



Cultural Diversity in Cross-Cultural Mission

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Abstract

Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural, human and material resources; however, corruption, political and economic instability, environmental and other emerging factors continue to impede the Nation's development thereby leading to forced and irregular migration within and beyond the shores of the Nation. This study relying on secondary sources of qualitative data, aims to understand why migration is a critical humanitarian and development issue in Nigeria, and recommended the capacity strengthening of policy actors, humanitarian and development practitioners as well as introduction of social safety nets and other incentives necessary to buffer the negative effects of factors that influence Migration.

Keywords: Culture; Inter-cultural Theology; Mission, Cultural diversity.

Introduction

The Bible is a cross-cultural (cc) training document. It has the only absolutes that we possess. A member of any culture can use it safely to relate both to God and fellow humans. Ted Ward, a missiologist, has said that commonalities outweigh differences among people. We are more alike than dissimilar. The image of God rests on all people (Genesis. 1:27). All people have a longing for eternity in some form, for instance (Eccles. 3:11). God has given people consciences, which reflect another attribute shared with God, morality (Rom. 2:14-15). Humans also love, which reflects God (1 John 4:8).





People also have an aesthetic sense--we appreciate sunsets and art. We enjoy beauty because God made that beauty. God himself is beautiful (Ps. 27:4). He is extravagant with that beauty, creating flowers that none will ever see but Himself. We have highly developed symbolic language. Animals communicate, but not through symbols. The principles of Scripture are intended by God to be used by persons of any culture in relation to other persons of any other culture or subculture. Otherwise, it would be good for only Near Eastern and Greco-Roman cultures (Vygotsky, 1987: 59).

Conceptual Clarifications

Integral (Holistic) Mission: The term "holistic" refers to a comprehensive approach that considers the whole person, addressing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. An integral, holistic approach to mission and ministry involves caring for people's physical needs, fostering community development, providing emotional support, and nurturing spiritual growth.

Intercultural Mission: "Intercultural" signifies engaging with diverse cultures and promoting understanding and cooperation across different cultural contexts. An intercultural approach to mission is about bridging cultural gaps, promoting inclusivity, and learning from one another in mission and ministry endeavours.

Polycentric Mission and Polyvocal Mission: "Polycentric" and "polyvocal" refer to recognizing and including multiple centers of authority and voices within a given context. In the context of mission and ministry, this means valuing diverse perspectives, empowering local leadership, and promoting collaborative decision-making processes.

Pentecostal Mission: The Pentecost event flung the doors wide open for a diverse church in every sense of the word – cultures, abilities, genders, languages, gifts, and more. The "Pentecostal" mission is not about Pentecostalism; it is about missional pneumatology and pneumatologically mission. The Spirit creates a diverse, global, inclusive church and empowers it to join with God in God's mission (Cole, 1972).

Cultural Diversity

The things you do and the practices you were taught inform who you become. Culture is a broad term that encompasses beliefs, values, norms, and behaviours, and overall can be understood as our "way of



being." When you go out into the world, you will meet people from different backgrounds and walks of life. It's a good rule of thumb to honour cultural diversity with your actions. So, what is cultural diversity and why does it matter? Cultural diversity can take shape in professional settings, within educational institutions, and overall, in most aspects of life. Cultural diversity is synonymous with multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is defined as, "the view that cultures, races, and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgment of their differences within a dominant political culture. According to Geertz (1973), the importance of cultural diversity can be interpreted based on the following related actions.

- i. Recognize that many cultures exist.
 - ii. Respecting each other's differences.
 - iii. Acknowledging that all cultural expressions are valid.
 - iv. Valuing what cultures have to bring to the table.
 - v. Empowering diverse groups to contribute.
 - vi. Celebrating differences, not just tolerating them.
- So, what are some examples of cultural diversity and what does it look like?

Cultural diversity looks like:

- a) **In A Workplace:** Having a multilingual team, having a diverse range of ages working together, having policies that are vocally against discrimination, etc.
- b) **In A School Setting:** Having students from all over the world, being accepting of all religious practices and traditions that student's part-take in, and supporting students to share their cultures among themselves.

