyond the relationship with the current partner (lack of alternatives); all
>
> of these factors matter in understanding commitment. (p. 3)

In fact, Rusbolt (1983) found that commitment was more likely than satisfaction to predict

whether a relationship lasted. One's level of commitment level was also found to be directly

related to dependence. Dependence was described by Rusbolt, Agnew and Arriaga (2011) as

when individuals want to persist (are satisfied), feel "tied into" the relationship or obliged

to persist (have high investments), and have no choice but to persist (possess poor

alternatives), they find themselves in circumstances objectively characterized as

dependence (p. 9).

What interested me most about this model was the idea of *investments*. While this theory is more

tailored to assess personal relationships, I believe it could be applied to organizational, business,

and all professional relationships. For example, if the SW Church is satisfied with their

partnership with the Ecuadorian Foundation (satisfaction), they are probably not going to end

this partnership. If the SW Church did not know of any other foundations/NPOs/NGOs (poor

alternatives), they are likely to choose to maintain their current partnership. And if the church

just recently entered into a five-year contract (high investments) with the Ecuadorian

Foundation, they are unlikely to end their partnership in that time. This type of relationship

(between the church and foundation) is not personal, but the model can still be applied.

The donor/donee relationship could be further examined to assess the satisfaction,

perception of alternatives and level of investment from both parties in order to predict their

commitment to the relationship. We were sent to Ecuador to check on the church's investments.

Not everyone could attend this type of trip, but many people support the foundation. The leaders

and congregation of the church wanted us to go on this mission trip and to check on their

investments, relay satisfaction and, hopefully, share that this donor opportunity is still

worthwhile. While this was never directly stated, we did have leaders of the church ask us to

"report" back, and to make a video summary of the trip to show to the church. Later that

summer, the leaders from the Ecuadorian Foundation were also invited to the church to share

with the congregation about what their funds were doing. All of these things were to persuade the church that this commitment to partnership and funding should continue.

On the other side, our team going on this trip showed a commitment from our church to continue this relationship with the foundation and the communities they support. As the church has been in partnership with this foundation for over ten years, they have come to depend on our funding. And as the investment model suggests, as their dependence grows, so does their commitment. Both organizations were trying to procure commitment from the other by showing satisfactory work, showing that they were holding up their partnership, and that the investment from both sides was worth it. This model of investment seems very appropriate for non-profit relationships. In the future, I would suggest researchers develop or extend this model specifically to non-profit work and relationships.

It may seem like the goal of renewed commitment is in tension with the general purpose of a mission trip. However, the church, our leaders, and the foundation requested that this be a "ministry of presence" trip in which we were told to "create relationships." This request from our church was meant to be an extension of their investments in the foundation. If we see the church as the *committer*, the sending of a team and encouragement to form more relationship was a further investment in the larger donor/donee relationship. The entire trip was a sign of our commitment to the foundation and the social work being completed. Then, our experiences from the trip would be able to determine the foundation's commitment to this relationship. These two goals do not necessarily contrast, as the overarching goal is to continue to help the foundation/Ecuadorian communities and to make sure they are committed to continuing a satisfactory relationship. This all falls under the category of relationship maintenance for both

parties. The analysis of my data brought to mind Koschmann's (2011) assertion that the non-profit sector needed its own communication theory.

A possible theory for NPOs could look at donor/donee relationship satisfaction and how that relates to future commitments and investments from both parties. I believe this type of theory would have to take into account the three characteristics of Rusbult's (1998) Investment Model of Commitment (satisfaction, alternatives, and investments), but would also have to look at the goals of the NPO and its success in producing those desired goals. This type of theory could be used to predict the commitment of both parties and also address what areas are lacking if the relationship is not found satisfactory. Again, my research focused mainly on the intercultural training offered, but in partnering with organizations of different cultures, understanding how to approach another culture could help greatly with the expectations and thus the satisfaction of both parties. Further research would be needed to understand intercultural donor/donee relationship and NPO work satisfaction.

Final Thoughts

In considering my research question, I found that the SW church trained our group to approach another culture by training both our attitudes and instructing some of our actions for performing service. Both the SW church and the Ecuadorian foundation did not seek to directly change the Quechuans' cultural practices. Instead, they desired to form understanding relationships in which their members were attentive to the desires and needs of the Quechuan people in order to form relationships and better serve them. This was accomplished mainly through relationship maintenance strategies. However, in the future, I believe a variance of Rusbolt's (1998) Investment Model of Commitment could be beneficial in studying NPOs and FBOs, their satisfaction in donor/donee relationships and the perceived success of their goals.

My stance as a participant observer worked well for this study. I was able to interact and ask questions of my participants and my data throughout the study, even returning to themes multiple times. As I was a part of the team, I also believe my presence as a researcher was not as evident and therefore did not affect my observations as largely as it could have.

