

BEING A MISSIONARY FAMILY OVER TIME:
RITUAL AND INTERACTION IN THE
PRODUCTION OF MEANING

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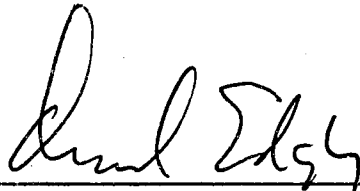
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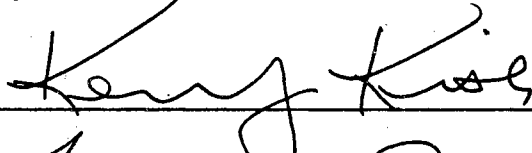
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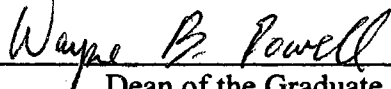


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For centuries missionaries have been leaving their home cultures to go to foreign lands to promote their religious beliefs. This activity is not performed in solitude, for these missionaries are often married with children, and they take their wives and children with them as they go. This activity is certainly different from most families in the United States. While families may move from one house to another or from one place to another, both the new and the old places are usually in the same country unlike the missionary who makes a significant cultural change. Also, most families, unlike missionary families, tend to live in the same country as their extended family members, which facilitates relationship with those family members.

Two other family groups who share some features with missionary families are military families and business families working in international settings. While there are similarities, at the same time there are differences in these groups. For instance, although the military family and the missionary family both live in international settings, they do not share their purposes for living away from home. The military family is sent to a foreign assignment designated by the US government for the ultimate purpose of defending the United States. The missionary family, on the other hand, goes to live in an international setting voluntarily for the reason of promoting religious beliefs.

There are differences also in the length of time spent away from the US. The military assignment is usually for a period of not more than three years, while the missionary family stays outside the US for the length of their career. Also, many businesses require some employees to live in settings outside the US in this age of an international market. In this role, the businessman may move his family to a different country but usually intersperses time overseas with time in the United States, unlike the missionary family who comes less often to the US. Like the military family, the business family usually does not live in the international setting for as long as the missionary family.

Although a preacher's family does not live outside the United States, this group also shares similarities with missionaries. Preacher's family members experience life with many religious features. Their children's lives are affected by their parents' values and beliefs. Often family members become the center of attention from members in their churches. Missionaries also live out their religious convictions which affect their family life. However, unlike the preacher's family in the US, the missionary is living family life in a foreign culture with different values and beliefs.

Certainly military families, business families, and preachers' families share characteristics with the missionary family, but of these groups only the missionary family has the professional religious position to blend with a dissimilar culture in which to act out family life over an extended period of time. The missionary family is in an unique position to conduct the activities of family life. Therefore, this fascinating

family presents an invitation for further examination.

Consideration of missionary families precipitates a list of questions. What is it that leads one to take family and live in a foreign culture? How does one's wife and children respond to this move? How do extended family members who remain in the United States respond to this activity? Once the move is completed, how does the missionary family accomplish family life? How does living outside the United States affect the cultural identity of the children of missionaries? How does being a missionary family affect the relationship between the immediate family and extended family members living in a different country? How does spending life in a different culture affect the retirement of the missionary? If one decides to return to the United States prior to retirement, how does one become an ex-missionary? These questions reflect the need to explore the life of missionary families.

Past Studies of Missionary Families

There is a notable absence of research related to missionary families. This may be due in part to the lack of interest in researching aspects of the religious community. The neglect of observation may be a reflection of the separation of a religious community with life centered around faith and the scientific community which has demanded facts defined by repeated observations.

Even though there is a dearth of examination of missionary families, there is research about individual members of missionary families. Research exists related to

missionaries as individuals and to children of missionaries.

Research Related to Missionaries as Individuals

Research related to missionaries as individuals is exemplified by three specific studies. One study by Dillon (1983) focused on personality characteristics of missionaries. The author stated that the study is based on other investigations into the relationship between personality characteristics and occupational choice. Taylor and Malony (1983) conducted a study which explored ways in which missionaries express their hostility. These authors rely on the concepts of culture shock and stress for their theoretical basis. A third study by Britt (1983) compared characteristics of success with personality traits of missionaries.

In the cited research the underlying theory perspective was of a psychological nature and proposed the idea that personality characteristics can predict and even determine behavior of missionaries. Especially the studies by Dillon (1983) and by Britt (1983) suggest that identification of personality characteristics may be used to accurately predict if missionaries will stay on the field or if they will become an attrition statistic. The ultimate conclusions of all three studies suggest that results of these studies could be used to decide if missionary candidates should be appointed by a mission organization.

Another feature of these studies is the time element of the research. In the methods used to collect data, survey questionnaires asked for missionaries' responses at

that one point in time. There was no acknowledgment of the possibility that people may change over time. Research is needed which examines family members over time to identify patterns of behavior rather than a behavior at one particular moment in time.

While this research focuses on missionary family members as if they exist in isolation, the situation of the family is that members live in interaction with each other. Psychologically oriented studies provide information which is not inclusive or which neglects the interactive nature of human behavior.

Research Related to Children of Missionaries

Missionary families are comprised of at least of missionaries and their children. Most of the published information about children of missionaries is not research. A search of research related to children of missionaries yielded one study by Walters (1991). The focus of the study was reentry into the United States by missionaries' children who grew up in families living outside the US. The theoretical foundation of the Walter's study was primarily psychological based on concepts such as culture shock and identity confusion. Although culture shock implies the context of a person's life is important, the focus still is on an individual's reaction to the culture rather than exploring interactions of family members in that culture. The attributes of culture shock and identity confusion are conceptualized as objects which affect the feelings and experiences of children of missionaries. The time frame for this study was similar to that of the individual missionaries described above. The study was focused on one

point in time, the time of missionary children's reentry into the United States to attend college.

Theoretical Problems with Past Research

In previous research related to missionary families several problems are noticeable. Some of these are manifested in a study by Dillon (1983) which suggested that certain personality characteristics cause a person to not only become a missionary but also to be a success in this role. The first issue is whether the scores on a standardized test, in this case the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, are a valid representation of missionaries. A set of scores cannot portray the dynamic characteristics of a living, changing, interacting human being. Secondly, the scores only represent the missionaries' answers at one given point in time, thereby ignoring the continuous change of living persons. Thirdly, score on a test are numbers and do not have the power to dictate whether or not one will live life successfully on the mission field. Fourthly, the human abilities and the multitude of actions available in human interactions are ignored. Therefore, studies utilizing personality traits are problematic as descriptions of missionary families comprised of dynamic individuals.

Blumer (1969) suggests that rather than emphasizing personality traits, the emphasis should be on human beings and their behavior. More specifically, the important issue to be investigated is the meaning that persons create in interaction with each other. "In the typical psychological scheme such factors as motives, attitudes,

hidden complexes, elements of psychological organization, and psychological processes are used to account for behavior without any need of considering social interaction. One jumps from such causative factors to the behavior they are supposed to produce” (p. 7). Prus (1996) supports this criticism of the psychological perspective as it lessens the import of human agency. He suggests that it is humans who made decisions and choices rather than personality characteristics imposing behavior on humans.

An additional issue noted from past research is related to the time perspective. Prior research of missionaries identifies personality profiles at one point in time. This one short view is a limited perspective of any family, an inherently dynamic group of people who change with time and experiences. The traditional family develops from a married couple to a couple with children and on to a couple whose children have left home to start homes of their own. Likewise, the missionary family moves along a time line which requires an understanding of the family to include various points along the way. This development is not presented by past studies.

Another problem with past research is that it is not family oriented. If one is to study the family, perspectives of multiple members must include their interactions with each other. To understand the perspective of the family, it is important to include missionaries, their children, and perhaps the parents of the missionaries.

Theoretical Alternatives for Family Research

One of the theories used for family research historically has been a structural-

functional approach. However, there are problems when considering this theory for research of missionary families. The dilemma has been well stated by Kingsbury and Scanzoni (1993) who suggest that assumptions of this model remain central to current family research. However, the authors further submit that a problem with this approach is that it asserts one static model as a normative yardstick for the family. Any family behavior not included in the model becomes deviant. While the missionary family is different from other families, they are not usually considered deviant. "Although the label 'deviant' seldom appears in the family studies' literature, the fact that other lifestyles are called 'other' indicates that they represent something besides 'The Family.' If one posits a theory of social organization based on normative conformity, then one must forever wrestle with the empirical reality that large numbers of persons are not conforming. . . .Parsons and his students agonized over the implications for decades" (Kingsbury and Scanzoni, 1993, p. 205).

Another consideration is that the missionary family has a career over time. The family does not stay exactly as the look at a family portrait at one point in time. The family changes continually as they interact with each other. To understand the missionary family a model is needed which allows for the natural patterns lived out by family members as they make decisions about family life.

Continuing the search for a workable theory, it is typical to mention systems theory, another popular model for family research. Systems theory improves upon the structural-functional assumptions in several ways. Systems theory advocates a view of

the family as a system which must be understood as a whole. Therefore, an individual approach is not a sufficient perspective for understanding a family. Furthermore, systems theory allows for investigation into how a family changes over time.

Another assumption of systems theory is that systems are self-reflexive. That is, the system has the ability to view itself and make adaptive changes. The problem with this thought is that a system is an abstraction which has no self and therefore no ability for self-reflection. Persons, in contrast, have the ability to be self-reflexive.

The larger problem with systems theory is that the focus is once again on the structure of the system. While the improvement is that the view is larger than the structural-functional assumptions, the problem remains that the focus is still on structure and, therefore, in the end takes on some of the problems of the former ideas. Systems theory then expands the dilemmas inherent in the structural-functional argument.

A final consideration of systems theory is that the ultimate examination is on the ability of the system to function. If the family process fits the systems model, the result is a positive designation of functioning. However, if the family does not fit the model, the outcome is the alternative negative indication of, in the terminology of the perspective, dysfunction. The pronouncement of functional or dysfunctional is the primary objective.

A further problem is the consideration of how a system can continue to “function” if the parts of the system are not fitting together in the ideal way. This mechanistic model requires that people be seen as parts of the machine rather than as

dynamic individuals who interact with each other as they live family life together.

In a further quest for a theory to guide exploration of missionary families, another option is developmental theory. Developmental theory is a more dynamic theory which addresses the issue of families changing over time. However, this model also suggests one path which families take throughout their tenure. The suggestions of developmental stages with their corresponding developmental tasks have presented problems for exploration of family behavior which wander outside the boundaries of the theoretical path. The theory denies the unique characteristics of a family by averaging all families into the lowest common denominator. This reductionist approach misses the rich features of each family. Also, developmental theory's goal of prediction ignores the creative ability of family members in interaction with each other. Therefore, the developmental approach is not the best option for examination of the group of individuals living together as a missionary family.

Symbolic Interactionism as a Theory for Family Research

An alternative for research of the missionary family is to consider the interaction between family members and the meanings created in such interaction as suggested in symbolic interactionism. In this theoretical formation, human beings are the actors. These actors interact, and the result of this action is the production of meaning.

This interaction is evident in family relationships. The family perspective is not just a collection of opinions in the family. Rather, the perspective of one member calls

forth a response from another member, which has some impact on the reaction of the first member. The meaning created is not just a serial representation of perspectives, but rather an interactive process. Therefore, a model for understanding family life and more specifically missionary family life must be of an interactive nature to offer an understanding of the behavior of the missionary family. In the missionary family, rather than identifying personality characteristics, symbolic interactionism directs the researcher to focus on interactions between family members and what being a family means to missionaries and their children.

Another aspect of symbolic interactionism is the recognition that the series of interactions in life results in on-going processes. Therefore, the activities of family life can be viewed as a series of meaningful phases in the family process. The missionary family's life process is a series of activities which are meaningful to the family living the missionary lifestyle. The question for this study is what is that process which the missionary family lives out in their life?

Generic Social Processes

Building on the work of symbolic interactionists, Prus (1996) has suggested elements of interactions which are identified as generic social processes. These actions are defined as "transsituational elements of interaction--to be abstracted, transcontextual formulations of social behavior. Denoting parallel sequences of activity across diverse contexts, generic social processes highlight the emergent, interpretive features of

association. They focus our attention on the activities involved in the 'doing' or accomplishing of human group life" (p. 142).

Prus (1996) further suggests that the major processes in human group life are acquiring perspectives, achieving identity, being involved, doing activity, experiencing relationships and forming and coordinating associations. Following the thought of Prus, it is suggested that missionaries experience these processes in their lives. It is expected that missionaries' stories about their lives would contain events about how they acquired the missionary perspective, how they achieved their identity as a missionary, how they became involved in missionary activities, what kind of activities filled their lives, how they experienced family relationships, and what other kind of associations they formed. These generic social processes applied to the missionary family allow for a moving picture of the family rather than a one time snapshot.

Other Support for Symbolic Interactionism in Family Research

LaRossa and Reitzes (1993) suggest symbolic interactionism as a natural theory for family research. "Symbolic interactionism's unique contribution to family studies is . . . the emphasis it gives to the proposition that families are social groups" (p. 136). These authors recognize the perspective that families are made up of groups of persons who interact with each other. Therefore, symbolic interactionism would require the examination of the whole family rather than of one person who represents the family.

Stryker (1959) also supports the selection of symbolic interactionism as a guide for family research. One of the strengths that this theory offers is the incorporation of “how the human organism acquires the ways of behaving, the values, norms and attitudes of the social units of which he is a part. The focus here is on development-- that which happens over time to the human neophyte: the infant, the recruit entering the army, the student entering the university, the bride entering a new set of family relationships” (p. 436). These ideas complement those of Prus known as acquiring perspectives. This perspective enlightens the research of the missionary family as the focus of the observation becomes how members of the missionary family acquired the values, norms, and attitudes which are the missionary family’s perspective.

A further strong point of symbolic interactionism in family research is that, according to Stryker (1959), this model acknowledges the link between the individual level of observation and the larger group level. “Those whose problems bridge . . . two fields, as is true of many students of the family, are provided with a framework facilitating movement from one level to the other, allowing systematic transactions between the two levels” (p. 437). This ability is an advantage in studying the missionary family as the exploration needs to move between the individual’s perspective of family and the meanings of the family as a group.

A question posed by Stryker in contemplation of the interactionist perspective of family research is related to “extra-familial identities.” The consideration is how the family identity is affected by and effects the identities outside the family. For the

missionary family the question is glaring. How is being a family member affected by being a missionary, and how does being a missionary effect being a family member? Stryker (1959) further asserts, "It is certain that one's extra-familial identities operate within the family situation. Which identities so operate, their specific mode of articulation with family identities, and their consequences for family relationships are questions of obvious importance" (p. 446). An investigation is needed to illuminate these relationships in the missionary family.

Examples of Symbolic Interactionism in Family Research

One example of family research of an interactive nature is the study by Sampson, Messinger, and Towne (1962). This study applies the concept of family as a group of human beings to understand family activities specific to a given situation, namely having a family member who is identified as mentally ill. These researchers investigated family processes which were used to cope with behaviors of family members who were mental patients. Using interviews with mental patients and their family members, the researchers were able to suggest a process of how the family accommodated the patient's behaviors which the family identified as disruptive. In a similar fashion using interviews with missionaries and their family members this study discovers the process of being a missionary family.

A similar approach was employed by Blum (1994) as she explored the process of managing a family member with Alzheimer's disease. Her conclusions were related

to the deceptive practices which she observed as a regular feature of interaction between the family member and the Alzheimer's victim. Her methods included interviewing patients and family members in addition to being a participant observer in support groups for Alzheimer's patients family members.

Both of these studies examined the family as a whole rather generalizing to a family perspective from one member's responses. Also, both studies explored interactions between family members and mental patients in one case and between family members and Alzheimer's victims in another. Finally, both studies provided a dynamic perspective of the family as they identified processes rather than static concepts. Their examples support the use of symbolic interactionism as a theory for family research. In a similar fashion, this theory will serve as a framework for the study of missionary families as well.

Research Focus

The examination of the missionary family is necessary for the understanding of how missionary family members interact with each other as they live as a family over time. This exploration is guided best by the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism which suggests that the core of the research is the interaction of family members and the meanings which are created in that process. Consistent with principles of symbolic interactionism, the focus of this research will be to:

1. Describe what it means to become a missionary family as told by parents of missionaries and missionaries themselves.
2. Describe what it means to be a missionary as told by parents of missionaries, missionaries, and children of missionaries after being in those roles for at least 5 years.
3. Describe what it means to be a missionary and children of missionaries after missionaries have retired.
4. Describe the intergenerational interaction of a missionary family at three points in the missionary career: at appointment, on furlough, and after retirement.
5. Describe the experience of becoming a nonretired former missionary.

To accomplish these purposes the following chapters provide an overview of symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective, appropriate research methods for understanding missionary families, the stories of missionary families told by family members, and recommendations for further investigations into missionary family life.

CHAPTER II

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM AND DRAMATURGY

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a theory which provides a strong framework for understanding the missionary family. The following chapter will present a brief history of symbolic interactionism and dramaturgy as well as terminology and the basic principles of the two perspectives as they relate to the study of missionary families.

History of the Tradition

Most authors who write on symbolic interactionism agree that George Herbert Mead was the father of the theory even though he was a philosopher before he was a sociologist, never writing to publish a book (Coser, 1977; Reynolds, 1993; Ritzer, 1996).¹ While recognizing as many as eight variations which are schools of thought emanating from Mead's ideas, Reynolds (1993) offers four "major varieties." The off

¹ A philosophy professor at the University of Chicago for 38 years, Mead is described as being able to organize thoughts extremely well when speaking, usually lecturing without notes (Coser, p. 345; Ritzer, p.333). Consequently, it was left to his students after his death to organize their copious notes from former classes into books of Mead's thoughts. One of those students, Herbert Blumer, elaborated on the ideas of his former professor for publication. In fact, it was Blumer who first used the term "symbolic interactionism" in 1937 (Ritzer, p. 330).

shoots are identified as the Chicago school led by Herbert Blumer, the Iowa school led by Manford Kuhn, the dramaturgical genre developed by Erving Goffman, and ethnomethodology promoted by Harold Garfinkel.

Given the importance of Mead, the following section examines Mead's major concepts. Reynolds (1993) suggests that Blumer is the symbolic interactionist who "has remained closest to Mead's original position" (p. 76). Therefore, Blumer's ideas will be reviewed as well.

Mead's Major Concepts

Society. When describing Mead's theoretical position, writers most often quote Mind, Self, and Society (Mead, 1934/1962). Ritzer (1996) suggests that because of Mead's emphasis on society as the origin of self and mind, he might have preferred "Society, Self, and Mind." Indeed, Mead thought of society as existent prior to the development of self or the mind. It is society which provides the context for birth and subsequent development of an individual. Furthermore, society includes the language, or symbols, needed for individuals to communicate and interact with others.

As Mead preferred processual models, he theorized that society itself was a process which evolved from interacting human beings (Ritzer, 1996, p. 346). "Even in the physical absence of others, the others are mentally present and lend to the conduct of the isolate the flavor of the past cooperative endeavors" (Reynolds, p. 49). Thus

the relationship between the individual and society in one of continual interaction.