Culture

Questioning traditions and conventions was part of the postmodern order of the 1980s and 1990s. Some social scientists questioned whether universal laws characterize human functioning and development and whether development is context-free or value-free. It was increasingly recognized that human behavior and development are situated in particular action settings, times, and cultures. Within the context of these trends, developmentalists were seriously embracing the view that culture is essential to human behaviour and development (Kollmann, 2011:89-90).Advancing an



understanding of how culture matters can also inform designing culturally sensitive and efficacious programs for addressing some of the world's pressing practical and applied issues. While increased cultural contact promotes the development of mutual understanding among people around the world, alas it also sometimes engenders conflict among people of different cultural circumstances. Within diverse cultures, divisiveness makes it difficult for people to recognize common concerns and develop ways of cooperating toward common goals (Kollmann, 2011:107-112).

The Bible and Culture

The Bible is above culture since it stands to judge any culture. There are elements of "common grace" insights that even pagans enjoy. The Greek poet Aratus wrote, accurately, "We are his (God's) offspring." (Acts of the Apostles 17:28). He referred to Zeus, but the statement is true of Deity (Bruce, 1954:360). Non-believers may discover the truth and employ correct principles, reaping their benefits. Many Chinese model principles for generating income in Proverbs are financially successful. God reveals much about Himself, such as His "eternal power and divine nature" (Romans. 1:20), but even this is "suppressed", or consciously denied by godless people (Romans 1:18 NIV). A culture may reflect God's principles of hospitality to strangers (Exodus. 22:21; Leviticus.19:10; Hebrews. 13:2), for instance. It may have strong taboos against embarrassing anyone ("face" saving, 1 Corinthians. 13:4) but may allow parents to invade and control the marriage of a son or daughter (Ephesians. 5:31).

Scripture stands in judgment of culture, not culture over the Bible. Jesus declared that the cultural assertions of Samaritans regarding the place to worship were wrong (John 4:19-22). Paul wrote, "Even one of their prophets has said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.' This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith." (Titus. 1:12- 13). However, in the same chapter, Paul gave behavioral guidelines for the selection of elders, which were in complete harmony with those given to Timothy for other cultures, illustrating absolute moral criteria (Titus. 1:5-9; 1 Timothy. 3:1-7). Whenever culture and Scripture conflict, culture must be judged. Democratic societies operate on majority consensus or majority morality (sociological "truth"). Perhaps the greatest hermeneutical challenge today is at this point: What in the Bible was the result of cultural conditioning and what is enduring to all generations and peoples? Not a few, for example, believe that a woman should teach men in the church today, despite 1 Timothy. 2:12, since, we are told,



women were domineering a local church and it was simply a local problem, confined to one time and culture.

However, Paul's reasoning in his prohibition goes, all the way back to Adam and Eve, to the origin of Cross-cultural to gender relationships, which suggests a larger application of his words (1 Timothy. 2:13-14). The issue of polygamy is similar. Those opposing it go to Gen. 2:24, where one man and one woman become "one flesh" (Matthew. 19:5), which is the clearest and most authoritative teaching. Some believe that polygamy is valid in the church today, for instance, Father William Knipe, an American Maryknoll missionary in East Africa ("Africanizing' the Church", Newsweek 126(14): 56, Oct. 2, 1995). God did seem to sanction polygamy in the Old Covenant (2 Sam. 12:8). As Marvin K. Mayers has pointed out, missionaries are change agents (Christianity Confronts Culture, Zondervan, 1987, p. xiv). They have stopped widow burning in India, the killing of twins in Africa, and prostitution in Hawaii. They have introduced hospitals, education, and dignity for women. In thousands of ways, Christians have been salt and light in culture, exposing darkness and preserving the good. God is both able and willing to reveal errors in our understanding (Phi. 3:15). The Word of God, "is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Heb. 4:12). However, understanding God's mind involves nonconformity to the prevailing unchristian worldview (Rom. 12:2). A culture will be as Christian as its people have been permeated with biblical truth.

Biblical and Theological Foundations for Intercultural Mission and Ministry

The biblical and theological foundations for intercultural mission and ministry are deeply woven into the rich tapestry of Scripture, from Genesis' first breath to Revelation's prophetic culmination. These foundations anchor the essence of intercultural theology, missiology, missions, and ministry, articulating God's profound inclusivity and boundless love for all humanity. Genesis, the book of Beginnings, lays a fundamental premise that undergirds the value of cultural diversity. When God creates humanity 'in God's image' (Genesis 1:27), every human being, irrespective of cultural or ethnic identity, bears the imago *Dei*, the image of God. This seminal concept lays a cornerstone for a theology that regards cultural diversity not as a divide but as a beautiful reflection of God's multifaceted creation.

