Acculturation 2.0
New Strategies for Acculturation

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Agenda

- To propose a new model for acculturation of international priests / candidates for religious life
  - Taking into account what we have learned from experience and from the research
  - A program we hope to have up and running in the next 18 months.
- Provoke some discussion on "next steps" for acculturation and formation.

The Reality, briefly…

- There are more than 6,000 international priests serving in the US - a number that has more than doubled since 1999 (CARA, 2014)
- These come from a variety of Asian, European, North American, African and Central/South American countries.

The Reality, briefly…

- Among international priests, CARA (2012) reports that most have been ordained for 10 or more years before coming to the US
- These have had their initial formation in their country of origin.

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The Reality, briefly…

- Among the dioceses and religious communities responding to our survey, most prefer initial formation to take place at least partially in the US.

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The Reality, briefly…

- In 2016, 30 percent of newly ordained priests in the US were born outside the United States
  - Received their initial formation in the US
  - Largest numbers of international seminarians come to the US from: Mexico, Colombia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Poland.

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The Reality, briefly…

- There are currently more than 4,000 international religious sisters studying or serving in the United States (CARA, 2017)
- In our survey or religious communities, approximately two-thirds of men's communities report that they currently recruit international candidates.

The Reality, briefly…

- Again, these come to the US from a variety of Asian, European, North American, African and Central/South American countries.

The Reality, briefly…

- CARA (2017) asked women's communities what would be most helpful to improve the lives and ministry of international sisters.
  - –Acculturation training
  - –Language acquisition programs

The Reality, briefly…

- Men's religious communities and dioceses are more likely than women's religious communities to use formal acculturation programs for international priests / candidates.
- In religious life, acculturation often happens in community or during initial formation.

The Reality, briefly…

- Men's religious communities appear to be more satisfied with their acculturation efforts (8/10) than dioceses (5.8/10) and women's communities (5.9/10)

The Reality, briefly…

- Across these groups, there is expressed need for:
  - More time devoted to acculturation
  - More effective screening strategies
  - Language training
  - Training in psychosocial /psychosexual (boundaries) issues

The Reality, briefly…

- There is also a recognized need for international candidates to grow in their understanding of the Church in the US.
- Unfortunately, Theological study is one of the least often included components in acculturation programs.

Current state of Acculturation Programs

- Approaches to acculturation vary:
  - Initial formation programs (seminary and religious)
  - Acculturation parishes / communities
  - Diocesan- and community- sponsored programs (formal and informal)
  - Formal, external programs

Current State of Acculturation Programs

- Most free-standing programs appear to follow a similar model:
  - Time-limited (2-3, several-day modules)
  - Lecture-based
  - Simultaneous with ministry
  - Assume that knowledge/information and exposure result in competence.

Current State of Acculturation Programs

- Short-comings of current model:
  - Leading researchers suggest that knowledge and exposure do not necessarily result in intercultural readiness or competence.
    - Attitudinal factors and personality traits are key to readiness and competence.

Current State of Acculturation Programs

- Short-comings of current model:
  - Time limited
  - Leave little time for practice of skills with feedback
  - Time constraints offer little opportunity for language training / accent modification

Current State of Acculturation Programs

- Short-comings of current model:
  - neglect the importance of theological studies in the context of the culture of arrival / ministry.

Current State of Acculturation Programs

- Short-comings of current model:
  - May result in negative first experiences on the parts of both the international candidate and the receiving community.
  - Do not evaluate for and train specifically in intercultural readiness

"Intercultural Readiness"

- An overlooked variable
- Cultural Adaptability
- Different than knowledge of a culture
- A personality trait as well as a skill
- Affective Maturity

What is "Intercultural Readiness"?

Four primary factors:

1. Intercultural Sensitivity:
   - The degree to which individuals (or groups) are interested in what makes people different because of the culture they come from
   - How much we are williing to take into account the fact that our own culture has formed us.

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What is "Intercultural Readiness"?

Four primary factors:

2. Intercultural Communication:
- How flexible we are in expressing ourselves
- How mindful we are when communicating with people from other cultures

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What is "Intercultural Readiness"?

Four primary factors:

3. Building Commitment:
- The degree to which individuals are able to build strong relationships that survive tensions and conflicts
- The ability to focus on new solutions that work for all parties

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What is "Intercultural Readiness"?

Four primary factors:

4. Managing Uncertainty:
- The ability to live with ambiguity, uncertainty, tension.
- Allows people to stay alert and creative throughout the interaction process – i.e., does not fatigue easily in the face of uncertainty, tension

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"Intercultural Readiness"

Four primary factors:

1. Intercultural Sensitivity
2. Intercultural Communication
3. Building Commitment
4. Managing Uncertainty

<div align="right">Brinkman & van Weerdenburg</div>

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

- 6-month acculturation program
- Allows for proper initial and ongoing evaluation of Cultural Readiness
- Community- or "milieu"-based
- Several components indicated by research and reported needs...

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Components: Time

- A primary factor in the success of initial formation in the US
- Allows for the acculturation without the simultaneous pressure of ministry
- Allows for ongoing evaluation of a candidate's readiness

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Components: Theological Study
- Recognizes that cultural context matters when studying theology
- Recognizes that seminary /religious formation may not emphasize or include dimensions we assign importance to in the US

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Components: Theological Study
- US Church history & Ecclesiology
- Pastoral Theology
- Moral Theology & Sexual Ethics
- Human Development

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Components: Supervised Ministry:
- Rural and Urban settings
- Allows for practice of ministry skills in new context + feedback
- Pastoral care, preaching, presiding, administration

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Components: Language Skills
- Development of reading, writing and speaking skills
- Accent modification

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A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Components: Human Formation
- Gender dynamics & boundaries
- Exercise of Authority & Power
- Celibacy Formation
- Customs & Social Dynamics
- Health & Psychological Adjustment

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A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Components: Mentoring
- Regular meetings with mentor from same culture group
- Allows for higher levels of support, feedback and role modeling

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A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Components: Ongoing Evaluation
- Staff licensed in *Inter-Cultural Readiness* assessment & training (Brinkman & van Weerdenburg)
  - Use to focus programming
  - Use to determine ultimate goodness of fit

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

Plan
- Have in place in 12-18 months
- An expansion of our *World Priest* program: probably focused initially on international priests
- Possible area for ongoing partnership with Saint Luke Institute

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A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

- We see this as the future direction for formation & acculturation of international priests and religious
- Could be adapted in larger dioceses and religious communities

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

- Saint Meinrad an ideal setting:
  - International Formation Community
  - Supervised Ministry Programming
  - ENL services
  - School of Theology
  - Housing
  - Health & Psychological Services Centers

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

- Possible Hurdles:
  - Convincing dioceses and communities to invest upfront.
  - Needed programs to prepare the receiving communities

A New Proposal: *Acculturation 2.0*

We would like to hear from you.

- Questions
- Recommendations
- Interest