Mead further suggests that the family is the basic unit providing this process in society. The processes introduced in the family become internalized in the individual's mind and subsequently guide the actions of the individual. In the missionary family, the child who is to become a missionary is introduced to missionaries and related perspectives early in life. These ideas are then internalized and have influence on related missionary activity later in life. The families of missionaries, then, are one of the primary socializing agents as they rear children in environments compatible with the parents' values and dreams.

Further ideas related to the interaction of society and the individual are suggested by Blumer (1969). "Human society is to be seen as consisting of acting people, and the life of the society is to be seen as consisting of their actions" (Blumer, p. 85). He positions the interpretive interactions of Mead in opposition to the more familiar constructs of social organization such as status, power, and social class.

Hewitt (1976) summarizes the symbolic interactionist perspective of society well. "It is only from a society already in existence, comprised of people acting toward one another and toward themselves, that new members of the society acquire the symbols and selves that equip them to be members of society. Only 'minded' people can be members of a human society, and mind is acquired by participating in society. And, in the final analysis, it is by the use of symbols and mind that people behave in ways that perpetuate the society" (p. 57).

These explanations offered by Mead, Blumer, and Hewitt help to understand that parents teach children the language or symbols required to interact in relation to family roles as well as religious roles. Children have grown up in families who have values and learned about the “society” of missionaries or missionary traditions including an environment of organized church activities where missionaries have been present. From participation in these activities, children acquired the views of established missionaries and of others who saw the missionary enterprise as a worthy endeavor. Prus (1996) identifies this process as “acquiring perspectives,” one generic social process.

Self. Another of Mead’s constructs which helps in understanding of the missionary family is the self. Again it is noted that Mead emphasized interaction with society in the development of self. “. . . selves must be accounted for in terms of the social process, and in terms of communication; and individuals must be brought into essential relation within that process before communication, or the contact between the minds of different individuals, becomes possible. The body is not a self, as such; it becomes a self only when it has developed a mind within the context of social experience” (Mead, 1934:49). The self who has developed a missionary identity has not developed in an environment void of missionaries. Only persons who have developed within a context valuing the missionary perspective will develop as a missionary.

Another defining feature of Mead's self is the ability of a human being to see self as object. As Blumer (1969) proposes, "In asserting that the human being has a self, Mead simply meant that the human being is an object to himself. The human being may perceive himself, have conceptions of himself, communicate with himself, and act toward himself. As these types of behavior imply, the human being may become the object of his own action" (p. 62). It is this ability to perceive self that enables one to communicate ideas about self to others. Thus, the missionary has the ability to look back on prior activities and thoughts, to report present thinking, and to project how self will act in the future.

This emphasis on self as object is inherent in Mead's suggestion related to the development of self in children. Mead suggested that the self comes into being in three distinct stages during childhood; imitation (sometimes identified as the preparatory stage), play, and games. In the first of these, the imitation stage, the child simply mimics the behavior of others around him. Implicit in this designation is the idea that the child attaches no meaning to those behaviors but rather does what he has seen persons around him do. Parents frequently observe children mimicking the parents they have observed. The little girls plays like she is a mother as she instructs her doll. In this way, family roles begin development very early in a child's life. A similar process reveals the development of other roles such as that of the missionary.

In the second stage, the play stage, the child begins to play a role. Meltzer describes the stage as follows. “The child plays mother, teacher, storekeeper, postman, streetcar conductor, Mr. Jones, etc. What is of central importance in such play-acting is that it places the child in the position where it is able to act back toward itself in such roles as ‘mother’ or ‘teacher.’ In this stage, then, the child first begins to form a self, that is, to direct activity toward itself--and it does so by taking the roles of others” (Meltzer, p. 10). The taking on of family role is implicit in being able to be a family member. At some point in the development of the missionary identity, a person takes on the roles of those missionaries with whom interaction has occurred.

Hewitt (1976) suggests that this play stage occurs when the child is able to use language and begins to put words to the roles he plays. “The development of language, including a name for self, makes possible the process of playing at and taking the roles of specific others . . . “ (p. 71). The child who is a missionary in the making has been exposed to situations where religious terminology or church language provides the capability for thinking about the world of the missionary. As the child plays the roles, he uses roles of those around him whom he has observed in daily activity.

During the playing of the role, the child then assumes the role of the other which can act toward the child, thus setting up the process of the child acting toward self as object. In this stage the roles are not organized or necessarily consistent as evidence by the child often switching roles without any concern about congruity.

In the third stage of self development, the behaviors of the child become more purposeful in relation to not only himself, but those of many other around him. The child not only takes a role but also begins to understand the relationship of that role to other roles. He learns rules which direct the behaviors associated with his own role as well as the roles of others. Therefore, he is able to anticipate the behaviors of others. This characteristic of role-taking allows for the child to then conduct himself in relation to the expected actions of others. This development leads to Mead's concept of the generalized other.

As the child is able to take the roles of others, he starts to internalize the attitudes and expectations of those others. This inner collection of ideas becomes the generalized other, as or Desmonde (1970) articulates, "the organized attitudes of the entire group" (p. 61). Mead's (1934) description is similar. "The organized community or social group that gives the individual his unity of self may be called 'the generalized other.' The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community" (p. 154). The values and beliefs of the society in which one grows up are now internalized in the self. Reynolds (1993) supports this perspective, "One comes to define one's own behavior in terms of the expectations of others, even in terms of the expectations of society as a whole" (p. 67). Once again the process of self development involves an inseparable interaction with society.

It is this process of interaction between the child and environment that explains the child's internalization of family and missionary perspectives. These children

interact with family members and church organizations which presents the developing child with the worlds of the missionary and family life.

An additional concept inherent in Mead's consideration of self is his differentiation between the "I" and "me." Meltzer () suggests that these two pronouns represent two phases of Mead's self. The "I" initiates actions which are impulsive, spontaneous, and without thought. In contrast the "me" offers activity which is goal-directed and socially influenced. Meltzer further asserts that the "I" allows for innovation and novelty, while the "me" promotes conformity and social control.

Mind. The third of Mead's major conceptual constructs is the mind. Mead's idea of a mind is a person having a conversation with himself by using symbols, more specifically language. Therefore, just as society and self are both processual in nature, so also is mind. Two specific types of mindful activities include problem solving and reflexive thought (Reynolds, p. 64). As one confronts a problem, he is able to contemplate alternative courses of action by suggesting consequences of each of those options. The source of the formulated consequences is found in one's past experiences. Mead's concept of reflexive thought is operative as the person is able to rehearse in thought a future course of behavior. In this way one is able to again become an object as he anticipates his prospective action and project the consequences of those actions.

One of the necessities for thinking is language, emphasizing the role of symbols in relation to the mind. "... mental activity ... is a matter of making

indications of meanings to oneself as to others. This is another way of saying that mind is the process of using significant symbols. For, thinking goes on when an individual uses a symbol to call out in himself the responses which others would make. Mind, then is symbolic behavior” (pp. 15-16).

Just as the self develops only in interaction with society, so also is the mind regularly in interaction with society. “The mind is social in both origin and function. It arises in the social process of communication” (Meltzer, p. 15). This process describes the mind of family members and the minds of missionaries. Thinking is continually the result of interaction between self and other family members as well as between self and other missionaries in the life of the missionary family member.

As man is a reflective communicator, it is expected that missionaries experience mental activity which is reflexive in nature. Furthermore, as missionaries prepare to take on, modify, or give up the missionary identity, they are able to rehearse in their minds future actions which will be a part of their prospective situation. To communicate with self about missionary experiences, the person has developed a system of meaningful symbols. In this case, the terminology of the Christian tradition, the organized church, and the mission world are a prerequisite necessary for this reflection of self as a missionary doing missionary activities. Early experiences in church and with other missionaries may provide this vocabulary..

Blumer's Major Premises

With the ideas of Mead firmly established, it is beneficial to now examine the major premises of symbolic interactionism as proposed by Herbert Blumer, the perpetuator of the Chicago school. In his classic work Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method Blumer (1969) clearly articulates three principles which he suggests are the basis of the interactionist perspective.

“The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them” (Blumer, 1969; p. 2). This viewpoint does not consider objects to have inherent meanings which are universal and without question. In contrast, persons act on the meaning they attach to an object. The implication for research based on Blumer's position is that the study of missionary family members' behaviors must involve the missionary family member's meaning for that behavior.

“The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows” (Blumer, 1969; p. 2). This principle speaks to the origin of the meaning an individual has for an object. The process proposed by symbolic interactionists is that the meaning is created in the interaction one has with others. Meanings do not appear as if by magic. Instead, meanings evolve as persons interact with each other about the object. The meaning, therefore, is a product of the interaction. It is never a fixed thing but rather one which is continually in process. Family members create meaning about family life as

they interact with each other. In addition, missionaries in interaction with each other create meaning about missionary life.

“The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the persons in dealing with the things he encounters” (Blumer, 1969; p. 2). The interpretive process as further discussed by Blumer is one in which the individual indicates to himself the meanings of the objects. In addition, the individual regularly evaluates the meaning, modifying it to fit his current situation. In relation to this modification Blumer (1969) states, “The actor selects, checks, suspends, regroupes, and transforms the meanings in the light of the situation in which he is placed and the direction of his action” (p. 5).

The meanings created about family life by family members are never a one time formulation but are continually revised in the daily activities of the family. The experiences of the members are evaluated and modified as each member interacts with the other. In a similar way the missionary role constantly is being shaped.

The act. Another construct which is necessary in examination of the missionary family is the act as conceptualized by Mead and Blumer. Reynolds (1993) posits that for Mead the basic unit in the study of any behavior is the act. Blumer (1969) further credits Mead for the idea that an act may originate as a “tendency” on the part of an actor, but there is a process which occurs prior to the individual’s performance of the act. That process is rooted in the individual’s ability to think reflectively about the action. “The intervening process is constituted by a

flow of self interaction in which the individual indicates various things and objects to himself, defines them, judges them, selects from among them, pieces together his selections, and thereby organizes himself to act” (Blumer, 1969; p. 95).

Joint action. As humans interact with others, Blumer (1969) suggests the term “joint action” for the larger scope of more than one person interacting in a specific time period. Blumer describes the term as “the larger collective form of action that is constituted by fitting together of the lines of behavior of the separate participants” (p. 70). The family is one example of joint action.

Blumer suggests that this “fitting together” process is a result of each participant thinking about his own act, reflexively of course, and then interpreting the acts of others in the situation. Through this process a family member adjusts communication to fit with that of other members as they participate in joint action. Therefore, the study of joint action is focused on the way the lines of action fit together rather than analyzing individual lines of action. In this manner missionaries adjust communication with other missionaries in their environment.

Blumer subsequently proposed that these joint actions built up over time compose a “career” (p. 71). These careers exhibit regularity, stability, and repetitiveness which together are seen as “culture.” As individuals participate in family action, the collective behavior constitutes family life. Likewise, as missionaries participate in joint activities with other missionaries, these behaviors make up the career of being a missionary.

However, Blumer also emphasizes the possibility of uncertainty in any career of joint actions. He further specifies that joint actions may be initiated, interrupted, abandoned, or transformed. This happens in the case of the missionary who goes away from home but after some time comes back to the US to live. In any case the participants must interpret and define the lines of actions from the other persons prior to continuing his activity in the interaction.

As the missionary family gains experience with other missionary families, the lines of a missionary family's actions adjust to fit those of other missionary families with whom they regularly interact. These missionaries have careers as they become a part of a missionary subculture.

Although not as specific as Blumer, Meltzer () goes on to suggest that it is necessary to consider any interaction in its context. Therefore, in the study of human behavior it is imperative to include in the study of behavior the observation of others around the individual as well. "What one's associates are doing becomes the context inside of which one's own developing act has to fit. Thus, the expression by them of their expectations and intentions, their solicitations and instructions, their demands and commands are matters which the individual has to take into account in fashioning his own act" (1969, p. 97).

The act, like other concepts in this tradition, is defined in a processual manner. The act begins with an impulse but is contemplated by an individual prior to its implementation. That individual's consideration is the result of interaction with the

others in his environment. Therefore, study of missionary family behavior must include the thoughtful perspectives of the subject and the examination of interactions with those around him.

An examination of the missionary family, like other families, would be expected to reveal actions of missionaries in interaction with their parents and their children which fit together into the missionary family. This “fit” is a result of each member’s interpreting the acts of other family members. These joint actions then work together to become a process known as the career of the missionary family. These careers together form the missionary family culture.

Prus’ Assumptions of Symbolic Interactionism

The following assumptions clearly stated by Prus (1996) provide comprehensive emphases from the interactionist tradition which are important for the study of missionary families:

1. Human group life is intersubjective.
2. Human group life is (multi)perspectival.
3. Human group life is reflective.
4. Human group life is activity-based.
5. Human group life is negotiable.
6. Human group life is relational.
7. Human group life is processual. (1996, p. 15-17)

Definition of the Situation

Although W. I. Thomas originally proposed the “definition of the situation”

prior to the formalized presentation of symbolic interactionism, Stone and Farberman (1970) suggest that the concept developed in a manner very close to the interactionist perspective. The classic proclamation from the Thomases was that, “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Stone and Farberman, p. 154). That is, when considering a human being at a point in time in a given situation, the action or behavior of that individual is a result of his perception of the situation. The family member behaves according to his perception of the family just as the missionary lives in a manner consistent with perceptions of missionary life.

Waller (1961/1970) further delineates the process of defining the situation. An individual in a given situation explores the possibilities for action based on the perceived limitations afforded by the situation. Thomas emphasizes that this is a time of “examination and deliberation” (Waller, p. 163). Waller (1961/1970) proposes the following elements of the process of definition of the situation. “1. The configuration in which it is perceived. 2. The aspect of the situation toward which action is directed. 3. The attitude or activity which comes out of the interaction between individual and situation and the organization of himself which the individual effects with regard to the situation” (p. 164). The resulting “attitude” about the situation is then internalized in the individual. As more and more situations are encountered, the individual collects these attitudes about various situations. Waller quotes Thomas as proposing that an entire “life policy” or personality is the outcome of this accumulation.

For the person deciding to be a missionary, perceptions of missionaries as saintly people may lure him into desiring to serve God in this type of role. As he explores and deliberates about this work role in life, information is collected about missionaries which leads to becoming one. One's perceptions about the desirability of being a missionary have the consequences of actually becoming a missionary.

Thomas further suggests that the family is a significant part of the interactive process in the development of the individual's defining his situations. "The family is the smallest social unit and the primary defining agency. As soon as the child has free motion and begins to pull, tear, meddle, and prow, the parents begin to define the situation through speech and other signs and pressures. . . . His wishes and activities begin to be inhibited, and gradually, by definitions within the family, by playmates, in the school, in the Sunday School, in the community, through reading, by formal instruction, by informal signs of approval and disapproval, the growing member learns the code of his society" (Thomas, p. 163). For the child who acquires the missionary identity, his definition of the situation is expected to have roots in his family of origin. The missionary definition is further defined by his religious environment, e.g., Sunday school and other church activities.

Stone and Farberman (1970) list five basic elements which are involved in the "staging" of the definition of the situation. Those five elements are "(1) spaces; (2) props; (3) equipment; (4) clothing; and (5) bodies" (p. 151). This list is a foreshadowing of the larger perspective of dramaturgy. Waller (1961/1970) adds

ritual to the list of devices which define the situation.

It is advantageous, then, to identify specific rituals in the life of the missionary family which serve to define their situation. Examples of these rituals for the missionary are their initial appointment ceremony, the furlough conference, and their retirement ceremony. It is anticipated that these rituals use the elements of space, props, equipment, clothing, and bodies to create impressions for both the actors and their audiences.

In summary, like the tradition of symbolic interactionism, the definition of the situation is a process. It involves the individual interacting with his situation to form an attitude which then becomes internalized. The family is a primary figure in the interaction. Therefore, the family of the future missionary has provided opportunities to interact with missionaries which fosters a positive attitude toward missionaries and which then becomes internalized in the child. Certain elements contribute to the definition of the situation, ritual being one. For the missionary there are rituals, such as the appointment service, the furlough conference, and the retirement service, which affirm their definition of the situation and provide for the staging of the missionary drama.

Vocabulary of Motives

An additional component of interaction is often a motive offered in relation to an action. C. Wright Mills (1940/1970) offers an analytic perspective of this

linguistic device. His basic explanation is that “rather than fixed elements ‘in’ an individual, motives are the terms with which interpretation of conduct *by social actors* proceeds. This imputation and avowal of motives by actors are social phenomena to be explained” (p. 472).

One of the questions to consider in Mills’ proposal is when does one use motives. It is suggested that in the course of interaction, one’s actions are impulsive and directed outward until he is “frustrated,” to use Mills’ term. At that point one becomes aware of himself and of the questioning of his action or the actions of others. “A satisfactory or adequate motive is one that satisfies the questioners of an act or program whether it be the other’s or the actor’s. As a word, *a motive tends to be one which is to the actor and to the other members of a situation an unquestioned answer to questions concerning social and lingual conduct*” (p. 474).

It is possible to change motives for a given situation. Mills submits that a person may begin an action with one motive and may change motives in the course of completion of the same action. Another possibility is that the actor may avow the original motive while adding another motive, especially if it “wins allies for his new act” (p. 3).

One of the important consequences of verbalizing a motive is that this process influences both the actor and others in the situation. More specifically, in the case of a conflictual situation, Mills suggests that a motive may mediate the behaviors of both parties thereby providing a common ground upon which interaction may continue.

In a similar fashion a motive serves to “stabilize and guide behavior and expectation of the reactions of other” (p. 478). Another function of a motive may be that it suggests given behavior is in keeping with societal norms. In this case, the motive becomes a mechanism of social control.

For missionary families, members often pose the question of why their family is geographically separating from their extended family. The missionary is challenged to formulate a motive which will satisfy questioning family members. The motive may change as time goes on, but the selection needs to garner support for the departed family members. In addition, the motive can promote continued interaction with family members remaining in the US during the missionary’s career.

Another manner in which motives are an integral part of social processes is in the choice of motives. It is important for the actor offering a motive to select situationally relevant terminology and language in a given situation. In the words of Mills, “The motivational structures of individuals and the patterns of their purposes are relative to societal frames” (p. 478).

One example of “societal frames” is the consideration of vocabularies of religious motives. Writing in the 1940's, Mills declared that “Rockefeller’s avowed religious motives for his business conduct” were not widely accepted at that time. The business community of that time had a different and more preferred vocabulary for its actions. Again in the words of Mills, “Religious motives have lapsed from selected portions of modern populations and other motives have become ‘ultimate’

and operative” (p. 477). Member of the missionary family accept religious motives as “ultimate and operative” ones in contrast to the time and societal context of which Mills spoke. This is due in part to the societal context of the future missionary, which is religious in nature.

In a more general sense Mills emphasizes the necessity of placing particular motives in situational contexts. “[Motives] must be situated. . . . Motives vary in content and character with historical epochs and societal structures” (p. 480). Again, the societal structure for the missionary family is a religious world where to do the work of a missionary is justified in terms which others in the religious world see as noble.