Furthermore, as Genesis unfolds, we see the first family's offspring forming diverse nations and peoples, each with its unique culture and



language (Genesis 10). The Tower of Babel incident (Genesis 11:1-9) divine plan to unite all in love.

The Old Testament frequently echoes God's concern for all nations. The call of Abraham, where God promises that all nations will be blessed through him (Genesis 12:1-3), or the book of Jonah, where God's compassion extends to the gentile city of Nineveh, testify to God's overarching plan that transcends cultural and national boundaries.

When we move to the New Testament, Jesus embodies this intercultural mission. Jesus crosses societal, cultural, and religious boundaries, dialoguing and offering love to all. His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42) shatters the cultural and gender barriers of his time. In this interaction, Jesus does not merely tolerate the other culture; he engages, understands, and validates it. Other narratives, such as the healing of the Syrophenician woman's daughter (Mark 7:24-30) and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), further exemplify Jesus's disregard for cultural prejudices. His ministry paints a vivid picture of a God who sees beyond cultural distinctions and loves unconditionally.

Theologically, the concept of the 'Kingdom of God' (or the 'community of creation') is critical to understanding the value of intercultural mission and ministry. This Kingdom, Jesus teaches, is like a great banquet to which all are invited (Luke 14:15-24). It's where people from East and West, North and South, will dine together (Luke 13:29), an image of a truly intercultural community. Paul's epistles further articulate this inclusive vision. In Galatians (3:28), Paul asserts that in Christ, cultural, social, and gender divides are no barriers to unity. He reminds the Ephesian church that previously separated groups are brought together in Christ, creating one new humanity (Ephesians 2:15).

Finally, in the book of Revelation, John's apocalyptic vision culminates in a profound scene of an intercultural gathering. People from every tribe, tongue, and nation gather around the throne of God (Revelation 7:9), emphasizing that the gospel's scope is global, and God's love is all-encompassing. The intercultural endeavor is, therefore, not a peripheral aspect of Christian theology and practice but a central, indispensable feature. It invites us to celebrate and engage with God's diverse creation, uniting us all in love and grace. This engagement with diversity deepens our understanding of God, broadens our love for our neighbors, and enriches our shared spiritual wisdom. Intercultural theology, missiology, missions, and ministry are



thus not just significant, they're essential for fulfilling our divine calling in an increasingly interconnected world.

Intercultural Approaches to Mission

Intercultural approaches are indeed transforming various fields and disciplines, fostering a richer, more nuanced understanding of our world. In anthropology, scholars like Clifford Geertz and Franz Boas have emphasized cultural relativism, asserting that cultures can only be understood on their terms. This perspective has revolutionized how we approach other cultures, moving from a judgment posture to understanding and respect. In sociology, Stuart Hall's work on cultural identity and hybridity has helped us understand how cultural interactions shape identities. Similarly, Amartya Sen's economic capabilities approach underscores the importance of holistically understanding diverse cultural perspectives to assess economic development.

Literature, too, has seen a surge of interculturalism with authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Salman Rushdie, whose works draw on multiple cultural influences to present a global perspective. Their narratives challenge us to rethink fixed cultural identities and encourage us to embrace the fluidity and complexity of intercultural experiences. In psychology, theorists like Urie Bronfenbrenner and his ecological systems theory emphasize the importance of culture in shaping human development. At the same time, cross-cultural psychologists like Geert Hofstede have highlighted the importance of understanding cultural dimensions in human behavior (Raeff, 2020: 274-276).

Intercultural approaches have significantly influenced Christian theology. Liberation theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez and feminist theologians like Rosemary Radford Ruether have challenged Western-centric theological perspectives and brought the voices of marginalized cultures to the forefront of theological discourse. These perspectives have opened up fresh avenues of theological reflection that resonate with diverse cultural contexts.

In missiology, Lesslie Newbiggin and Andrew Walls have underscored the need for a gospel that transcends cultural barriers yet is expressed within specific cultural contexts. This understanding has informed missions, shifting the focus from mere proselytizing to building relationships and fostering mutual cultural understanding. In ministry, theologians like Emmanuel Katongole have highlighted the significance of embracing diverse cultural expressions of Christianity,



paving the way for intercultural ministry models where diverse cultural perspectives are respected and valued. Each field demonstrates the impact of intercultural approaches, providing richer, more nuanced insights and creating space for diverse voices and perspectives. This shift is not just intellectually enriching—it's crucial for fostering understanding, empathy, and unity in our increasingly interconnected world.