I found that the approach to culture by both organizations was appropriate in that they were understanding of cultural differences and norms and did not seek to change Quechuan culture. I also believe that their approach was effective, as it accomplished the goals of each party. I would suggest that future research be completed specifically on conversion. While conversion should be factored into the perception of success for FBOs, it should also be studied by viewing different social work as a persuasive tool for religious conversion. Much more research should be completed in order to create a theory of the non-profit and in studying FBOs goals and success. However, I judged the approach to intercultural interactions in this context both appropriate and effective in completing the goals of each party while being culturally sensitive.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Questions:

This study focused on how members were prepared for intercultural experiences. One of the situations we encountered that was a particular "culture shock" was the prevalence of sexual abuse and prostitution within these communities. As I hope to write more specifically about how members were or were not prepared/trained for this type of encounter/situation, I felt I needed to understand this practice more. As I also hope to give insight on how to train groups in the future, I wanted to understand this specific situation more fully as well.

1) So in your time in Ecuador, what have been some experiences that you've seen with child prostitution in Quechua and then in Ecuador in general?

2) So do you think women allow that cycle to continue? You mentioned in that story that it was an uncle and a father pursuing these young girls. Do you think women are—um, feel like they're stuck in that cycle and cannot protect young girls, or that's just the way it is? Or is there violence if they do intervene? What do you think is their role, or how they react to this?

3) And so, that's another question that I was going to ask, was, in specifically the Quechuan region, which is the selva, or the jungle, there, from what I saw, was not a ton of government regulation going on. So are the schools the type of leadership that are in those communities? How easy is it to get government out there if there is this abuse is going on?

4) What do you think contributes to this cycle and this problem of child prostitution and child abuse?

5) So do you think that many people in the community know and understand that this type of behavior, that child prostitution, sexual child abuse, is wrong, or do you think that they are unaware that it's wrong? Or why does it continue if they consider it a wrong practice, a violation of human rights?

Appendix B

The ABC's of Short-term Mission Work – DELTA Ministries International

A. Ambiguity

B. Bathing

C. Clothing

D. Delay gratification

E. Eyes for others

F. Food

G. Grateful

H. Humility

I. Ingenuity

J. Journal

K. Keep it pure

L. Laugh

M. Mingle

N. Nurture

O. Opportunity

P. Prayer

Q. Quiet time

R. Renew your mind

S. Stretch

T. Telephone

U. Understanding heart

V. Viewpoint

W. Watch and Wait

X. Expect miracles

Y. You're never not a role model

[You're always a role model]

Z. Zest for life

Appendix C

A Brief Statement of Faith (Creed)

In life and in death we belong to God.

Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit,

we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One

of Israel,

whom alone we worship and serve.

We trust in Jesus Christ,

Fully human, fully God.

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:

preaching good news to the poor

and release to the captives,

teaching by word and deed

and blessing the children,

healing the sick

and binding up the brokenhearted,

eating with outcasts,

forgiving sinners,

and calling all to repent and believe the

gospel.

Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and

sedition,

Jesus was crucified,

suffering the depths of human pain

and giving his life for the sins of the world.

God raised this Jesus from the dead,

vindicating his sinless life,

breaking the power of sin and evil,

delivering us from death to life eternal.

We trust in God,

whom Jesus called Abba, Father.

In sovereign love God created the world

good

and makes everyone equally in God's image

male and female, of every race and people,

to live as one community.

But we rebel against God; we hide from our

Creator.

Ignoring God's commandments,

we violate the image of God in others and

ourselves,

accept lies as truth,

exploit neighbor and nature,

and threaten death to the planet entrusted to

our care.

We deserve God's condemnation.

Yet God acts with justice and mercy to

redeem creation.

In everlasting love,

the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a

covenant people

to bless all families of the earth.

Hearing their cry,

God delivered the children of Israel

from the house of bondage.

Loving us still,

God makes us heirs with Christ of the

covenant.

Like a mother who will not forsake her

nursing child,

like a father who runs to welcome the

prodigal home,

God is faithful still.

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,

everywhere the giver and renewer of life.

The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,

sets us free to accept ourselves and to love

God and neighbor,

and binds us together with all believers

in the one body of Christ, the Church.

The same Spirit

who inspired the prophets and apostles

rules our faith and life in Christ through

Scripture,

engages us through the Word proclaimed,

claims us in the waters of baptism,

feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of

salvation,

and calls women and men to all ministries of

the church.

In a broken and fearful world

the Spirit gives us courage

to pray without ceasing,

to witness among all peoples to Christ as

Lord and Savior,

to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,

to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,

and to work with others for justice, freedom,

and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the

Spirit,

we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks

and to live holy and joyful lives,

even as we watch for God's new heaven and

new earth,

praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

With believers in every time and place,

we rejoice that nothing in life or in death

can separate us from the love of God in

Christ Jesus our Lord.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and

to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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