In summation, motives are beneficial when one’s behavior is questioned, either by self or others. This serves the purpose of linking of an act to the situation, integrating one’s action with the actions of others, and lining up conduct with the norms of a social group. Because of the integration of the vocabulary of motives with society, the terminology and language must fit the situational context.

In the missionary family, motives are composed of religious terminology and language which facilitates the fitting of their actions, leaving home and extended family, to the norms of an American society in which others emphasize the importance of home and family. As religious terminology involves talking about sacred things, it is reasonable to expect that sacred ideas can be excellent motives. For religious people, questioning sacred ideas is behavior akin to “killing the sacred cow.”

Dramaturgy

As established previously a ritual is one way to define the situation. Several rituals serve to define points in the process of being a missionary family. One approach which sheds light on rituals is dramaturgy. Erving Goffman, the “godfather of dramaturgy,” (Brissett and Edgley, p. 1) followed in the tradition of symbolic interactionism while making a significant contribution resulting in a slightly different scene. Dramaturgy uses the metaphor of the theater to examine the nuances of everyday life.

Many of the basic premises of dramaturgy are very interactionist. “The most straightforward definition of dramaturgy is that it is the study of how human beings accomplish meaning in their lives” (Brissett and Edgley, p. 2). In a similar fashion Brissett and Edgley suggest, “The fundamental principle of dramaturgy is that the *meaning of people’s doings is to be found in the manner in which they express themselves in interaction with similarly expressive others*” (p. 3).

Using the basic idea of interaction, Goffman expanded the scope of observation to include the larger influence of costume, script, and anything else in the theater utilized to express meaning. Goffman talks about performances rather than interactions, stage regions and settings rather than contexts, audiences rather than others, and scripts rather than symbols. Prus (1996) adds, “Goffman elaborates on front-stage activity, addressing settings, props, and publicly presented characters. He

also takes readers into the back regions to examine preparations, teamwork, and deception. Furthermore, he shows how people move back and forth, sometimes abruptly between the two settings by discussing mistakes, embarrassment, and remedial interchanges” (p. 80). These characteristics are a part of the rituals of missionary family members.

Burke (1969/1990) identifies five terms as central to the dramaturgical perspective: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Burke stresses the interrelationship of these aspects of any observation using this view. These elements are similar to those proposed by Stone and Farberman (1970).

Prus (1996) points out that the primary focus of dramaturgy is impression management. In the words of Goffman himself, “the individual will have to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally *expresses* himself, and the other will in turn have to be *impressed* in some way by him” (p. 2). The goal then becomes to inspect the features of the performance to magnify the aspects used to create or “manage” the expression or impression.

In the world of the missionary several elements assist in the management of impressions intended for the observers also known as the audience. The missionary family provides performances in many arenas in an effort to maintain the impressions expected of missionaries. The most dramatic impressions can be witnessed in the rituals which are significant to the missionary family. The appointment service is the ritual which initiates the missionary to a new role. The furloughing conference is the

ritual required of all furloughing missionaries returning to the US for a brief time.

The emeritus recognition service is the ritual recognizing accomplishments of retiring missionaries.

Summary

To understand the interactive nature of missionary families, the exploration of family and church environments are paramount as suggested by symbolic interactionism. Also of import are the role of the self and the mind in the development of family roles and missionary roles. The meanings related to missionary family members are those created by family members' interactions with each other and missionaries' interactions with each other. The concepts of the act and joint action further assist in comprehending behaviors and activities of missionary family members. Rounding out the viewpoint is Mills' vocabulary of motives as missionaries frequently are questioned about decisions to leave home and family.

The definition of the situation is influential in the career of the missionary family member. The missionary's rituals which help define the situation are the appointment service, the furlough conference, and the emeritus recognition service. Understanding of the ritual is augmented by consideration of Goffman's dramaturgical view of behavior in a theater-like manner. The primary purpose of behavior, the management of impressions, become the focus for study of the rituals.

These concepts form a map to guide the research of missionary families. The focus is on the meaning of being a missionary family as created by missionary family members, specifically their parents and their children. Furthermore, the rituals at significant points in the career of the missionary family manage the impression: important in sustaining missionary life.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The preceding chapters established symbolic interactionism as the theoretical perspective of choice for the study of missionary families. This assertion directs the methods utilized by the researcher for the purpose of comprehending the interactive process known as being a missionary family over time.

Natural Settings for Research

In considering the setting appropriate for the study of missionary families, it is beneficial to refer to Blumer's (1969) principles for research methodology of human beings in interaction. The first assertion of Blumer is that the study of human beings takes place in natural settings. "Symbolic interactionism is a down-to-earth approach to the scientific study of human group life and human conduct. Its empirical world is the natural world of such group life and conduct. It lodges its problems in this natural world, conducts its studies in it, and derives its interpretations from such naturalistic studies" (p. 47).

Others supporting this perspective are Lincoln and Guba (1985) who propose that persons cannot be understood apart from their context. Denzin (1970) also asserts that symbolic interactionists' research methods "must consider the 'situated aspects' of human conduct" (p. 453). In his elaboration of this point he specified the necessity of

noting the spacial location of the interactions of persons and the behavior.

The natural setting for families generally can be considered to be the home. Interviewing a family in the home allows for the observation of the interaction between family members as well as for interacting with family members in their context. Interviews with family members were conducted either in the living room or at the dining table of homes of missionaries at various points in their careers.

Kleinman, Stenross and McMahon (1994) further elaborate on this methodological issue. They point out the traditional stance supporting fieldwork through participant observation as exemplified in the research of Becker, Geer, and Hughes (1961). One of these advantages is that “fieldworkers examine the dominant culture of the group, the salient roles within it, and how members reproduce or subvert that culture” (p. 45). The conclusion is that fieldwork is often perceived as “the way to become an interactionist analysis of social life” (p. 40).

In the study of missionary families, participant observation was possible during the rituals which were an integral part of missionary life. The rituals provided for observation of the “dominant culture” of missionaries as the ritual were conducted by missionaries and two of the three rituals were attended by family members of missionaries.

Natural settings for missionary families. Acting upon the principles of Blumer (1969) and Denzin (1970), study of missionary families occurred in their homes. Home for the missionary was not always a place of stability. For newly appointed couples

who were in transition between their home and a formal orientation program prior to actually departing for their country of designation, home was not a constant geographical location at the time of the interviews. For one family home was a house furnished by the church he pastored prior to leaving for his new assignment as a missionary. The temporariness of the dwelling was apparent as rooms were lined with labeled boxes already filled with belongings. For another family, home for two weeks was in the husband's parents' home.

For the furloughing families home was somewhat more fixed but still had an air of temporariness about it. Families were living in houses provided by a church or university designated for "furloughing missionaries."¹ These environments usually had basic furniture but were obviously missing personalizing items such as pictures on walls or family pictures sitting on tables. The limitation of traveling from their assigned home to their furloughing place prohibited bringing those unique characterizing props.

The retired missionaries homes were much different. These homes, of the missionaries as well as their adult children, were filled with mementos from the country where they spent their working years. Walls were lined with family photographs of children and grandchildren. One family who had lived in Thailand most of their adult life built a retirement home in Oklahoma, which presented the appearance of a house from Thailand. Built on a hill, the front of the house was on stilts with the area

¹ Larger Baptist churches and sometimes Baptist universities own a house which they own and furnish as a place for a missionary to live while in the United States on furlough. Typically these are called "missionary houses."

underneath the foundation filled with futons and small tables. The missionary couple reported that their Thai friends in Oklahoma City loved to sit in this area facing the pond next to the house when visiting their American friends.

The homes of former missionaries were the most “Americanized” but which were filled with mementos from countries which had been home for these families. This group’s living environments were typical of middle class families.

Settings of the rituals. In the determination of the best opportunities to both participate in missionary activities and observe missionaries in the process of group life, the researcher reviewed a series of 11 articles printed in the Commission, a magazine published by Southern Baptists and dedicated to providing information about missionaries. In December, 1982, an article was printed titled, “The bittersweet call to foreign missions.”² The author stated that the purpose of this initial article and the rest of the series was to describe the “journey” of a family as they participated in missionary life. In the author’s words, “The purpose is to continue in depth our efforts to present a realistic, honest account of missionary life, ministry and development” (p. 39). The series was completed after the eleventh article published in June-July, 1992. In reviewing this series of articles, it was noted that significant points in the span of this family’s missionary family experiences were orientation time and furlough.

The Southern Baptist mission board conducts an appointment service which is the orientation ritual. During this service appointees officially become missionaries.

² See Cresswell listing in bibliography.

The setting for the ritual is a church, providing space for family members and friends to attend the significant event. The furlough conference is the ritual for every furloughing missionary. This ritual is held in a place appropriate for a conference. Sometimes this is in a hotel, and sometimes this is a conference center specifically designed for missionary education. The ending of the missionary career is marked by a recognition service, held in a church setting, much like the appointment service. All three rituals were held in settings providing for interaction with missionaries.

Exploration and inspection in identification of settings. Blumer (1969) describes the first step of research as exploration when the researcher generally interacts with others in the beginning to find out about the world to be studied. The series of article described above as well as conversations with missionaries and staff members were used to explore the research possibilities through the International Mission Board³ of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond, Virginia. These activities were followed by the more specific behavior identified by Blumer (1969) as inspection, a more in-depth look at ideas generated by the first phase of exploration. “. . . the focus [of the exploratory procedure] is originally broad but becomes progressively sharpened as the inquiry proceeds” (p. 40).

Selection of rituals. In the exploration phase, it was decided that significant events at specific points in time for missionaries and their families were their

³The International Mission Board will be the group referred to by the term mission board in the remaining text.

appointment service, furloughs, and the retirement service. The International Mission Board supplied the researcher with dates and places related to appointment services and retirement services. Also, the mission board informed the researcher of the conference required of all furloughing missionaries. This conference was a series of informative sessions for 50-75 missionaries present for each conference. Although the appointment service and the retirement service were both events held in churches for the public, both services were attached to sessions for only missionaries presented by mission board staff for the week prior to the ritual event.

More specifically, the ritual observed in relation to the newly appointed missionaries was the “appointment service.”⁴ These services, conducted by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and very much in the tradition of a church worship service on Sunday morning, are held six times a year in various parts of the country.⁵

The appointment service attended was held in Glorieta, a conference center

⁴ It was not uncommon when talking with retiring missionaries for them to mention names of persons with whom they had been appointed. It was clear this experience was similar to that of being in the same graduating class in high school or college. There was a lasting bond with those persons even though further activity may have been somewhat limited after that ritual.

⁵An administrative person at the board explained to me that in the past there were only two services a year, one in the western part of the country and one in the eastern part. However, recently the board decided on four services a year so more Baptists would have the opportunity to attend an appointment service.

located near Santa Fe, New Mexico,⁶ during the week of July 28 through August 1, 1997. While the initial communication with the board requested attendance at the appointment service, an invitation was issued for the researcher to attend orientation sessions for the missionaries as well.

The ritual attended for furloughing missionaries was held at the Dallas Grand Hotel in Dallas, Texas, June 12-13, 1997. This type of conference is required of all missionaries who are on furlough in the United States. This ritual was more of the an educational workshop with a little church mixed in occasionally.

The ritual attended for retired missionaries was an “emeritus recognition service.” This service for the public, much in the style of a Baptist Sunday morning service, was on Sunday evening after a week of workshop type presentations related to retirement for the missionaries. These sessions were very much like the sessions offered by many businesses for retiring employees. The recognition service was held in the auditorium of a Baptist church in Richmond, Virginia, while other presentations

⁶The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board “owns and operates” two conference centers in the United States, one located in the Santa Cristo mountains near a small rural town of Glorieta, New Mexico, and one located in the Blue Ridge mountains, Ridgecrest, North Carolina. Both conference centers are small villages with motel type accommodations for guests and with cabins often owned by Baptist churches, Baptist universities, or individuals. Both centers are designed for the purpose of “retreating” from the daily hustle and bustle of life and for the purpose of providing religious education for a week at a time throughout the summer months.

The centers are located in geographical places with some religious significance. The center at Glorieta is just a few miles from a Catholic monastery, while the North Carolina location is near evangelist Billy Graham’s home in Montreat, North Carolina.

were held at the Missionary Learning Center outside of Richmond.⁷

Effect of Research on Activity

One of the cautions expressed by Fine (1993) in the process of participant observation is to purposely participate enough to be involved in the activity observed, but to limit activity to not alter interaction any more than necessary by being there. In the case of the appointment service and the emeriti recognition service, the events were open to a large group of the public. The researcher sat close to the front of the audience in order to observe the actions of the subjects closely but as a member of the audience, excessive involvement was not of concern.

However, in the furloughing conferences, the orientation sessions, and the retirement sessions, too much researcher involvement could have influenced the interactions observed by asking questions during the question and answer sessions or by offering comments during missionary discussions. Therefore, interaction during these sessions was limited to being introduced to the group and interacting with participants

⁷ The International Mission Board is located in Richmond, Virginia. The Missionary Learning Center, called M.C. by the board and the missionaries, is located about 15 miles west of Richmond in a rural area of rolling hills, trees, and country sounds. The land was donated to the mission board for the purpose of providing an educational center for missionaries. The main building contains administrative offices, a library, several classrooms, an auditorium, and a cafeteria. Around the main building are located the "quads," quadrangles where missionaries stay while attending conferences. In front of the main building is a water fountain with a metal sculptured globe in the middle of it, symbolic of the international perspective of the missionaries.

on an individual basis during breaks between sessions only. During sessions observed, the researcher sat on the back row to be as unobtrusive as possible. During collective activities, such as singing hymns, the researcher participated as a group member.

Rituals as Epiphanies

The meaning attached to each of these rituals is richly described in the following chapters. For many of the missionaries, events such as the appointment service or the retirement service become what Denzin (1996) identifies as “epiphanies.” “The focus of the research is on those life experiences (epiphanies) that radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their life projects. In epiphanies, personal character is manifest and made apparent. . . . Having had such experiences, the individual is often never quite the same again” (p. 510).

The epiphanies in the life of the missionary include the appointment service and the emeritus recognition service. These two points in the missionary’s life radically shape life. The appointment service is designed to focus on the formalization of identity as a missionary. In this sense it becomes a rite of passage. Accompanying this change is the move of the family to a new setting for family life. Not only does the family live in a new house, but also they interact with the context of a new culture.

Likewise, the retirement service is life changing in that it is the time when identity, although not completely abdicated, is at least changed. Even though they may continue in some kind of religious role similar to that on the mission field, they have

returned to a culture in which they have not been a permanent part for years. Also, family life is now lived within a new context. Children often have grown and moved away from parents, changing the parental role in relation to their adult children. Certainly the retirement ritual indicates a significant change in life for the missionary family.

The People of the Study

Another implication identified by Blumer (1969) as important for a study founded on the tenants of symbolic interactionism stems from the basic premise that “people, individually and collectively, are prepared to act on the basis of the meanings of the objects that comprise their world” (p. 50). Therefore, it follows that the researcher must explore the individual’s world from his perspective. Again Blumer suggests, “. . . if the scholar wishes to understand the action of people, it is necessary for him to see their objects as they see them” (p. 51).

For this study the observed world is that of the missionary family. To examine the sphere of the missionary, the researcher went to be among missionaries to ask them about being a missionary family. Missionaries were asked to tell their family’s story which allowed family members speaking to select the things about their family they interpreted as most significant. In this face to face interview, family members told of their being family members in somewhat traditional ways. They dated, they married, they had children, they educated their children, and then some of them retired. Some of

them left the mission field to return to the United States and to resume family life in the way they knew best from their own experience.

In other ways missionaries' stories were untraditional. They not only married, but they married someone who also became a missionary. They not only had children, but they took those children with them as they left the country to live and work outside of the American culture in which the missionaries had been raised. Missionaries not only educated children but also made major decisions about how, when, and where education would occur. When they retired, missionaries not only left a job but also a country and a people with whom they had lived for most of their adult life. For some of them when they returned to the United States, they changed their culture and work responsibilities. This study reflects the perspectives of these missionary people who were being families and who were being missionaries simultaneously.

Group Life

Blumer (1969) asserts that not only does a researcher need to explore the meanings created by individuals in their interactions, but he also speaks to "group life," which involves more than two people communicating with each other. Prus (1996) concurs that in order to be sensitive to the human ability for "symbolic interaction," the examiner must explore "the ways in which people do things on both a solitary and interactive basis" (p. 19). To more fully understand the missionary world being examined, the researcher must become intimately familiar with that world of group life

and activity. Blumer supports this notion as he states, “. . . the empirical social world consists of ongoing group life and one has to get close to this life to know what is going on in it” (p. 38).

To accomplish that close position where missionaries act in interaction with missionaries and others, the researcher attended the missionaries’ meetings around the rituals of appointment to the missionary role, the furlough conference, and the retirement program. Spending three to four days at each of these events allowed the researcher to mix and mingle with missionaries. Observations were made of their behavior in response to the actions of those presenting the programs. Meals were often eaten with participants which allowed for casual conversation exchanged only during less formal settings. Interchanges with participants during breaks offered insight into this missionary world.

Missionaries are a friendly group of people. A part of their life’s work is meeting strangers and becoming their friends. The interactive mode was very natural for them. However, there were degrees of interaction when comparing the four groups. Newly appointed missionaries were friendly but reserved. The uncertainty of their role and their assignment was felt as they interacted in a more factual way. They readily discussed the places they were going and the arrangements they were making, but they were almost too busy getting ready to reflect much on their situation. Missionaries on furlough were less busy than the newly appointed group, but their interests and concerns were definitely directed toward their work, how it was going in

their absence, the multitude of things they had to do while on furlough, and when they would be returning to their assignment.

Retired missionaries were the reflective group, ready at the drop of a pin to talk about the people they were leaving and their feelings about returning to a culture they did not think they knew any more. Former missionaries talked the longest when given the opportunity. As if having a wealth of knowledge not shared often enough, they talked about their lives as missionaries and about their transitions to being ex-missionaries. Their interviews lasted two and three times the length of the newly appointed missionaries.

Since the family is usually thought of as a husband, wife, and children, missionaries interviewed included missionary husbands, missionary wives, and children of missionaries. In addition the parents of missionaries were interviewed when they were accessible.

The Focus of the Study

Prus (1996) suggests that for symbolic interactionists “people studying people should attend to: (1) the intersubjective nature of human behavior; (2) the view points of those whose worlds they propose to examine; (3) the interpretations or meanings that people attach to themselves, other people, and other objects of their experiences; (4) the ways in which people do things on both a solitary and interactive basis; (5) the attempts that people make to influence (as well as accommodate and resist the inputs and

behavior of) others; (6) the bonds that people develop with others over time and the ways in which they attend to these relationships; and (7) the processes, natural histories or sequences of encounters exchanges, and events that people develop and experience over time” (p. 19).

The study of missionary behavior includes the points outlined by Prus. Most of the issues have been addressed in the sections above. The remainder of the study describing the perspectives and behaviors of the missionaries demonstrates “the processes, natural histories or sequences of encounters exchanges, and events that [missionaries] develop over time.”