Intercultural Theory, Theology, and Missiology

Intercultural theory and theology draw insights from diverse fields and disciplines, illuminating the complex dynamics of cultural interactions and enriching our understanding of intercultural encounters. Here I'll map out key domains and scholars that have shaped intercultural theory and theology, highlighting their contributions to this evolving field.

Cultural Anthropology: Cultural anthropology, with luminaries like Clifford Geertz and Margaret Mead, explores the intricacies of culture, cultural relativism, and how culture shapes human behavior and worldview. It provides foundational concepts and methods for understanding cultural diversity and its significance in intercultural encounters.

Cross-Cultural Psychology: Scholars like Harry Triandis and Shalom Schwartz have delved into cross-cultural psychology, examining how cultural factors influence human cognition, behavior, and emotions. This discipline offers valuable insights into the interplay between culture and individual psychology, informing our understanding of intercultural dynamics.

Social Psychology: Prominent figures like Muzafer Sherif and Gordon Allport have contributed to social psychology, which explores how social interactions and group processes shape individual behavior and attitudes. It sheds light on intergroup dynamics, prejudice, and identity formation, providing frameworks for understanding intercultural relations.

Sociolinguistics: With scholars like Dell Hymes and Deborah Tannen, sociolinguistics investigates the relationship between language and society, studying how language use varies across cultures and contexts. It illuminates the role of language in intercultural communication, power dynamics, and identity negotiation.



Intercultural Communication: Intercultural communication scholars like Edward T. Hall and Richard Wiseman focus on the complexities of communication across cultures, highlighting the role of verbal and nonverbal communication, cultural norms, and context in intercultural interactions. Their work provides practical insights for effective intercultural communication.

Discourse Analysis: Scholars such as Judith Butler and Norman Fairclough delve into discourse analysis, exploring how language shapes social reality and power dynamics. Their insights shed light on the discursive construction of identities, ideologies, and social hierarchies, informing intercultural understanding and challenging dominant discourses.

Postcolonial Theory and Studies: Figures like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have advanced postcolonial theory, which critically examines the legacies of colonialism and the dynamics of power, culture, and representation. Postcolonial perspectives challenge dominant narratives, highlighting the voices of the marginalized, and deconstructing the power imbalances within intercultural contexts.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality, developed by scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw, explores how multiple social identities intersect and shape individuals' experiences and privileges. It helps us understand the complexities of power, privilege, and oppression within intercultural encounters, emphasizing the need to address intersecting forms of discrimination.

Theology: Theological scholars like Kwok Pui-lan and James H. Cone have contributed to intercultural theology, integrating theological reflection with intercultural and contextual perspectives. They explore how diverse cultural contexts can shape theology and how it can address issues of power, justice, and liberation in intercultural encounters.

Missiology: Missiologists such as Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh have expanded missiological discourse, emphasizing the intercultural nature of Mission and the global spread of Christianity. They explore how intercultural encounters impact the practice of mission, urging a more inclusive and reciprocal approach. These fields and disciplines collectively offer theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, and critical insights that inform intercultural theory and theology. By integrating these perspectives, intercultural theory and theology gain depth, nuance, and practical relevance, enabling.



Cultural Studies: Cultural studies, with its multidisciplinary approach, examines cultural phenomena and their roles in societal structures. Scholars like Stuart Hall have delved into issues of cultural identity, representation, and power dynamics, adding depth to our understanding of culture in intercultural theory and theology.

Comparative Religion: This field, enriched by figures like Mircea Eliade, provides comparative analyses of different religious traditions. It fosters an understanding of diverse belief systems and practices, encouraging dialogue and respect in interfaith and intercultural contexts.

Critical Theory: Critical theorists like Jürgen Habermas and Theodor Adorno provide insights into the power structures and ideologies embedded within societies. Critical theory assists in identifying and challenging oppressive systems and is fundamental in intercultural theology's commitment to justice and equality.

Postmodern Philosophy: Philosophers like Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida have critiqued universalist assumptions and advocated recognizing diversity and difference. Their work has encouraged openness to differing perspectives in intercultural theory and theology.

Globalization Studies: Scholars like Roland Robertson and Arjun Appadurai analyze the complex processes of globalization. This field sheds light on how global flows of ideas, people, and resources shape intercultural encounters and interactions.

Migration and Diaspora Studies: Migration studies, represented by scholars like Stephen Castles, delve into the experiences and challenges of migrants. Their contributions provide critical perspectives on displacement, diaspora, and intercultural navigation pertinent to intercultural theology.