Interviews in the Study

To understand the meaning of being a missionary family interviews were used to visit with missionaries in their homes and listen to what it was like for them to be a missionary family at various points in their family life. Kleinman, Stenross and McMahon (1994) suggest interviewing as offering important insights into the world being observed from a symbolic interactionist perspective, which incorporates the concepts of identities and self-reflexivity. “Interviewing enables us to study identities and meanings that cut across, lie outside, or transcend settings. Interviews enable the researcher to learn how members of a social category maintain, transform, or challenge an identity” (p. 43). They further support the interview as a method allowing for observations of self-reflexivity. “In the private conversation of the in-depth interview,

researchers can learn how people use particular experiences, relationships, and identities to construct the self as an integrated unit” (p. 43). In addition they suggests that “interviews may explore how nonpresent others--even God--sustain, compromise, or challenge actors’ claimed identities” (p. 44). Furthermore, they suggest that in an interview a person may reveal identities which the field researcher simply would not see.

Additional perspectives offered by Kleinman, Stenross, and McMahon (1994) related to interviewing include the view of person’s feelings and beliefs which would be discussed in a private rather than public interaction because of the conflict with “dominant feeling rules” (p. 44). That is, there are rules in society about what feelings should be expressed in public and which should be more of a private matter. These authors support the idea that in an interview persons might be more willing to disclose feelings usually preserved for private times. Prus (1996) suggests that symbolic interactionists have neglected investigations into emotionality in the past. Therefore, interviews may provide the information needed into the emotions of missionary families.

For this study the strengths of both interviewing and participant observation are implemented to learn about the world of the missionary family. Interviews with missionary families identified feelings of family member as well as meanings created together by the family members. Kleinman et al. (1994) suggest that with interviews it is possible to see “how people make sense of their lives as a whole” (p. 45).

In this study the interviews with family members revealed how the missionaries in interaction with their children and parents created meaning as a whole family. Interviews were completed with missionaries and any children over 13 who were willing to participate in the process. Also, parents within a 200 mile radius were interviewed to complete the three-generational perspective. Therefore, a broad view of the family was used to construct the process of being a missionary family over time.

Summary

In an effort to identify the meaning of being a missionary family over time, this study was guided by the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism and to some extent dramaturgy. To identify the process representing the interaction inherent in missionary families, the observations must take place where the missionary family naturally lives out their existence. Therefore, a naturalistic methodology was chosen. Interviews were conducted with family members in their homes.

Furthermore, rituals were identified to observe missionaries in interaction with other missionaries at significant points in their careers. Using dramaturgy as a guiding perspective, the rituals of appointment, furlough, and retirement were chosen for participant observation with missionaries during these times. In combination, the interviews and rituals provided insight into the life of missionary families. The outcome was delineation of the generic social process of being a missionary family over time.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEWLY APPOINTED MISSIONARY FAMILY

While newly appointed missionary families may seem to begin their career at the time of their appointment service, actually they have been involved in the process of being appointed for some time. The application process itself usually takes at least a year or longer.

The missionaries in this study were appointed by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. The process with this board generally is as follows:

1. The couple contacts the International Mission Board.
2. They are assigned a representative on staff at the board with whom they interact on a regular basis until they actually leave the country.
3. They complete an application.
4. They have a series of interviews while the board checks references.
5. They attend a week long orientation session held in conjunction with their appointment service. There is a two hour session for parents on the afternoon prior to the appointment service in the evening.
6. They are officially commissioned at the appointment service.

7. For two months they attend an exit orientation¹ at the Missionary Learning Center (MLC) in Richmond, Virginia.
8. They “crate” their belongings which go with them.
9. They leave for their new destination. Usually there is a year of language school before they go to the country where they will be assigned. The language schools are located in countries which speak the language the newly appointed missionaries will need.

Newly appointed missionary families interviewed in this study were about half way through the process described above. One of the families was interviewed before the appointment service while the other two families told their stories after the appointment service and before their orientation at MLC.

The Families

There were three families who were interviewed for the purpose of understanding how families begin the process of becoming missionaries. Newly appointed missionaries were young adults between the ages of 20 and 35. Their parents were ages expected of parents of young adults; most were between the ages of 36² and 65 with one parent between the ages of 66 and 75. Newly appointed couples

¹The word “exit” is used to communicate their leaving the United States. An entry orientation is provided when they arrive on the field.

²While none of the parents of newly appointed missionaries were 36 years of age, the exact ages are not known. The demographic questionnaire asked for information in

were not newly weds; all had been married between 6 and 10 years. Most of the couples had been born in Oklahoma, although two persons were born in Texas and one in Tennessee. Both the missionaries and their parents had all lived in the United States during their school years, and all had resided in the United States during the last five years.

The Short Term Family

This family consisted of the newly appointed couple and their three children, aged seven years old, six years old, and four months of age. The children were not interviewed as they were under the age of 13, the age chosen for persons interviewed in this study. The parents were not interviewed with one set of parents living in California and the other in Texas. The couple did make reference to their parents, however.

It is significant to note that this couple applied to the mission board several years earlier and had been turned down due to the wife's health status which was affected by a chronic condition. They were eligible, however, for a short term assignment to Swaziland, Africa. After returning from that assignment, the wife's health had improved, and they resubmitted their application. This time they were accepted and were preparing for their appointment when interviewed.

categories, one of which was 36 to 65 for adults. Therefore, these parents most likely were in the upper part of this range.

The husband related that his family of origin was an Air Force family. However, on further investigation the family lived on one base for all of his life until he went to college. Therefore, the usual moving around of the military family was not characteristic of this family.

One of the interesting descriptions of the parents was when the husband discussed the closeness of his wife's parents to her. Referring to the frequent phone calls while the couple was in Africa, the husband described his father-in-law's perception of his wife as "his little girl." Also, he stated that he is not as close to his family as his wife is to hers.

The relationship of the wife to her family was mentioned several times as she talked about how their daughter is her parent's only granddaughter, although they have three other grandsons in addition to this family's two boys. Later in the interview the wife again approached the grandparenting issue as she stated that she is concerned about:

making sure that [the children] have a good sense of who their grandparents are and that their grandparents are informed about their progress and send them lots of pictures and try to get them to write to them.

In terms of visiting in the place of current assignment, the Dominican Republic, it was her parents that were the focal point.

My mom has multiple sclerosis, but she is doing really well, but it is out of the question to take on a trip like that. But they might come to the Dominican Republic. They say they might.

While the couple expressed feeling supported by both sets of parents, they also

identified the difficulty for their parents. He described his family as being supportive but not understanding their decision. She pictured her family as “long time Southern Baptists, and they are supportive, but they hate for us to be so far away.”

For this couple the new assignment to the Dominican Republic is a positive move, fulfilling a religious calling and providing an opportunity to raise their children in a nurturing home environment. They saw their parents as supportive but as having some difficulty in understanding and accepting a life away from them.

The Missionaries-in-Waiting

These newly appointed missionaries were a couple without children. The husband is from a family of four children. He is the third child and the second son. The parents interviewed were his parents. The parents were his biological mother and a stepfather who did not contribute anything to the conversation, although the stepfather was present during the interview and nodded nonverbally during some of his wife’s narration. The husband’s biological father died in 1987 from cancer, as related by both the new missionary and his mother.

This mother spoke with much tenderness as she described her son.

He read the Bible much more than the average kid. I frequently found him on his knees over his bed. He also went to [church camp] regularly.

She further added that in his teenage years her son’s peers were the youth group at church.

As they anticipated the son's leaving, both son and mother elaborated on how difficult it would be for the son to be separated from his larger family. He identified that as the "hardest thing." She spoke of the difficulty, specifically of having family get together without him.

There were differences in the approach of the mother and that of her son, soon to be leaving for the mission field. One example was when they talked about the waiting period between acceptance of the son's application and his actual leaving the country. He spoke of that time period as a "horrible" time, remarking that he felt like a "lame duck pastor," and that it had been a long 2 ½ year waiting period. On the other hand, his mother mentioned with pride activities during this time period, like the appointment service and his last service at the church he pastored.³

This newly appointed couple was exhilarated about their new destiny and had endured the orientation and preparation with some reticence. His mother, however, stated emphatically that she was not excited about their leaving, mentioning often the closeness of her family and anticipating the void which she was certain would be a part of family gatherings in the future. In spite of this hesitancy, she stated that they are proud of their son.

³It is noted here that during the interview with the new missionary couple, the female talked about her parents but did not mention his. Also, during the interview with his parents, his mother said very little about her daughter-in-law

The Educational Missionaries

The husband of this newly appointed couple was from a family of five children, three boys and two girls. He met his wife met while working as a director of a Baptist Student Union on a college campus in Oregon.⁴ They have two children, a girl five years of age and a boy one year of age. Her parents live in Oregon and his in Oklahoma. The husband recently finished his doctorate while the wife worked as a physical therapist before the children were born.

The parents interviewed were his parents. His mother contributed most of her family's story, although his father was there and did add things occasionally.

This mother told of how her children grew up in the church's missionary organizations for children. She was proud that they were all in youth choirs and attended church camp in the summers. She added,

All five felt a strong relationship with God and worked in the church.

She further stated that the family read the Bible and prayed together regularly at home as a family.

⁴ The Baptist Student Union, usually referred to as BSU, is an organization with a building on college campuses which serves as a religious hangout for students attending the college. It is like the more traditional college student union but with religious activities for students. Typically, there is a BSU director who plans activities for the college students. These activities include devotionals and lunch on certain days of the week. Usually Baptist churches in the area provide the meal while the director secures speakers, sometimes pastors from Baptist churches in the area. Often there are also recreations activities such as ping-pong provided for the students.

In reference to her son's new role as a missionary his mother stated,

all of our family had an influence on others to get them in church. Our son frequently took his friends to church.

One of the similarities in the mother's story and her son's story was the inclusion of the son's mission activities prior to his call. However, the mother related the son's early participation in mission activities in the church, while the son told of his experiences through his activities in BSU during his college years. A similar difference was noted when comparing the stories for the son's developmental years. The mother concentrated on the years from birth through high school, while the son basically began his story with his college years.

Another area of agreement was the designation of the family as a "close" family. The mother described her family as close and loving. The same report was offered by her daughter in law, who told of how close her husband's family was.

Also, the son depicted his family as being very supportive. While that same word was not used by his mother, she described herself and her husband as "blessed" when talking about how they felt about their son's leaving. Her narrative displayed a very positive about being in a missionary family.

Even though the son's decision to become a missionary was reported by both son and mother, there were differences in the perspectives. She told of events in her own life which she thought contributed to her son's going into mission work, while the son's story at that point was focused on his negotiation about missions with his prospective wife when they were dating. The son indicated that he was interested in

working in an educational role rather than pastoring a church. His father had been a school teacher for many years.

Summary of Families

Three families were interviewed for their stories related to being newly appointed. The families generally told of early childhood events contributing to their children's decision to become a missionary. The couples identified their parents as being supportive, although parents were not always "thrilled" about their leaving. While often describing their families as close, the missionaries themselves talked about how difficult it was to leave family.

The Interviews

The interviews with newly appointed missionaries and their families began with reports of children being in church from an early age. Occasionally stories were told of parents' assigning meaning to events surrounding the birth of the child. One mother told of how her physician had said that she should not have any more children after her first two. She designated her subsequent pregnancy as a significant happening.

It was divine intervention of God that I was pregnant at that time. When this son was born, my husband thought this son would be used in some special way.

The son who was a newly appointed missionary told the same story from his

perspective. His father bargained with God that in return for a healthy child, the father would “return him to the Lord.” The son further stated that years later at a missions conference he heard a sermon preached on a verse from the Bible⁵ in Isaiah 49 which states, “Before you were born, I called you.” He then told of how he thought of his dad’s promise to return his son to God, even before the son was born.⁶

The mother’s story included additional affirmations about her son’s role in life.

God had told my other boy that [this son] was going to be a preacher. Then in his junior or senior year in college, he felt the call to the ministry.

Prior to her husband’s death, her son was in seminary in California, but he transferred to a seminary in Texas to be closer to home during his father’s bout with cancer. During this time there was another event which became a powerful affirmation of the son’s future. The mother stated,

When his father was in the hospital, he told [our son] that God had a plan for his life.

The story of the father’s offering his son to be used by God in a special way plants the idea of religious vocation in the child’s life early in his development.

⁵Southern Baptists have been referred to as a “people of the Book,” referring to their staunch belief that the Bible is their authority in “matters of faith and practice.” This frequent reference to the Bible is used in many situations as their vocabulary of motives.

⁶Pollner (1989) discusses the idea that persons interact with others who may not actually exist. One example is people’s relationship with media figures. He also suggests that people may identify with and interact with biblical figures, including a divine other. An example of this was the inclusion of the story of Abraham leaving family due to the command of God as related by one of the missionary candidates in her testimony during the appointment service.

Subsequent affirmations of that role were provided by the brother's specific reference to his brother as a preacher and by the father's deathbed pronouncement of something special for his son.

One set of parents thought they would go as missionaries. The wife related that she had been called into missions prior to her husband's deciding to go to college after several years in the armed services. Then after their first child was born,

we both, during a revival, felt the call to missions. We surrendered to that call and then started the process finding out what we needed to do.

In fact, she was attending seminary when her future missionary son was born.

However, as more children were born, her own call was not so clear.

I prayed, 'Lord, if it's Your will that we go overseas as missionaries,' then these three children . . . they told us we could have as many children as we wanted, but there was a limit on how many I could take care of With four children, it just all fell apart.

This couple later was rejected by the mission board. The rejection described by this mother became a turning point in the direction of life for herself and ultimately her child.

When we had gone through the process and we had been rejected . . . God just took care of all that. . . . We just really felt like God was in our walk in going to the mission field. So, when we were denied, . . . then my feeling was that we could pray for some of our children to be used in the mission field. "Maybe God didn't call you. Maybe he called you to be an instrument." No, I think He called me to be a missionary, but I will pray for my children. Pray for them to be used, and I wanted them to do God's work.

In addition, she told of the special feelings and thoughts she had as she rocked her son after he was born.

... for some reason he was very cuddly, and I held him and rocked him and cried, having a feeling that someday this baby was going to be far away from me. It was such a strange feeling.

Later, when talking about her son's decision to become a missionary, she said she wondered why it took her son "so long." It is evident that his mother thought he was going to the mission field long before her son made his commitment.

The Generalized Other in Formation of the Missionary Identity

The desire of the parents being instilled in the lives of their offspring is understood as Mead's "generalized other." Emphasizing the interaction inherent in the development of self, Mead suggested that the ideas of parents become internalized in the child in the form of a "generalized other." In this study the child's early environment provided the missionary perspective which later becomes internalized in identity of persons as missionaries.

Acquiring Perspectives

Prus' (1996) first generic social process, acquiring perspectives, provides more specific steps which suggest how the generalized other develops. He suggests that prior to achieving identity persons acquire information about the roles and activities associated with a specific position. He further asserts that the perspective is a worldview which is comprised of definitions, traditions, religious beliefs, language, and other symbols. Exposure to these ideas is one of the ways in which consensual

validation is achieved by different individuals.

Prus (1996) further discusses subprocesses which comprise the larger process of acquiring perspectives. Some of these subprocesses are encountering perspectives (definitions of reality) from others, assessing (new, incoming) perspectives and resisting unwanted viewpoints, resolving contradictions (dilemmas within and across paradigms), and managing reservations (overcoming doubts, stigma, risks).

Encountering perspectives. Prus (1996) suggests that initially persons do not have a choice about the perspectives to which they are exposed. This is especially noted in the missionary families' accounts which refer to parents dedicating their child to God, being reared in a Christian home, and going to church related mission organizations⁷ at a very early age. The interaction of parents, church, and individuals occurs repeatedly in the narratives of newly appointed missionaries.⁸ This background contributes to the Prus' idea of perspective acquired by the future missionary. These exercises provided the child with the vocabulary defining such concepts as missionary, a call, the field, and the mission. Although meanings may not be well constructed at this point, the child is able to see persons in the roles in church

⁷The Southern Baptist Denomination offers a lifespan approach to missions education. Pre-schoolers (ages 4 and 5) attend Mission Friends, while school-age female children can belong to Girls in Action. The teenagers are part of Acteens, and adults attend Baptist Men and Women.

⁸This early exposure to church activities as well as mission-oriented organizations is common to other missionaries' stories. Keller (1998) related similar experiences of a missionary couple before they decided to go to Brazil as a missionary.

camps where missionaries are available to talk with persons on an individual basis.

Assessing perspectives and resisting unwanted viewpoints. Narratives of newly appointed missionaries related events subsequent to their first decision to go into missions. Affirming events were those such as going to missions conferences and talking with missionaries. However, there were also resistances reported by the new missionaries as demonstrated by one male who stated,

I didn't want to become [a Christian] because I really didn't want to surrender to being a preacher or a missionary. I didn't like that idea and struggled with that for a couple of years and finally asked Jesus to come into my life and devoted my life. He changed my heart and gave me a desire and that is what I enjoy doing. I enjoy the mission . . .

A dilemma arises as stories revealed conflicts about becoming a missionary. One possible solution is suggested by Prus' idea that perspectives once acquired are not finalized. Rather, those perspectives are continually revised as one encounters alternating resistances and affirmations of the perspectives. Prus states, "[The perspectives] are subject to ongoing interpretation and assume cooperation and other enterprising activity on the part of those exposed to these particular 'notions of reality'" (Prus, p. 151).

For this group of newly appointed missionaries the assessing of those perspectives continued often through their activity with the Baptist Student Union. In fact, in all cases either the husband or the wife had participated in BSU during college. One female spoke of how her involvement in BSU helping her to become more involved in church after several years of not taking part in any kind of religious

activities. Her husband talked about his involvement in BSU as being concurrent with his “commitment to missions.”

Perspectives of missionaries were also assessed as future missionaries participated in mission trips or volunteered for short term mission experiences.

One example was reported by a mother who told of her son’s experience as a teenager.

Her son’s early interest in the mission field was exhibited when he went as a “home missionary” to Disney World one summer.

He worked at Disney World to support himself. Then he developed Bible studies while he was there.

Later he went to Oregon with a corps of volunteers. He worked with the BSU at Oregon State, which influenced his enrollment at an extension of Golden Gate Seminary.

Managing reservations. One female related her hesitation about marrying her future husband because she did not want to “move overseas.” Another female wanted to stay single in order to participate in missions. Her future husband helped her manage her reservations by providing options which included marriage and mission involvement.

In another account one male missionary speaks to the resolution of his wife’s ambivalence about missions to God.

It was obvious that God was using her and took away a lot of doubt and insecurities.

It is interesting to note in this comment how the husband of the missionary

couple was the one describing how his wife had resolved her reservation. This is an example of the missionary couple who has arrived at a consensus about their family's future role in missions.

The first step in becoming a missionary is the acquiring of the missionary perspective. This is accomplished through early church activities and participation in mission activities. During these activities, reservations and conflicts may arise which call for a resolution. The candidate then assesses perspectives and resists unwanted viewpoints. Through managing their reservations, future missionaries are able to maintain their goal of achieving the missionary identity.

In the Beginning: Becoming a Family and Becoming Missionaries

The origin of the newly appointed missionaries' stories are an entwinement of two beginnings. One account chronicles the initiation of the family, and the other involves the marital couple's becoming missionaries. Accounts of how the couple met, dated, and subsequently married are much like other couples in the United States.

The distinctive feature, however, is how the theme of becoming a missionary is interspersed in the narratives.

The newly appointed couples all met in some way which was connected to a religious activity in their lives. One couple met in seminary. Another couple met when he was a youth minister in a church and she was "one of his youth group." Still another couple met when he was the minister at her sister's wedding. These couples

all began their interactions from roles related to a religious activity.

The stories of how they became missionaries are much more complex. Their narratives were filled with religious incidents occurring prior to their meeting. Each person had an account related to their religious history, the events leading to their perceptions of the “call to missions,” and the span of time between their “call” and their official appointment by the mission board. As this activity goes on in the life of two separate individuals, the process of integrating those perspectives into one line of action becomes complex. These two people with similar but different backgrounds integrate into one family, and these same two people with similar but different backgrounds integrate into one direction, into mission work.

Blumer (1969) discusses the manner in which this can be explained theoretically from an interactionist viewpoint. He states, “the actions of the participating people are constructed by them through a process of interpretation” (p. 86). The common definitions of family and what families do and are about allows the two individuals to agree on how to live as one family. In a comparable manner, the common definitions of missionary life obtained from parallel childhood experiences allow the two persons to converse and share ideas about mission life.

The difficulty arises, however, when spouses do not interpret the situations in exactly the same way. In Blumer’s words, “Many other situations may not be defined in a single way by the participating people. In this event, their lines of action do not fit together readily and collective action is blocked. Interpretations have to be

developed and effective accommodation of the participants to one another has to be worked out” (p. 86). This “working out” was reported by newly appointed spouses as they related how they individually interpreted their role in mission work and how those two separate roads merged into one.

The female was serious about doing mission work, while he described his experience as being merely open to the idea.

[She] had indicated to me whenever we were dating, when we started getting serious, that she was planning on being single for awhile so she could have some opportunities to do some short-term mission work. And so, I convinced her that we could do that together and that singleness was not a function of missionary work and that you could do missionary together and married as good as you could single and that, in fact, you could do it better married. I promised her that if we could go ahead and get married that she could do some short term mission trips and we could pursue long term mission work together.

Later he stated he had thought about missions to some extent before meeting his future wife.

I had been [thinking about mission work] throughout my teenage years, and through college had been thinking seriously about that, sometimes more serious than others. I probably hadn't been thinking about international missions as much during my years in Oregon. I did more when I was in high school and going to college here, but the years I was in Oregon I wasn't thinking as much about international missions. I began to think about it again during our years of dating. . . As soon as we were married we began to talk and pursue international missions.

Another couple's resolution of the decision was somewhat more complex.

When we married I knew that he wanted to be a missionary, but I didn't want to do it because I was afraid to move overseas and all that would involve

Her transition to wanting to be a missionary included interacting with other missionaries during a week of missionary conferences. In addition she identified

praying and talking to representatives from the mission board as activities which resulted in her deciding she “could be a missionary.” This resolution is common to the personal account described by Corwin, a missionary to Indonesia and Singapore (Keller, 1998). In her account Corwin states she also contacted the mission board at which time she was assigned a representative who continued to pray and consult with her about issues such as the application process and subsequently where she would go as a missionary.

The Call of God

“God’s call” is a term so common among missionaries that a definition is rarely discussed. Generally, it means that the individual has had some experience which he or she interprets as a message from their higher power communicating that this transcendent being wants them to go into a religious occupation.⁹ The call is often to be a preacher or a missionary, although others broaden the term to refer to a commitment of lifelong service in many areas.¹⁰

⁹For many who feel “called,” the phenomenon is stronger than a desire on the part of the transcendent being. The belief is that God has one plan for every person’s life on earth. Becoming aware of what God desires for them is discovery of God’s plan, often referred to as God’s will, for one’s life. The young person who decides that God’s will is for him/her to be a missionary believes that the only way for their purpose in life to be fulfilled is by taking on this role of missionary.

¹⁰Florence Nightingale is an example of one who believed nursing was a vocation or an occupation of service to which she had been called. (Nightingale, 1859/1992). For those who began in an obviously religious role, Kleinman (1984) suggests that applying the call to roles not inherently religious allows those in religious roles to exit the religious

It is common for adolescents who are thinking about their future occupations to experience “the call.” One male identified his sophomore year in high school as the time he began to “deal with the call to the ministry.” In the words of another male, “[I] felt a calling to missions. I wanted to go overseas.” Kleinman (1984) in her study of students attending seminary suggests that the call is important to those planning to enter religious work. “Students who feel they have been called . . . are more convinced that they are the right kind of person for the profession and therefore feel more certain about their decision” (p. 44).

Experiences Interpreted as God’s Call

It is interesting to note that missionaries identified specific events which they attributed to God. These experiences were interpreted to be a call from God for the person to become a missionary. One experience was understood as an affirmation of God’s call, although the original intention was not as strong as the future missionary thought. This male told of a lady who was in his group on numerous mission trips. She once told him she thought he would continue to work in missions. He thought she was talking about his having a career in mission work. Later, upon hearing him say this, the lady said she meant other short term mission ventures. Certainly the future missionary heard her comments as an affirmation of his long term commitment

field with less difficulty should they ever make a transition to a less obviously religious role.

to missions, even though that was not the lady's intent by her own report.

Another incident demonstrating the interpretation of events as God's call was told by a female who before she was married had been to Byelorussia on a mission trip. She was in charge of the groceries for the volunteers while there. When she was shopping, she observed the nationals and thought, "Why do I have so much, and these people don't have as much?" She stated that the following spring she attended a missionary conference. The president of the mission board preached a sermon in which he said, "Have you ever thought, 'Why do I have so much and others have so little?'" He then suggested that thought might be a sign of God's calling to missions. She perceived this moment to be the defining call of God to international missions.

A similar process is noticed in the missionaries' discussion of where to do missions. Not only did participants view the decision to become a missionary as a "call from God," but also they see God as the selector of the place where they were to do mission work.

In all of the cases the call from God involved interaction with other missionaries from the place upon which the couple decided. One male stated

Everything has been positive--all of the missionaries that we have talked to that have been from there. I like their philosophy, and I like what they are doing--the new missionaries that are going now. Their approach to church planning I have agreed with, and it sounds exciting. God has just been slowly kind of affirming that this is the right place, the right choice of where He wants us to go. It seems like every time we turn around we are meeting another missionary from the ministry that tells us what a good experience we are going to have. So God has been leading us in this way, in small ways.

Another couple related how they had been to a denominational boys' camp during the summer. While they were there, they met the camp missionary who was from Niger. This was during the period when they were praying about where to go as missionaries. The next time they looked at the list of where missionaries were needed, they noticed that Niger was on the list. The wife still was not sure that Niger was the place to go. Together they prayed for a sign from God to clarify their decision. The next day they received a letter from the camp missionary who was now back in Niger. Both husband and wife identified this as their sign from God.

The Call as a Vocabulary of Missionaries' Motives

According to C. Wright Mills (1949/1970) a motive is "an unquestioned answer to questions concerning social and lingual conduct" (p. 474). Perhaps the most obvious questioning of missionary behavior is, "Why would anyone leave a comfortable home and native country to take their family to a foreign place where a strange language is spoken?" Perhaps an even more obvious answer is that missionaries desire to take the beliefs of Christianity to countries where this is not the dominant religion more than they want the comfort of home. However, the stories of newly appointed missionaries reveal that the response given most often is that "God called me."

Newly appointed missionaries credit their decision to be a missionary to God. In this way the missionaries were not just the actors in the decision making process.

To the contrary, they were also the objects of the process; God called them.

Viewing the call from an interactionist perspective is much different from a more common psychological orientation. One example of the psychological approach is Brister's proposal in the book Caring for the Caregivers that "assurance of divine appointment helps [the missionary] cope with many disappointments along life's way" (p. 18). The symbolic interactionist perspective proposes that rather than originating in isolation from the inner mind, the call cannot arise without interaction with others who have experienced such calls. The definition of the call comes from the interaction with other religious professionals who have communicated the meaning of the term, how they experienced the call, and what they did after the call.

There are several features of the call of God to missions as related by missionaries which warrant consideration. It is suggested that such an examination of this concept is illuminated by Mills' vocabulary of motives.

The call as an answer to questions of family members. Parents of new missionaries often question the behavior of their children as they leave their families and take with them their parents' grandchildren. One mother expressed her doubts as follows.

Africa is a long way away. It was their praying that led them to that country. I would rather go to a place of beauty to visit [my son] than in West Africa!¹¹

¹¹The Southern Baptist missionaries concurred in their reports that the mission board does not assign them to a place, although they may tell the prospective missionary where needs are in various parts of the world. Missionaries often approach the board with a place in mind, a place that they have come to know as the place to which God is calling them.

Why couldn't God have called him to the Bahamas or somewhere like that? . . . We are proud, but it is still difficult. Some parents are much more excited than I am. I am not excited about their leaving.

The same mother earlier had expressed a desire for her son to pastor churches in the United States than to leave the country to be a missionary.

A similar sentiment was expressed by one of the male missionary appointees whose in laws were not interviewed but who stated that his wife's parents have some hesitations.

They are Christian people, and they have a commitment there. They are not mission oriented. Her mother is real gentle about it, but sometimes she will drop a line to me. "Oh, you are doing such good stuff here" and "don't you think God could just use you in more good ways with what you are doing?" and make subtle hints like that. But then she will say, "But I'm not trying to talk you out of what you are doing. If that is what you need to go do, then go do it. I just want you to realize what good work you do here too. God is the God of the world, and He might need you here, too."

The thoughts of the mother referred to in the above interaction provide the implied "unquestionable answer." The motive expressed by the parents' children is that God has called them to be a missionary. It is as if God's call supersedes all other possible answers and questions.

One of Mills' tenets is that in conflictual situations, motives provide a common ground upon which interaction may continue. In this case, both parents and children agree on the idea that what God wants is more important than what parents want. Therefore, parents concede to whatever is attributed to God. The missionary's motive then becomes the "ally for his new act" (Mills, p. 3).

The parent's acceptance of the call as motive is evident in this mother's

comments following her unhappiness with Africa as the place of her son's future home.

We are getting to know the area where they will be living. . . . They have a homemade tape of the area where he will be, and we have seen the tape. Also, we have read on that part of the world.

This parent has made plans to go to Africa to visit her son after he has been there a year, even though she is not excited about the place.

Another example of parental acceptance of a son's motive is apparent in this comment:

We have a strong sense of being blessed when we think of [our son] going to the mission field. . . . God will have His arms around them. This is all in His will.

If the question is why are they leaving the missionary's family to go to a foreign land, the unchallengeable answer is, "Because God said so." Families with strong religious convictions accept that motive as ultimate.

When the question was related to where a family would go to do mission work, the answer was not always unquestionable. In fact, there were reported "struggles" with exactly where God was leading.

However, just as in the call to be a missionary, the call to place was not always clear; sometimes prospective missionaries described a "struggle" with where to go. One couple had gone to Africa for a temporary assignment after being turned down for a career appointment due to the wife's health status. After returning to the United States, the wife's health had improved enough to qualify for a career appointment.

Deciding on the place to go posed some problems.

We struggled. I looked at a place in Morocco, but we are going to the Dominican Republic.

This decision was made after consulting with the mission board about where needs and existed and where the applicants' abilities and experiences "matched" with what was needed.

Another couple had taken several short term mission trips. On one trip the wife stayed home as they had a new baby. The husband traveled to Asia where he met

a gentleman that we have become friends with now, into the area that we are actually going to be going, and saw what it was like.

He returned to the United States, excited about the possibility of going to Asia, but his wife expressed some doubts. She told of how she had previously thought that she would be willing to go anywhere---except Asia. In her words,

He came back, and he was real excited about it, but it was hard for me to think about it because I never really had an affinity for that culture until I got an affinity for that culture.

The conversation of how the place was decided upon then turned to the matching of place and identified needs of those places with the missionaries' "gifts and skills and our desires on what to do and what is available to be done."

It is clear that the vocabulary of motives in relation to the place God is calling involves meeting needs, even though it is not clear about who decides on what the needs are. In the first example the couple decided God was calling them to the

Dominican Republic because that was where the needs were as identified by the mission board. In the second example, the couple together finally agreed on Asia because the needs were in sync with their abilities.

Vocabularies of motives as explanation for behavior of family members. For one missionary's parents the unvoiced question was about their relationship with their grandchildren. Once again the religious family found a satisfactory answer by employing a vocabulary which imputed the motive to God.

[This son's] children are different from the other grandchildren, even the ones who don't live close to us. I see this as a way of God's preparing us and them for this separation. I don't think we will have as hard a time as if some of the other grandchildren were leaving. . . . With these grandchildren, there's a reserve there. They are very attached to their parents. So they will be okay.

God's call as entry into the professional role. One of the commonalities in the stories of missionaries is that they talk about their call (Keller, 1998; Cresswell, 1982). Furthermore, missionaries often talk about "how God called them" when telling their story or testimony from the beginning. God's call is seen as the entry point into the profession. It is a given beginning, much as "Once upon a time . . ." is for the fairy tale. Many testimonies begin with "God called me into missions when . . ."

From the perspective of the agency sponsoring the missionary, the call is more than just a scripted introduction; the call of God is part of the application process.

Louis R. Cobbs, director of the Personnel Selection Department of the Southern Baptist mission board in 1982, asserts that being called by God is a pre-requisite to

being hired by the board as a missionary (Cobbs, 1982). Thus, the call is one's ticket needed for the missionary journey.

This characteristic of the call is an examples of Mills idea that one's motives serve to "stabilize and guide behavior and expectation of the reactions of others" (p. 478). Following the behavior of established missionaries who have been called, the newly appointed missionary gains some acceptance that he too will be able to fill this position. His call is in keeping with societal norms of the world of missionaries.¹²

Development of the Missionary Identity

Once the couple agreed to become missionaries, they set about the process of further completing their identity transformation. Mead's theoretical principles related to development of self guide examination of development of the missionary role. A central part in Mead's formulation of self is a three stage process including the preparatory stage, the play stage, and the game stage. Although Mead's ideas related to children, the development of the missionary self occurs in a parallel manner during the adult years.

In the first stage, the preparatory stage, the child imitates the behaviors of others. In a similar manner, taking the perspectives the child has acquired previously, the developing missionary may imitate the behaviors of other missionaries with whom

¹² There is a sense in which this call could be used to urge acceptance by a mission board. The implication is, "If God (who is more powerful than everyone) has told me to be a missionary, how could any human being tell me I can't?"

there has been contact. In these stories the missionaries often referred to other missionaries who provided this connection.

One male noted that he was good friends with a couple who was preparing to go to South Africa as missionaries several years prior to his own decision. His friendship allowed him to have first hand information about the application process and offered a familiarization with a career in missions. Several other missionaries also told of close contact with friends who were missionaries or with missionaries as a part of mission trips.

The second stage is the play stage in which the actual playing of roles occurs. Meltzer further states, "In this stage, the child first begins to form a self, that is, to direct activity toward itself--and it does so by taking the roles of others" (p. 10). This stage is characterized by some instability in those roles. The role is temporary at best. For the developing missionary, this stage would be one in which the person tries on the role of missionary to see if it fits. It would not be a permanent arrangement, but rather a temporary one which would provide a way out if the fit was not good.

The parallel in the narratives from missionaries is that almost all of the missionaries had participated in some type of short term mission activity in the past. Some had been in the eastern part of Europe, one had been on trips both in the United States (Oregon) and overseas (Asia), and one couple had been in Africa for a two year temporary assignment. These temporary periods allowed couples to act in the role of a missionary without a firm lifetime commitment. In these settings they could try out

behaviors in a role which could be discarded upon returning to their homeland.

Therefore, they were able to try on the activities and behaviors of other missionaries with whom they worked.

The third stage is the game stage in which the child completes the self. The child has developed a generalized other in order to be able to see himself as he becomes an object. In this more complex situation he may have to take several roles simultaneously or switch roles in certain situation. However, it is not just himself of which he must be aware. The player in a game must know not only his own role but also the roles for other players as well. The player thinks of self never in isolation, but in response to the actions of others. Furthermore, to be able to satisfactorily engage in the interaction of his roles with the roles of the other players, he must be able to identify the intentions and expectations of others in the game.

One missionary exemplified this process in deciding what he was going to do as a missionary.

What I could see myself doing long-term were a couple of things. . . .I like to start things. That is why I struggled for so long. Most of the requests for work and various missionary needs were to come in and keep doing something or make something better, but I always liked starting things. So I thought starting, going to an area and being the beginning administrator or to begin a ministry training center, that is what sort of started pointing me toward education administration.¹³

¹³ The reflective nature of identity work is demonstrated in this missionaries' own words. "I could see myself doing . . ." This is consistent with Mead's thoughts related to a "generalized other" and self as object. In this specific scenario the missionary rehearsed in his mind the mission activity with himself as the actor.

Once one figures out what he will do, he is ready to see how that activity will fit into the situation into which he is going. That role must then interact with others in the area where he will serve.

In order for interaction to occur among the players, there must be an organization of, as Meltzer states, “attitudes and definitions, understandings and expectations--or simply meanings--common to the group” (p. 11). The actions of all players are then governed by the rules of the game (Stephan and Stephan, 1985). For the developing missionary, this phase is exemplified by the behaviors of the missionaries as they go to orientation sessions and the appointment service. These activities provide them with the rules of the larger missionary field. Knowing the rules of the group, the missionaries’ behaviors then fit with those of the more experienced missionaries with whom they work.

Rehearsal of New Role

Thinking, in the tradition of Mead, involves the ability to participate in reflexive thought. That process is rehearsing in thought a future course of behavior. As one anticipates his prospective action, he is able to see himself, i.e., become an object unto himself. As newly appointed missionaries envision their future in their new work setting, they voiced concern about these new experiences.

Concerns about his ability to meet other expectations were voiced by one husband. An explanation for this kind of concern is offered in the literature by

Truman Smith, retired and former senior family consultant for the mission board. “To fall short of personal and professional ideals in ministry, whether as professional ministers in the United States or as missionaries overseas, means high risk from two sources. First, one might fail in the perfecting of ideals in his or her walk with God, and second, one may not live up to the complex expectations of persons to whom ministry is extended” (Brister, p. 9). In both cases, the missionary has evaluated himself as he thinks others (God on the one hand, and parishioners on the other) see him.

Concerns Related to Children

One of the areas about which newly appointed missionaries voiced the most concerns was their children. Initially, parents wanted to make sure their children would adjust to the new country with minimal difficulty.

A mother of three children expressed it this way:

I am just praying that the kids adjust well and are able to make friends and fit in there. They are at a good age.

Another mother had similar thoughts.

I think when the reality hit that we were going, she cried because she didn't want to leave . . . her best friend. . . . We told her that it was going to be hard for us to leave our friends, that we were going to miss our friends. That was another thing that was going to be hard for us, too.

This mother's anticipated solution is in their new place of residence to find other children.

One of the things that we have talked a lot about, and I am wanting to be real aware of is that there be children, that we as best as we can, find other families and children of people that not only speak English . . . but people that she can have relationships with as best as she can.

One couple found that their concerns were handled fairly simply by their two year old son.