Feminist and Womanist Theologies: Feminist and womanist theologians like Rosemary Radford Ruether and Delores S. Williams have highlighted the significance of gender analysis and the inclusion of women's experiences in theology. Their perspectives urge the consideration of gender dynamics within intercultural interactions and interpretations.

Indigenous Studies: Scholars like Linda Tuhiwai Smith in indigenous studies examined indigenous peoples' histories, cultures, and rights. This field provides essential insights into indigeneity and colonialism,



urging respect for indigenous cultures and wisdom in intercultural theology. These fields, among others, contribute valuable perspectives that expand and enrich our understanding of intercultural theory and theology. They underscore the multifaceted and interdisciplinary nature of the intercultural study, highlighting the complex interplay of cultural, societal, and individual factors in intercultural encounters (Rogoff, 2003).

The Deficiency of Monocultural Approaches to Missions

Several studies underscore the deficiencies of monocultural approaches and the need for intercultural approaches in theology, literature, biblical interpretation, ministry, and missions. Here are some examples:

Theology: "The Myth of Religious Superiority" by Paul F. Knitter critiques monocultural theology's tendency to perceive one's religious tradition as superior. He argues for an intercultural theology acknowledging the richness and diversity of religious traditions, understanding God's Revelation as multifaceted, and transcending any culture.

Literature: In "Postcolonial Literature and the Impact of Literacy," Neil Ten Kortenaar highlights the limitations of Eurocentric literary analysis in understanding postcolonial literature. He advocates for an intercultural approach, suggesting that recognizing authors' cultural contexts and backgrounds can yield a deeper understanding of their works.

Biblical Interpretation: R.S. Sugirtharajah's "Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation" critiques traditional, monocultural approaches to biblical interpretation as often colonial, ignoring the sociocultural contexts of biblical texts. Sugirtharajah proposes an intercultural approach to biblical interpretation that respects and incorporates diverse cultural perspectives, emphasizing the need to decolonize biblical studies.

Ministry: Emmanuel Y. Lartey's "In Living Color" discusses how monocultural approaches in pastoral care can lead to culturally insensitive and ineffective practices. He argues for an intercultural approach that values and respects the cultural identities of individuals and communities, leading to more effective, holistic pastoral care.

Missions: Andrew Walls' "The Missionary Movement in Christian History" discusses how Western-centric missionary practices often failed to recognize indigenous cultural values. He emphasizes an intercultural

approach that views every culture as a recipient and a contributor to the Christian mission. This leads to a more equitable and effective practice of missions.

These studies and others like them not mentioned by this paper, reveal the limitations of monocultural approaches in various fields and highlight the necessity of adopting intercultural perspectives for a more equitable, inclusive, and comprehensive understanding.

Intercultural-cultural Mission

Intercultural theology is the study and application of study and application of religious beliefs, customs, and practices in diverse cultural settings. It delves into how various cultures interpret and interact with theological concepts, often challenging traditional Western theological paradigms. In essence, it is theology engaged in cross-cultural dialogue. It is not about one culture imparting its religious beliefs on another but fostering dialogue, understanding, and mutual growth among varying cultural groups (Rosin, 1972:6-7).

Conclusion

Evangelism efforts in the twenty-first century in Nigeria and Africa and cross-cultural communication are joined together. As Christians reach out with God's Word into their community, they find people who are unlike themselves. While they share the good news of a Saviour for all, cultural differences can easily be ignored. Cultural ignorance negatively affects evangelism efforts. It prevents witnesses from effective gospel communication because it creates psychological barriers that stop effective communication. Cultural awareness enhances evangelism efforts. It breaks down barriers.

Recommendations

In light of the awareness that this paper raised in terms of the role culture plays in evangelism efforts. The following recommendations were given:

1. The significant role of local language in evangelism should be made known to Missionary students in Bible Colleges.
2. It is further suggested that Bible Colleges should be a terrain for multilingual and should also make it compulsory for all Missionary students to learn at least two local languages apart from their mother tongue.

3. To make God's message more persuasive, Denominations should endeavour to involve and make indigene an assistant pastor or senior pastor where possible.

4. Another recommendation is that the senior pastor who is not an indigene should be made to learn the language of his host community three months before resuming there, at least the basics of such language should be learned.

5. The researcher further recommended that the European style of dressing should be discouraged but instead, the dressing code of the indigenes should be cultivated by the pastor and his family to identify with the host community.

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