The day we found we had been accepted we asked our son, who is two, "How would you like to move to Asia?" and his response was "Will [my sister] be there?"

"Yes."

"Will Daddy be there?"

"Yes."

"Will mommy be there?"

"Yes."

"Okay."

Another concern of parents was contemplating how their children would achieve their cultural identity. This concern is most likely related to the idea that children learn culture from their parents and others in their environment. In the case of the missionary family, the missionaries, unlike their children, have been grown up in the United States. Their generalized other, as Mead would call it, is pure American. The child of the missionary, however, grows up in a culture foreign to the culture of his parents. Therefore, the generalized other of the child becomes a mix of his parent's traditions and those of the culture around him. This generalized other is different from that of his parents. Perhaps the concern of the parents is that the newly appointed missionaries at this point do not know the culture which their child will internalize into self. Also, they have nothing in their own collection of experiences to provide a pattern for the new culture.

One mother's cultural concerns were as follows:

One concern is to make sure they maintain an American identity or a United States identity. That was a tip that was given to us. You know, make sure we celebrate the 4th of July. And we will have access to American TV at times.

As she compared her school age children with her 4 month old daughter, she noted the difference between the older children who had some connection with the United States and the daughter who will have limited connection to this country.

It's going to be really different with [our youngest,] because with the [older ones] they had memories of the United States but [she] won't.

The couple who had been in Africa on temporary assignment had known other missionary children. This reflection on their previous experiences revealed their apprehension.

We have seen those that are well adjusted with a world view and a good strong self image. And then we have seen the missionaries that we were with . . . the kids never left home and they just stayed with mom and dad in the home and were not very well adjusted. Couldn't blend into either culture at all. They were too much wanting to be in the United States, but I don't know how well they adjusted in the United States either. That they do well has always been my concern.

One mother sensed that the need of her children was some stability during this time of temporariness for her family.

. . .we have usually felt that wherever our family is, that is home, but I have realized more lately that [the children] that they wanted some sense of where is home. . . .So I guess that is a concern that they have a little bit of roots and some stability.

One of the issues which surfaced with regularity was how the missionaries' children would obtain their education. The options are usually for the children to go to a school native to the culture in which they live or an international school which usually conducts classes in English, is designed for children of businessmen, government workers, and missionaries, and may be some distance from where the missionaries reside. Another option is home schooling where either the missionary parents or a short term missionary provides the instruction. For one couple the issue was settled by the children's initially being able to attend school along with their parents as they study their new language.

New missionaries usually explored educational options for their children and were informed about the possibilities. One father stated,

I think it would be possible for them to go to high school right there. There is an international school that goes all the way through high school.

The same couple identified educational options for their children as a consideration for where they chose to be assigned.

Another couple expressed their issues with schooling in this manner.

That was one of my concerns too was home schooling, one of the things is knowing the support that we have needed with home schooling. That was one of the concerns that I had. Talking to people and knowing the support is there and that has helped. Some of the women that I have met also have home schooled, so they have some knowledge and experience that I can learn from. Actually, the little bit I have started reading on it, I am getting excited about it--not really nervous about it.

Concerns Related to New Roles

Another concern of newly appointed missionaries was related to how they would be a parent and a missionary at the same time. They have an idea of how to do combine their previous work roles and parenting roles, but in anticipation of their new work role, some doubts surfaced.

I think [the children] are going to do fine with whatever is put in their way, but how stressful is it going to be for us to manage the combination of home schooling, international schooling in the area, co-op schooling? . . . They are bright kids, and they enjoy learning, and they are going to learn well, but whatever we are going to have to do to help that happen, what kind of stress is that going to put on us is more what I am worried about.

Another mother was somewhat anxious about her change in role.

Another concern I have is that I have chosen not to be a mom who works outside the home, and when you are a career missionary you do, in a sense, have a job. So that will be an adjustment. . . . In language school we will be studying. We will be in class 6 or 7 hours a day plus you have to study, and it means that [the baby] is going to be under the care of somebody else, which I never did with my other two and that is going to be an adjustment for me.

Her husband then chimed in,

That will probably be the hardest thing for her and for us, not being with our baby. And I don't want to miss her first step because I'm studying Spanish. I'm going to tell them not to let her walk!

On the other hand, some parents anticipated positive aspects of being a missionary parent. One mother began,

I think that it is much easier to maintain [family life] in this field than in the United States with all the distractions. I have heard other people echo that. . . . In the United States we get so caught up in materialism, giving to our kids, having them involved in all the activities to enrich them and make sure they have all the advantages. You can spend all your time driving your kids from

one thing to the next and not really being there.

The father, speaking of his parenting role when they were on temporary assignment, then added,

For most of my career I have been able to spend a lot of time at home because my office has been at home. So, I have been able to spend a lot of time with them, with the boys. . . . That has been real beneficial to us.

Concerns Related to Other Family Members

A frequent topic was how relationships with other family members would be affected by the role requiring residence so far away. Sometimes the relationship was with parents, sometimes between grandparents and grandchildren, and sometimes cousins.

Her parents are very close to her. My parents, I'm not as close to them as this family, and [her dad] is very supportive of what we are doing, but this is his little girl. While we were in Africa, they called every week, every week if that gives you any idea--to Africa!

[My parents] are long time Southern Baptists, and they are very supportive, but they hate for us to be far away, and now we have their only granddaughter so that makes it even harder.

We have been real close to her parents. . . . There is a strong affinity there, and I think it is going to be hard for them.

He is really close to his family, really close. He calls and talks weekly to at least one of the members of his family, and so you know there will be some struggle at least a little bit there for him. Not to have that immediate access. . . . We will definitely miss cousins, the opportunity to get together. We pretty well spend the holidays with my family.

At times the narrative turned to thoughts about leaving extended family. One couple stated that the hardest thing for them to do was to leave their family. They then talked about wanting to have children in the future, but they would grow up without their cousins.

Finally, newly appointed missionaries approached the issue of leaving family members who were sick or aging.

My mom just got diagnosed with melanoma and had surgery. . . . They think they got everything.

Another male stated,

Being away from them, the people [my wife] has been close to, her grandmother particularly and one of her uncles who I think will die in the next four years, and how her parents are going to handle that and what that means with the stress on us with, would [she] come back, and how all of that would work out.

One husband conjectured,

Sometimes I used to be in Swaziland and think, you know, if somebody died, how long would it take me to get home. It would be a couple of days.

Sometimes the anticipated death was not verbalized directly.

I have an almost 92 year old grandmother. She is very understanding and a strong Christian lady, but I know that this good-by could be it.

The concerns of missionaries anticipating their future are centered around family members. They think of children who will be going with them as well as family members left behind.

Emotionality of Newly Appointed Missionaries

Prus (1996) posits that interactionists at times have neglected the reporting of emotions, relegating them to the realm of psychology. He further suggests that emotions are “interwoven in the fabric of human lived experience” (p. 175). In the interviews with newly appointed missionaries, expressed emotions were very much a part of the missionaries’ experience. Just as they voiced concerns about their new roles as they anticipated their future, they also expressed feelings about decisions made, relationships experienced, and leaving family in the future.

The most common emotion verbalized by new missionaries was “excitement.” This emotion is one which in this society fits with the idea of adventure, also used by the missionaries to describe their perspective of plans for their future. The feelings expressed by the parents of the missionaries were different from those of their offspring. The parents were much more ambivalent about this change of events. On the one hand they were less than excited as they anticipated the absence of their children at family gatherings. On the other hand, they described their situation as “blessed” as their children fulfilled God’s purposes in life.

The Time of Preparation: the Long Wait

All three couples addressed the time between their call to missions and the actual departure for their new environment. One couple stated,

I’d say we are on the starting block and ready to run the race. We have been

in training for quite a while now, and we're ready to get going. . . . We have had a whole year just wading through the process.

Another husband agonized over the wait. He described his role during this time as a "lame duck pastor." He further stated,

we have been going full speed ahead for a year, and we're still 4 to 5 months away from leaving. Overall, this has been a 2 ½ year process. . . . It has been horrible for us to be in the waiting mode. Even though we are doing stuff that has to be done, the waiting has been hard, although we have been busy.

The third family contemplated how the waiting period had been difficult for their two year old. The concerned mother then described a year of traveling, filled with changes in their environment during the preparation for the mission field.

My son, who is 2, is showing lot of signs of insecurity struggles. So I'm concerned a little bit about him and how he is going to transition to things, especially anxieties and such that are coming out. It is hard to know if that is the result of some of the happenings in our life or is it the normal kinds of things.

In Pirolo's Serving as Senders he suggests a "Cross-Cultural Worker's Life Time Line" as a way of diagraming the interaction of missionary's activities, time, and emotionality. He suggests that the first three points on this time line are Personal Call of God, Call Confirmed by Church, and Date of Departure. He describes the period between a missionaries' experience with the call and the date of departure as a mixture of "excitement and apprehension, visions of grandeur and nightmares of depression" (p. 18). These feelings continue along with the anticipation of the new mission which is characteristic of a suggested stage which he names Anticipation of Departure, the period between Call Confirmed by the Church and Date of Departure.

The Meaning of Being Family

The nature of human interaction requires that man be able to step outside of himself and look at self. That is, he is reflexive. By this same process family members are able to step outside of the family and look at the family. This activity permits one to describe the family of which he is a part.

The newly appointed missionaries interviewed in this study provided a report of how they saw their families.

Our family likes to explore. I would talk about us as an exploring, fun-loving family.

Her husband continued,

And the story of my greater family, too, I think is that of exploring and being adventuresome, seeking God. . . . Some of what I have grown up with is the idea of going from where you are to somewhere else, being adventuresome, being different challenging the status quo.

In a general description of the families, members often saw themselves as close and loving.

As a family I see, to me it's a so much more loving and close knit family than I grew up with, and I enjoy my family a whole lot and I enjoy our closeness. To me it's just a gift from God to have such a wonderful family, and I struggle with it from time to time to give it back to Him and to know that He is in control. Yeah, it's a very loving family.

We are a very close family anyway. We like to do things together.

Another key part of the story of our family is the togetherness. [We] really value the unity of our family, and we guard that and protect that.

The parents of missionaries concurred with this view.

We are a loving, caring family. . . The kids have a good time when they get together. The family gets together several times a year. This past summer all twenty were here on one day.

Then with a note of sadness she quietly voiced added.

There will be a void at family get togethers now because [he] will not be here.

Summary of Interviews

From interviews with newly appointed missionaries in their homes it is clear that the experience of becoming a missionary begins early in a child's development in the family of origin. In this study missionaries, most of whom had parents very active in church activities, attended church from an early age, participated in missions programs, were members of church youth groups and were a part of BSU groups in college. Through these endeavors persons acquired perspectives about the world of the missionary.

As the future missionaries entered young adulthood, they often participated in volunteer mission projects. These experiences provided the opportunity for trying out missionary roles and expanding knowledge about the behaviors and rules common in missionaries' activities. As they began to think about establishing their own family, negotiations about marriage and being missionaries were the focus.

An important element in the process is the concept of the call of God. This vocabulary of motives is common as missionaries told about how they made the decision to become a missionary. The call served as the unquestionable answer to the

parents' questions about leaving family and home to live in a foreign country.

The process of becoming a missionary family further involved a reflexive factor as new missionaries were able to step outside of themselves and project what they will do in the future in their new role. The outcome of this mindful activity was concern about children, about their own blended roles of parents and missionaries, and about extended family.

The temporal situation was defined by missionaries as a long wait for the period between their call and the time they actually left for their new assignment. Although new missionaries verbalized the importance of preparation, they depicted their situation as being ready to "run the race."

Rituals of Appointing New Missionaries: Orientation and Ceremony

After a missionary receives notice of acceptance from the International Mission Board, he is scheduled to participate in a ceremony known as the appointment service.¹⁴ For a week prior to this event orientation sessions are provided for the missionaries to be appointed. This researcher attended orientation sessions on connection with an appointment service.

¹⁴Another name for this ritual is commissioning service. This term is reminiscent of a military act of giving soldiers an order to enter a branch of service. The term commission also appears as the title of the monthly magazine published by the International Mission Board.

Orientation Sessions

The orientation observed was held at the afore mentioned conference center. There were 45 missionaries attending this orientation. Daily sessions during the week were conducted in a room with a classroom like atmosphere. Each day there was excited chatter before sessions with much interaction also between sessions. Missionaries talked to each other about where they were going, when they would be at the Missionary Learning Center (MLC), schooling decisions for their children, and tips for crating.¹⁵

The stated formal purpose of these sessions was to make the more extensive, two month orientation at MLC “better.”¹⁶ During the initial session a mission board staff representative suggested that the new missionaries would do well to bring with them to MLC “an open mind and a willingness to learn.” He stated that some new missionaries think they don’t need to learn. They want to go directly to the

¹⁵“Crating” is a coined term used by the missionaries to talk about the process of packing belongings into a standard crate provided by the mission board for the purpose of sending the missionaries’ belongings to their new destination.

¹⁶ The mission board, previously known as the Foreign Mission Board, was in existence 109 years before an orientation program was developed. In 1954 the board decided to have an orientation which consisted solely of 8 days in July at Glorieta. From 1954 through 1984 the orientations were held in various places. In 1980 land in the amount of 238 acres was donated to the board for the location of the Missionary Learning Center near Richmond, Virginia. The staff moved into this facility in April, 1984. The MLC was designed to fulfill the purpose of learning for missionaries, short term volunteers, and missionary children. See Appendix A for handout entitled “Get ready, get set--” which was distributed to the participants to help them prepare for attending orientation at MLC.

field.¹⁷ However, he suggested that a sound orientation will make their work more effective once they arrive at their new assignment.

During these meetings some mission board staff were introduced. Staff members included a physician who talked about health preparations, personnel staff who discussed insurance plans, and representative from the Southern Baptist Annuity Board who discussed retirement issues. Other business matters included filling out travel forms for the extended orientation at MLC and completing forms for children's schooling during that time.

Although some business seemed of a formal nature, an unspoken purpose was to provide information for the new missionaries as they began to fill their new role. One of the ways this goal was accomplished was to have speakers who were either former missionaries or children of missionaries. For instance, one staff person presiding at the orientation sessions identified himself as being from a family with five generations of missionaries. His grandparents were missionaries to Japan. By having speakers who had missionary experience, the new missionaries were able to hear the group jargon, observe the behaviors of missionaries, and basically learn the rules of the organizational "game."

In addition the speaker related areas about which they would learn while at MLC. They were spiritual formation, cross cultural aspects, personal development,

¹⁷In some of the interviews with the newly appointed missionaries they talked about the drudgery of the "waiting" period, being very excited about going to the new assignment.

and understanding the mission board. In relation to the cross cultural aspects he stated that there would be studies on world religions. The content would be presented by a cultural anthropologist and former missionaries. The additional focus of personal development would be to help participants identify who they fit in with a team.

There were other issues addressed which were not directly related to future experiences at MLC but which were informative for the new initiates. One of these issues which emerged often was that of family.¹⁸ Many of the concerns related to decisions to be made about schooling children. One of the forms which participants filled out was a detailed questionnaire about their children's past schooling experiences. The speaker explained that at MLC classes would be individually structured for children, depending on the child's educational level and where the child would be living in the near future. For example, if a child was going to the Dominican Republic, the social studies segment of his schooling would be related to Latin America.

Another reference was made to new missionaries' extended family members.

Sometimes there is a problem with family. They sometimes don't understand why you are leaving. Some of you have family members who are not [Christians], yet you are leaving. However, you know you don't have a choice. You have a sense of call. God has called you. During your time at MLC you will begin to develop family among missionaries.

¹⁸ The integration of the family with new role issues was symbolized by a young mother attending the orientation sessions who sat at the back of the room breast-feeding her four month old daughter.

There are several interesting points in the above comments. First, there is a verbalization of the call as a vocabulary of motives. The priority of God's call over family is clearly indicated. It is more strongly stated by this staff person than by any of the missionaries interviewed. The message was, "You don't have a choice." This emphasis, coming from a mission board representative, adds strength to the candidate's own use of this motive.

The second point is the introduction of the idea that the interaction with family members and resulting meanings of family can and will be replaced with interactions with other missionaries, thus affecting the meaning of family. The last comment of the speaker suggests that this process begins even before the missionaries actually leave the United States. This idea was echoed in a video presentation entitled, "A Time of Cultivation." The video was designed to introduce the viewers to the MLC and what happens there. At one point the video stated that the biggest sacrifice missionaries make is their family. "After spending time [with other participants], missionaries start becoming family."

A further comment on the experience at MLC has been offered by Truman Smith as he described participating in a closing session of an orientation program at MLC. He told the story of the new appointees as they came to the close of eight weeks together. "On departure day feelings ran deep in the group. One person remarked, with choked voice and blotting of tears, that they all seemed allergic to saying good-bye. These persons reflected great variety of history, training, and

experience. Each individual was dealing with the loss of a meaningful support community in his or her own way--a loss symbolic of all other losses" (Brister, p. 10)

The two hour parents' orientation session addressed this issue of leaving family from a slightly different perspective. During this session parents were given a packet of information containing handouts entitled "On Becoming a Missionary Parent," Helps for Parents of Missionaries: Spiritual Preparation, Emotional Preparation, and Practical Preparation," and "Experiencing Grief??" (See Appendix B). Rather than telling parents that their children would find family substitutes on the field, they were encouraged to take care of their own feelings with prayer and then were given practical suggestions for communicating with their children in a distant country.

The Appointment Service

The appointment service is the official ceremony recognizing the beginning of the missionary career. The appointment service is conducted somewhat like a church service, and in fact takes place in a church setting. The actors are the missionaries and appropriate representatives from the mission board. The audience is usually comprised of family members, denominational staff, and other interested persons.¹⁹

¹⁹Four of the six appointment services conducted this year were held in churches in various parts of the country. The audience in these services tends to be members of that church in addition to members of other Southern Baptist churches in the area. Many of the attendees have family members who are or have been missionaries somewhere. When the appointment services are held at the conference centers, the audience includes

The Setting

The setting was a large auditorium situated next to a small lake. The building had a spire pointing upward and was made of stained glass, symbolic of the religious purpose for which it was built. Inside the large auditorium contained a stage in front of gray cloth covered pews--rows and rows of benches with Baptist Hymnals in the racks. A balcony surrounded the outer boundaries of the space. The walls were made of floor to ceiling stained glass framed by wooden arches. On the east side of the auditorium windows were hidden by heavy golden draperies. The west side of the auditorium revealed a golden sunset outside.

The stage in front of the auditorium was backed by wooden panels. In the back corners of the stage were multicolored flags, 18 in the left corner and 18 in the right. Scattered around the stage floor were medium sized crates stamped with "Handle with care." Below that phrase on each crate was the name of a country--Venezuela, Austria, Ethiopia, Portugal, Asia, Latin America, Japan, and the Middle East to name a few. Rows of folding chairs had been placed in front of the flags. Toward the back center were two tables covered with white tablecloths. In the front center stood a wooden stand. Microphones had been placed on the left and right front of the stage as well as on the floor to the left and right in front of the stage.

those who have attended the conferences during the week.

The Prelude

Upon entering the auditorium, one was handed a program on the front cover of which was printed, "We Shall come Rejoicing: Missionary Appointment Service. Planting, Watering, Harvesting, Rejoicing."²⁰ At 6:45 p.m. the pianist began playing a medley of hymns with a theme of God's leading. This music was from hymns entitled "He Leadeth Me," "All the Way My Savior Leads Me," and "Wherever He Leads I'll Go." During this musical presentation the spotlight came up on the two tables in the back center of the stage. The gathering crowd began to chatter as if in anticipation of a big event.

At 6:55 men in business suits began gathering on the front row. They were talking quietly and pointing as if making last minute arrangements to assure the actors knew exactly where they were to do what. One boy in casual clothes was noticed going backstage. To add to the preprogram gathering, a group of teenagers assembled themselves in the reserved seats in the center section.

The Program

Exactly at 7:00 p.m. the teenagers lined up in the front, one row in front of the stage and on row on the front edge of the stage. The kids were attired in jeans, t-

²⁰ "We shall come rejoicing" are words from the chorus of a well known Baptist hymn, "Bringing in the Sheaves". This song uses the theme of harvesting to allude to the act of bringing others into the Christian faith.

shirts, sport shirts, and casual clothes, although no one was in shorts. There were spotlights on the group as they were introduced as “Youth Jericho,” the teenage group at Glorieta for missions week. The group sang a song entitled, “Carry the Light.” The song included the phrase, “Go and tell the children they are precious in His sight.” Although one girl stood at the left microphone and one boy at the right, the microphones were not on, making it difficult if not impossible to hear the soloists.

As the group returned to their seats, the organ bellowed out the introduction for the congregational hymn, “Oh, Zion Haste,” a familiar missions song for many Baptists. The words of the hymn are as follows (Baptist Hymnal, 1975 edition):

O Zion, haste, thy mission, high fulfilling,
 To tell to all the world that God is Light;
 That he who made all nations is not willing
 One soul should perish, lost in shades of night.

Behold how many thousands still are lying,
 Bound in the darksome prison house of sin,
 With none to tell them of the Savior's dying,
 Or of the life he died for them to win.

Proclaim to ev'ry people, tongue, and nation
 That God, in whom they live and move, is Love:
 Tell how he stoop'd to save his lost creation,
 And died on earth that man might live above.

Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious,
 Give of thy wealth to speed them on their way;
 Pour out thy souls for them in pray'r victorious;
 And all thou spendest Jesus will repay.

Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace,
 Tidings of Jesus, redemption and release.

Following the hymn, the audience was seated as the Parade of Missions began.

The house lights went up, and the organ played “We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations.” Another group of teenage boys and girls, dressed similarly to the singing group, came down two of the five aisles carrying multicolored flags. The processional was quite kaleidoscopic as two groups of flagholders crossed in front of the stage while others went up on the stage.

Following the flag bearers down the two aisles were the soon to be newly appointed missionaries. The women were all dressed in dresses, and many, although not all, of the men were in coats and ties. Many of the forty-five appointees were smiling as they proceeded onto the stage where they sat in chairs placed in front of the colorful flags. When flags and candidates were all on stage, the audience spontaneously clapped, and the lights partially dimmed. Everyone then sang together “We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations” after which they were seated.

After the hymn two men in suits joined the seated missionary candidates. One man introduced himself as the president of the International Mission Board.²¹ He wore a gray suit and carried a medium sized wine colored Bible. He stood clear of any podium and wore a small wireless microphone on his shirt. He proceeded to talk about the call of God in the lives of the missionary candidates seated around him.

²¹Many of the staff at the mission board have been in international settings as missionaries for 10 to 20 years. The current president of the board was a missionary to Indonesia while the vice-president served in Latin America.

Next he introduced the parents and immediate family members of the appointees. They stood as the audience clapped. He expressed appreciation that the families present had raised their children to be sensitive to the call of God.

The introductions then focused on the board of trustees for the mission board. The chairman was presented followed by other members. He commented on churches which decrease missions from their budgets. He compared this practice to “emptying diesel fuel from an 18 wheeler.” He talked about committees involved in the appointment process interviews. He explained that this information is examined by the staff before examination by the personnel committee of the board of trustees. He then read the official recommendation from the board of trustees, stating that the candidates present had completed the application process and were ready to be commissioned as international missionaries. On this cue the house lights went up, and the trustees present were asked to stand in a vote of affirmation. Following this validation, the congregation was asked to affirm Southern Baptist support. The audience stood and applauded.

After the house lights were dimmed again, the president stood in the spotlight to begin his sermon for the evening. The theme was “Whatever It Takes--to Reach the Nations.” He spoke to the congregation and occasionally the candidates as he held his Bible, although he never opened it. He stated that there were 270 emeriti missionaries at the missions conference this week with a total of 7844 years of missionary service.

He then introduced the well known missionary figure, Lottie Moon,²² a missionary for 39 years in Asia. He further informed the congregation that in 1840 Lottie Moon lived in a privileged class in Virginia. Her father died when she was 12. At 13 she went away to a boarding school. The speaker described her as a “brilliant, unpredictable prankster.” The play then began.

The actress representing Lottie Moon appeared in a green and white costume from the late 1800's. (At this point it was most noticeable that the microphones being used on stage were not working. A stage hand ran backstage.) Lottie Moon stood at the wooden podium in the center of the stage. She spoke in an exaggerated manner as if imitating a loud preacher with a southern accent. The congregation responded with laughter. Then a male entered wearing a suit from the same period. (At this point the male's microphone was working, but the female's was not. A short time later the microphone problem was resolved.)

According to the unfolding drama, Charlotte Dix Moon was baptized in 1858. She was one of the first in her school to receive a master's degree. She reportedly spoke five languages fluently. After her experience of tutoring her sister, she started schools all over the south. Her sister was one of the first single women to go as a missionary for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. After the sister went to Asia, she wrote to Lottie to tell her of the need for Lottie's ability in learning

²²Lottie Moon is legendary in Southern Baptist circles. Her familiarity is partly due to the annual convention wide financial campaign named for her, the Lottie Moon Christmas offering.

languages. In October, 1873, Lottie Moon left for Asia.

The play indicated she was “seasick for the first 25 years.” Again the congregation responded appropriately with quiet laughter. At this point the house lights were completely dimmed and the spotlight on the actors partially dimmed. One couple from the seated group of candidates went to the microphone on the left side of the stage and gave a brief testimony lasting about two minutes. The statement sounded like a rehearsed script, disclosing their probable stage anxiety. When they finished, another couple was in place at the microphone on the right of the stage. Testimonies alternated from one side of the stage to the other with the spotlight only on the couple speaking. About a third of the group completed their testimonies prior to the next act of the play. This format continued with testimonies given between acts of the dramatic presentation.

One scene in the Lottie Moon drama was specifically related to a family issue. At this point Lottie sat at a table placed at left center stage. She was writing a letter to her sister who had returned to the United States due to a health problem. This was the first time in some time that she and her sister had been separated. In Lottie’s letter, which the actress verbalized aloud for the audience to hear, she talked about her sister “turning your back on your call.”

Testimonies continued as candidates briefly spoke of their background experience with missions education and short term missions projects. They routinely mentioned some aspect of their “call.” One female recited the passage from Genesis

12:1 in her testimony. “Now the Lord said to Abram, Go forth from your country, And from your relatives, And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you.” Others spoke of their preparation for their new role.

In the last scene of the drama Lottie received a letter telling of her sister’s suicide. Lottie stayed in Asia where she later died from a deteriorated physical condition. At the end of the play, the actors sang a song entitled, “So Send I You.” The lights came up partially as the missionary candidates moved to the crates with the name of the countries for which they were bound. As they finished moving, the actors and the missionaries were interspersed. At the end of the song, the audience clapped enthusiastically.

The president began speaking again with missionaries and actors in the background. With his Bible in hand he began referring to Lottie Moon as he issued an “invitation” for members of the audience to respond to the call of God on their lives. The lights came up as the congregation stood to sing a song. The singing of a verse alternated with a plea from the speaker for members of the congregation to come forward to talk with someone at the front about their decision. During one appeal he said, “There are 270 retired missionaries here. Wouldn’t it be nice to have 270 replacements tonight? You could be like one of these.” While some members of the audience did walk down the aisle to the front, a photographer took pictures, although without a flash attachment. Many young persons came forward to talk to staff persons who were “counseling” those respondents.

Following the invitation to missions, the president lowered his hands as a sign for the congregation to be seated and then moved from the front stage to the center stage where he stood among the missionary candidates. From there he issued a “personal charge.” He quoted Acts 20:24. “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.” As he stood between the two actors at center stage he “charged” the candidates to pay attention to their “call.” “In spite of economic deprivation and loneliness, Lottie Moon stayed true to her call. The only thing that matters is to finish your call. . . . Missionaries are not more spiritual or dedicated than other people, but because of the compulsion to share Jesus’ story, ‘I endure all things lest I hinder the gospel of Jesus Christ’.”

Next he asked the candidates’ children, previously sitting in the audience, to join their parents on stage. (The scene was interesting with actors in costume and missionaries and families dressed in Sunday dress.) The president asked the audience to stand as he offered a “dedication prayer.” (A baby began crying during the prayer.) Everyone joined in singing one verse of “So Send I You” without any instruments playing. Then all began to chatter once again as they left to the strains of the organ playing a postlude.

The Dramaturgy of the Ritual

One of the first obvious characteristics of this ritual is that there were principally three groups of actors. One was the president of the mission board, another group were the two dramatists acting out a play within a play, the life of Lottie Moon. The third group was the missionaries who were being appointed.

This combination of actors is described by Goffman as a team. “We commonly find that the definition of the situation projected by a particular participant is an integral part of a projection that is fostered and sustained by the intimate cooperation of more than one participant. . . . the term “performance team” or, in short, “team” . . . refers to any set of individuals who cooperate in staging a single routine” (p. 78). In this ritual the three groups of actors form a team to communicate the missionary presentation.

Preparation

When a team of actors works together, Goffman asserts that the possibility increases of unintentionally communicating something inconsistent with the intended impression. One of the strategies he suggests to manage this situation is preparation. “One application of this strategy is to settle on a complete agenda before the event, designating who is to do what and who is to do what after that. In this way confusions and lulls can be avoided and hence the impressions that such hitches in the proceedings might convey to the audience can be avoided too” (p. 228).

The missionary candidates had two rehearsal sessions. The first rehearsal was a 2 ½ hour talk-through as it was held in the classroom setting and consisted of a discussion about the appointment service and the procedure to be followed. The second rehearsal was a 3 hour practice in the auditorium and on the stage. These rehearsals were for the missionary group only. The dramatists and the president of the board conducted their rehearsals out of the presence of the missionaries.

Props

There were a number of props providing symbolic support for the message to be conveyed. The three principal props were flags, crates, and the Bible. Flags on the stage in the beginning as well as those carried in as the missionaries paraded in represented the international scope of the missionaries' endeavors. The flags were actual flags of nations around the world. The flags provided a colorful accent to the scene while also being providing meaning to the event. The standing of the audience as the flags entered was similar to the cultural practice in the United States of standing when the Stars and Stripes are presented in American settings.

The crates on stage also suggested an international theme as the words in large bold print on the boxes included the name of countries around the world. These props gained significance as at the conclusion of the program, the missionaries being appointed moved to the crates bearing the name of the country where they would be assigned. The speaker told of the connection between the missionaries and the

countries to assure transmission of this message to the audience. The additional “Handle with care” on the boxes was an effective connection with members of the audience, many of whom were family members who have emotional ties to the departing missionaries.

The Bible was a prop used by the president of the board in his message. It was used as a prop in that the speaker never opened it to read from it. When passages were voiced, he quoted them from memory rather than exhibiting the behavior of reading from the sacred book. The use of the Bible, both as a prop and in his text, added a religious significance²³ to his appearance and message. This audience was probably fairly familiar with the Bible, and the use of scripture added authority to this presentation.

Other incidental props were used for the Lottie Moon play. The table and other items were located backstage and were useful in the dramatic presentation.

Music

Musical support during the appointment service was impressive.²⁴ The

²³The setting of the event, the auditorium, was surrounded by walls of colored glass panes encased by wooden arches. The arches, an Archimedean characteristic in churches through the ages, contributed to the sacredness of the place.

²⁴Southern Baptists are known for their love and use of music in church. Many churches include a hymnal along beside the Bible as necessary for all church services. While many times the parishioners are expected to have their own Bibles, the church usually provides copies of the hymnal for audience use during the service. Singing of hymns is one way the audience participates in the service.

instrumental music consisted of organ and piano music, typical of Southern Baptist churches. Although the prelude itself was only instrumental music, the organ and piano played hymns with words referring to going where God leads. Thus musically the message was reinforced for those in the audience, many of whom were family members, that God, the ultimate power, is the active agent in sending these people around the world.

The music played as the flags and the missionaries entered was in the parade style appropriate for the pageantry. The hymn, "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations," is in the tempo of a march with words which have international references. Also, the words could easily be imputed to the missionaries who were following the flags.

Another aspect of the music in the program was "congregational singing." At this point the audience was expected to pick up a hymnal in the pew and sing along with the song leader.²⁵ The singing of the hymn which had accompanied the parade of flags and missionaries underscored the importance of the song's theme.²⁶ This was the second time it was used, and the congregation was asked to sing the words. Both of these acts emphasize the combination of geographical and religious motifs.

²⁵This person had no speaking parts during the program and was fairly incidental. He did stand on the stage and conduct the audience as they sang the hymns. He left the stage immediately after the singing.

²⁶In addition to providing textual support, hymns supply an further need to stand up and move in a limited way. This activity allows the audience some relief from sitting for extended periods of time.

The final hymn, “So Send I You,” was also one with two aims. On one hand, audience members could be active participants in the sending off process. Perhaps family members who had reservations about their children’s leaving could mouth the words to support their children in this setting. On the other hand, the group of actors being appointed as missionaries could hear the words as support from the large audience, some of whom were family members.

The support garnered from this audience was of three different kinds. One was financial support.²⁷ A second method frequently mentioned was prayer.²⁸ The third method was often mentioned as letters, although in these days the term letters is understood to expand to the larger scope of communication, including telephone calls and e-mail. Another reference to support was directly verbalized during the appointment procedure. The speaker then asked the audience to stand up as an affirmation of Southern Baptist support.

Costumes

The manner of dress was dictated by the appointment ritual being in the style

²⁷Southern Baptists, unlike most other missionary groups, provide total financial support for the missionaries. No future missionary is asked to ask individuals to send money to them on a regular basis. In lieu of this activity, the mission board raises the money which goes to a central office to be distributed among their denominational missionaries.

²⁸Another missionary tradition in Southern Baptist life is to pray for the missionaries, specifically on their birthdays. The Missionary Prayer Calendar is published in several pieces of literature annually for church members to be able to pray for these missionaries by name.

of a church service. Sunday dress seemed to be the style of choice. Many of the male missionaries wore suits while women tended to wear dresses and dress shoes. The costume of the president, as also of the mission board staff and members of the board of trustees in attendance, was in the style suited to a business man or to a preacher, since both tend to dress similarly. Costumes of the dramatists were the most different, being consistent with the setting of the Lottie Moon play. The actress wore floor length dresses typical of the late 1800's and the actor's suit was of that time period also.

The difference in dress portrayed the time element of events. The play cast wore the dress of a different time period, while everyone else wore more modern styles. Perhaps more significant, the difference in dress indicated a difference in importance of the actors. The dramatists aside, missionaries and board members were dressed in moderately formal attire while the audience was in casual clothes. Missionaries were not dressed casually as were the conference attendees in the audience. The youth, no matter whether they were flag bearers, singers or only audience members, tended wear jeans and tee shirts.

Lights and Sound

Lights were a tool used to help the audience know when it was appropriate to participate. Goffman stresses the importance of audience being privy only to the action in the region known as "front stage." The "back stage" area is only for actors.

One of the properties which helps to keep these area separate is distance. Given the right amount of distance, the audience focuses on the front stage area. The lighting assists in the creation of distance between the two groups. Actors have light on them, while the audience is sitting in the dark. During the appointment service, the house lights were up during congregational singing and during the last part of the service when members of the audience were expected to participate. Also, lights were up when the president asked parents and immediate family members of the appointees to stand. With the lighting some of the distance between the two groups was removed and the audience was given permission to engage in the action, but only to a limited extent.

The sound system also is important in any production. The quest is to magnify the sound without too much distraction from the action which is creating the impression. Goffman's (1959) example is the waiter whose's necessary role in a restaurant is to deliver food to the table, but he is to perform his task in a manner so discreet that he is almost unnoticed. Such is the technical assistant who is to control the sound machinery in a manner which allows the actors with the quietest voices to be heard without the audience focusing on the equipment or the technician.

In the appointment service the president of the board wore a lapel microphone, which allowed him to talk with the audience without any distraction between him and the audience. This kind of microphone also allowed him to be mobile on the stage, giving the impression that he wanted to talk with everyone no matter where they were

seated or perhaps giving the impression that he was personable and congenial rather than being stiff. Either of these impressions would be beneficial to the speaker in this situation.

Microphones used by the dramatists also were lapel mikes which allowed for movement on stage without distraction. The missionaries during their testimonies stepped up to a standing microphone on either side of the stage. This arrangement was much less distracting than passing a microphone from person to person.

Goffman suggests that a discrepancy occurs any time an actor does something which contributes to a message contrary to the desired one. One example of this was when the dramatists initially spoke without any sound amplification. The audience was not able to hear the words of the actor, and attention was called to the fact that this was an artificial representation.

To solve this problem a stage hand was observed to up on the stage and walk to the backstage region. After a few lines, the female's microphone was working, but the male's was not. A few more lines were delivered before the male's mike began to work, and the stage hand, dressed in jeans and tee shirt, came from the backstage region and walked to the back of the audience. While this discrepancy was noticed, the problem lasted only for a short period of time, doing little damage to the production.

Staging

Placement of the actors is significant in impression management. The audience traditionally sits in front of the stage while the actors are on the stage. In this manner the dramatists and speaker were on the stage. One interesting observation in this situation was the placement of the missionaries to be appointed.

The missionaries first entered from the rear of the auditorium, walked down the aisles in between sections of the audience, and walked up onto the stage. This behavior physically supports the notion that missionaries come from the ranks of ordinary persons to live on a higher plane. On stage the missionaries sat in groups of chairs interspersed among the props defining the scenes in the Lottie Moon play. With this staging, the areas for the past missionary characters and the present missionary appointees were mixed together, promoting identity transformation of the new appointees; they are becoming missionaries just as Lottie Moon was. There was an area in the center of the stage where most of the action took place in the Lottie Moon play. This area was a “no man’s land” during times when the dramatists were not active. Thus during the play there was a slight separation between the dramatists and the missionaries.²⁹

Goffman emphasizes the importance for a team of actors to all produce the

²⁹ Another blurring of these roles, actors and missionaries, occurred when the dramatists were introduced by the president. He told the audience that the actress’ sister and brother-in-law were missionaries and that the performing couple had dedicated their “ministry” to missions.

same impression. He further describes “dramaturgical discipline” which is necessary for all members of the team. One way to make sure all 45 missionary appointees exercised their discipline was to limit the time they had access to the microphone on stage. As Goffman says, “If the audience is to see only a brief performance, then the likelihood of an embarrassing occurrence will be relatively small, and it will be relatively safe for the performer” (p. 221). Each missionary spoke for no more than 30 seconds each, or one minute per couple. This control assisted in impression management.

Another potential problem for maintaining the image arises with the presence of children on the stage. Goffman states, “. . . children of the house are often excluded from performances given . . . because often children cannot be trusted to ‘behave’ themselves, i.e. to refrain from acting in a way inconsistent with the impression that is being fostered” (p. 91). Perhaps it is for this reason that the children of the missionaries were asked to join their parents on stage only at the conclusion of the performance. In this way the children were given some recognition as part of the missionary family, but the chance that they would ruin the impression was negligible.³⁰ Their coming up on stage, however, was important to the performance as it allowed the audience to see that children, too, were part of the missionary families.

³⁰Most of these children were preschool or schoolage children.

Impressions Created

There were several messages communicated in the appointment service for new missionaries. Although the theme was billed as a “Missionary Appointment Service,” the mission board took this opportunity to send messages to the new appointees and their families about the missionaries’ calls, about the need for more new missionaries, and more subtly about the need for financial support of missionaries as well as prayer for missionaries.

In presenting testimonies, missionary appointees routinely referred to their call.³¹ The president also used the concept in issuing his “personal charge” to the candidates in the appointment portion of the program. He urged candidates to pay attention to their call. He then referred to Lottie Moon as staying true to her call. His more direct words, “The only thing that matters is to finish your call.” This could be construed as an attempt to prevent attrition of missionaries.

Furthermore, the call could emphasize to families that missionaries are doing the right thing in leaving, as discussed previously. This notion was blatant in Lottie Moon’s interaction with her sister. She writes a letter to her sister scolding her for leaving her call. In the next scene, Lottie receives a letter that her sister has committed suicide. This could have been problematic if too much time had been spent on the sister’s death as suicide is not usually in the Christian’s comfort zone.

³¹Candidates also frequently spoke of their experiences with missions education and short term mission projects.

This potential discrepancy was fixed by interruptions in the drama provided by the testimonies of the missionary candidates and by the subsequent focus on Lottie Moon rather than her sister. In the play Lottie is clearly noble for staying in China, while her sister is characterized as the weaker of the two.

Recruitment was apparent at the latter part of the service as the house lights came up and the president asked for members of the audience to respond to God's call on their lives. The reference to the number of missionaries on stage was an effort to have members of the audience identify with the missionary candidates and perhaps become missionaries themselves. A furloughing missionary interviewed in this study related how he felt the call during an international missions conference at this same conference center.

The financial theme was included in the president's introductory remarks to his address. His analogy comparing churches' decreasing their mission giving with emptying fuel from 18 wheelers was an unusual use of metaphors but was an attempt to create a powerful picture with an impact.

Finally, the appointment service was a rite of passage for the new missionaries. Much like a graduation ceremony, they received a charge from the president. The ceremony itself is a public display of their decisions to become missionaries and offers affirmations of this determination.

It is acknowledged at this point that making a commitment in front of a large group of people has powerful meaning for the person involved. This is confirmed in

later sections of this study as those missionaries at retirement conferences talked with great fondness about people “we were appointed with.” Brister () adds a theological perspective to the appointment service by suggesting that the “private call” is one which is discussed in the stories above. He then speaks to the “external call” described by John Calvin as the “approval by ‘the public order of the church’” (p. 21).

Appointment as an Epiphany

Later interviews with more experienced missionaries reflected the importance with which missionaries speak of their appointment service. Time spent with other missionary candidates during orientation week prior to the service provided opportunity for bonding with other team members. Furthermore, the candidate received many affirmations of his decision during the appointment service itself. The visual display of approval from International Mission Board trustees provided confirmation of the candidates’ new role.

Finally, the appointment service offered a concrete reference point when one can say they became a missionary. In fact, many other missionaries’ stories began with the phrase, “We were appointed in . . .” Life will never be the same.

Summary

The process of becoming a missionary family begins long before the family is formed. (See figure 1.) Future missionaries in their childhood start acquiring

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A MISSIONARY FAMILY

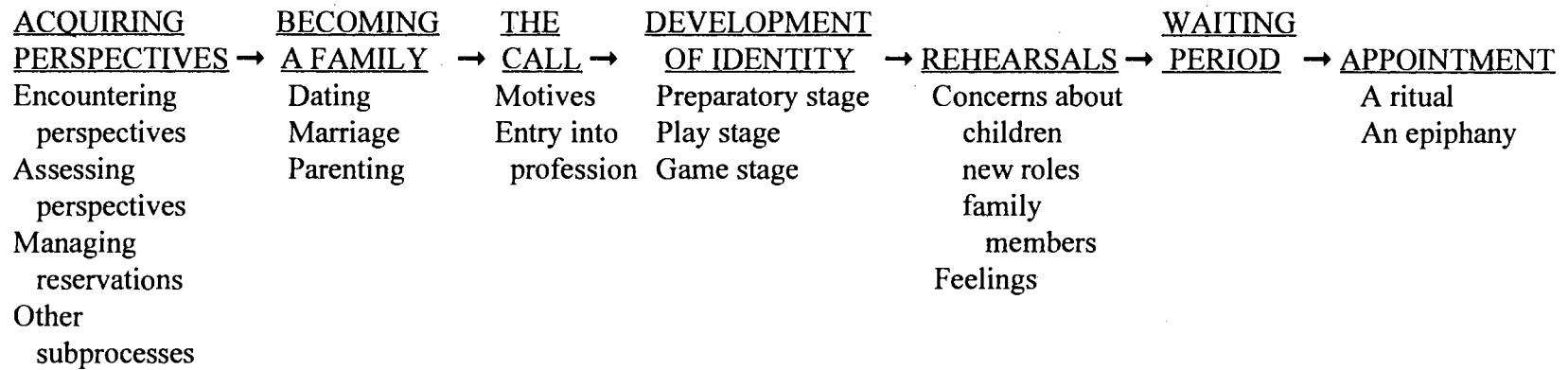


Figure 1. The process of becoming a missionary family.

perspectives of missionaries through organized church activities and influences of parents. Throughout their youth they come into contact with missionaries and often participate in mission oriented activities. These endeavors provide the opportunity for adolescents and young adults to assess missionary perspectives and anticipate life as a missionary.

As the young person approaches the age to select a marital partner, negotiations are apparent even in the dating stage. The person may decide to become a missionary prior to marriage in which case the issue of going to the mission field may be addressed prior to the marriage. In other cases, a person may put the desire to be a missionary on hold until this issue is resolved with the spouse.

Whenever the decision to become a missionary is finalized, an prominent part of every missionary's story is a call from God to enter this profession. God's call serves as a motive for behavior which may be questioned by friends and family. Referring to a sacred rationale for their decision becomes an acceptable explanation for behavior of the new missionary. In addition, the call of God grants the called Christian an entry ticket into the profession.

As the new missionary develops identity as a missionary, Mead's stages of development are apparent. In the first phase, the preparatory stage, the developing missionary imitates behaviors observed in contacts with missionaries. In the second phase, the play stage, the person temporarily takes on a role to further assess behaviors related to the role. In many cases, missionaries previously had taken mission trips in

which they had served as a mission volunteer, allowing this temporary trial in the role. The third phase, the game stage, is that in which the new missionary learns the rules of the profession in order to fit in with other missionaries who will be team members in mission work. The orientation sessions provide many opportunities to develop these skills.

As the new missionary makes plans for future assignments, the ability to think reflexively allows the person to see self in the mission role formerly observed in others. Results of this rehearsal activity are concerns about their children's future, their ability to fulfill the new roles involved in their new assignment in an international setting, and concerns about family members remaining in the US. New missionaries and their parents expressed feelings, specifically excitement and apprehension, as they prepared to leave their native land.

Several newly appointed missionaries discussed the long waiting period between first deciding to become a missionary and their final departure date. Even though most stated they were busy arranging to leave, at the same time they expressed displeasure at having to spend time in orientation and other preparations. Parents of the new missionaries often spoke of feeling "blessed" about their children's leaving, although they occasionally shed a few tears and had a tone of sadness at times.

The ritual affirming the taking on of the new role was the appointment service. Even though the mission board utilized the occasion for recruitment of new missionaries and fund raising, the pageantry displayed the special role of the

missionary. Integrating the initiation with a dramatic presentation of a well known missionary figure added to the status afforded the new missionaries at the occasion. Missionaries in all stages of missionary family life spoke of this event as life changing for them. Retiring missionaries reminisced about missionaries who shared their appointment service.

The newly appointed missionary has developed over a period of at least twenty years. Appointment is an epiphany and a time for excitedly anticipating the future of missionary family life.

CHAPTER V

FURLOUGHING MISSIONARY FAMILIES

After international missionaries have been on the job for a period of time, they come back to the United States for a short period of two months to a year. This time away from their assignment in an international setting is known as a furlough.

Although many Americans may think of this of a vacation, there is reason to think that missionaries see it differently. In the article “So this is furlough!” Stan and Charlotte Parris describe their experience as a very hectic one. Activities of this family on furlough included getting complete physical and dental checkups for all five members of their family, speaking to 75 churches during the 10 months, attending a World Missions Conference,¹ visiting family members in various places, and visiting prospective colleges with their oldest son.

Joseph L Cannon (1969) echoes the sentiments of the Parrises when writing about missionary furloughs. After being on furlough for a while he states, “We start thinking, ‘Won’t it be wonderful to get back to the field so we can take a rest for awhile?’ Things begin looking good on the other side of the pond..... by the time we get back to the field again, we’re in need of another furlough. A furlough did I say? Forget it! If that’s a rest, what must the work be like? The only chance of getting a

¹A world missions conference is a week of evening meetings involving various Southern Baptist churches in a given geographical area. There usually many furloughing and retired missionaries speaking at these meetings.

rest on your furlough is to plan never to return to the mission field” (p. 37).²

For this study the researcher interviewed three missionary families on furlough. The children of missionaries were interviewed if they were older than 13 years of age. Parents of these missionaries were interviewed when the parents were residing in Oklahoma. The ritual observed for this phase of being in a missionary family was the workshop required of all furloughing Southern Baptist missionaries.

The Families

The MK-Missionary Family

The first furloughing family interviewed was a mother and father with three children, ages 12, 11, and 7. The father had been raised on a farm in Oklahoma. He describes his parents as older when he was born (his mother was 40), and he had two older sisters and one older brother. After graduating from college, he was working in the business area in Oklahoma City where he met his future wife at church. She grew up as a child of missionary parents in Africa. Being the oldest of three children, she accompanied her parents to Africa when she was four years old. The couple was appointed as missionaries in May of 1982. They left for Africa in January of 1983.

²There are some denominations, according to Cannon's account, that do not provide financial support for missionaries while they are on furlough, which adds to the stress of having financial resources for making the trip in addition to living while in the US. The Southern Baptist missionaries salary continues uninterrupted during furloughs. Also, the board provides for the cost of transportation for furlough travel.

He works as a business manager for the mission board in Africa, and she is the health director for Southern Baptist missionaries in the eastern part of Africa. Having been missionaries for 14 years, they have experienced several furloughs. The furlough they were on during the interview was a two month furlough, although they had been on longer ones in the past.

This couple described the process involved in planning a furlough. The mission board's formula is two months of furlough for every 22 months on the field. If one waits for five years to take a furlough, it lasts for a year and a couple of months. The husband stated that the average time on the field before furlough is three years. Also, he indicated that it is up to the individual to decide when to come home.

The wife added that the shorter furlough time was instituted to allow missionaries to come back to the US to attend weddings, graduations, and other family events. She stated that the reason they chose a two month furlough was because her mother-in-law was 85, and they wanted their children to see her while she was still in good health. She further offered that the mission force is aging, and there are many more aging parents of missionaries than in previous years. The shorter furlough option allows missionaries to make more frequent visits to these family members.

The couple talked further about planning for their furlough. They mentioned difficulties in reserving housing and transportation for the furlough period. He stated,

It takes three or four years to plan furloughs ... to get booked in a mission house³ ... to get all the logistics taken care of.

The wife then elaborated on planning their next furlough projected to take place some three years from now.

In this family the maternal parents were interviewed. They retired and now live in Oklahoma City. They served for many years as missionaries in various parts of Africa. For the last few years before retirement, they worked at the headquarters for the mission board in Richmond, Virginia, working as a coordinator for African missions. In telling their family's story, they talked about their experience of being missionaries with children as well as being parents of a missionary family.

The Oklahomans

This missionary couple met while in college. Both were born in Oklahoma. She came from a traditional Southern Baptist family, while his family was of another denomination. After they were married, they attended a Sunday School conference at Glorieta, New Mexico. It was during this week that they decided they would become missionaries. They have three children, two girls and a boy. The youngest was less than a year old when they went to Costa Rica for language school. A year later they moved to Argentina for their permanent assignment.

The main theme of this family's story was related to schooling for their children.

³They mentioned one popular mission house owned by a church in Oklahoma City which is booked up for the next seven years.

Interspersed in their narrative were comments about their parenting role. Additionally, they talked about their children's response to moving frequently and their relationships with extended family remaining in the United States.

During this furlough they were living in missionary housing provided by a Southern Baptist university. During this semester the husband was teaching courses in the religion department of the university. Furthermore, they were the "missionaries in residence"⁴ for the school. Their children were enrolled in public schools in this medium sized town. On the morning of the interview, all their children were in school. The family's oldest daughter, age 14, was interviewed separately one afternoon after school.

The husband's parents live in a metropolitan area about 50 miles from the university which is the temporary location of their married son's family. The parents had three children, two boys and a girl. They talked openly and without hesitation as they offered their perspectives of their family, especially in relation to their missionary son and his family. The mother was the main source of information with her animated husband adding comments for emphasis. They continued talking long after the tape recorder clicked off, as though they were excited about being able to talk about their experiences. Although they talked about all members of their missionary family, it

⁴Many Southern Baptist universities furnish temporary housing for missionaries on furlough in exchange for frequent speaking engagements in various university classes. Also, they speak to social groups on campus as well as many churches in the area.

was clear that their grandchildren were the persons to whom they responded with the most emotion.

The Professional Family

This couple met in Sunday School. He was in law school, and she was working on an education degree. He practiced law in a large city in the western part of the US before deciding to go to seminary to prepare for a religious profession. By his last year of seminary they had 3 preschoolers, all boys. In 1984 they went to Costa Rica for a year of language studies and then on to Guatemala for their permanent assignment.

Their story is filled with episodes of illness--his, then hers, then both of them, and finally their kids. Initially the family lived in a remote area of Guatemala. Their first furlough they described as more of a medical furlough during which they concentrated on recuperation. During that time they considered other assignments in eastern Europe, but finally returned to Guatemala. This time, however, they were assigned to a large city. After several years there, they took a leave of absence to live in Oklahoma for two and a half years before returning to Guatemala.

The husband and wife both discussed the father's relationships with his three sons. The interview was largely devoted to discussions about schooling for the boys. All three boys were interviewed separately. They, too, talked of their school experiences in both a remote area and a large city in Guatemala.

The wife's mother also was interviewed. She told of her own background with deep Southern Baptist roots. Her own words summed it up this way.

I was brought up in a very stout Baptist home. My parents were both Baptists, my father was a deacon and Sunday School superintendent. My mother was a Sunday School teacher, and we continued on in the faith of Baptists and we took the kids to Sunday School all their lives.

This supports the notion that the religious background of missionaries may extend back further than just one generation.

The wife's mother continued her story while her single daughter, who lives with her mother, came into the living room and joined the conversation. The missionary wife's sister is a nurse who was working at night and was just beginning her day in the afternoon as the interview was in progress. The sister had been a short term missionary before returning to the US to live. The mother and sister both had been to Guatemala several times to visit their missionary relatives.

Summary of Families

All three furloughing families were in the first few months of their furlough in the United States. One family had a short furlough of two months, while the other two had longer furloughs. The missionaries were all in the 36-65 age range, as were all the parents except one who was between 66 and 75. All of the furloughing couples were somewhere between 25 and 50 years of marriage.

Four children of missionaries, ranging in age from 14 to 18, were interviewed. All four experienced schooling in the United States as well as in the countries where

they lived. Most of their education experiences were in English. School situations included international or missionary schools⁵ and home schooling with either parents or missionary journeymen⁶ as teachers. All four MKs lived at home during the school terms rather than in dormitories or boarding schools.

The Interviews

Similarities with Newly Appointed Missionaries

Just as the identity of newly appointed missionaries revealed origins in interactions with those around them, so it was with the identity of furloughing missionaries. In their narratives they revisited childhoods steeped in church activities and missions organizations. One slightly different slant was offered by a missionary who was a MK and had spent her early years “in the bush.” Her mother described their setting as a compound with houses of missionaries and a hospital. The daughter had

⁵The difference between international and missionary schools is that international schools usually are designed for children of American businessmen, diplomats, and missionaries. The teachers tend to be Americans living in the country. The missionary schools usually are taught by missionaries or other Americans, but have integrated religious values as well. Sometimes the missionary schools are in a city other than where the parents live in which case there are dormitories that are overseen by missionaries. This latter case is sometimes referred to as boarding school.

⁶The journeyman program is for young adults, usually just out of college, who serve in a country for two years. Their expenses are paid by the mission board, but they are not considered a career missionary, as they have a limited term. However, some journeyman later become career missionaries as evidenced by the testimonies of some new appointees during the appointment service at Glorieta.

fond memories as she looked back on her life there.

I spent my early years standing inside the door of the operating room of the hospital watching them operate and doing clinics and deciding way back then that medical missions was a pretty fun thing.

These stories of these furloughing missionaries mirror those of the newly appointed missionaries in the process of identity formation.

Another way in which the stories of furloughing missionaries was similar to those of newly appointed missionaries was in the verbalization of God's call as vocabulary of motives. Just as some of the newly appointed couples had negotiated marriage with God's call as a missionary, these couples reported similar experiences.

[My wife] had for years felt a call about missions ministry. I had been open to it, but hadn't felt any direct call. Then we began to explore those kinds of possibilities. Then on a Wednesday night at a big screen commissioning service we did at the church, we made commitments to missions. [She] made the first commitment and said, 'I am going. Are you going with me?'⁷ So I went with her. I'm a lot happier with her than without her, so I went.... We had been contemplating missionary calling for a long time, and we had already thought about this and had investigated seminaries, so it was just the moment we made the commitment.

Wife: I felt all along that the Lord was calling me into missions. When [we] met, he hadn't really considered that.... I had really felt like the Lord wanted me in missions, and I decided that after I graduated, . . . I'd probably end up going by myself. . . .I met him and that changed all that.

Husband: . . . her involvement in missions, in effect, got me involved. I came out to Glorieta during Foreign Missions Week one year, and I just really felt that there might be an ability that I could use on the mission field.

Parents of these missionaries honored their children's reports of a call.

⁷The appointment service is videotaped for churches to replay at a later time of the church's choosing.

They both had a sign that they should become missionaries.... We told them, 'If God calls, you'd better answer.'

But he said that was what he felt he'd been chosen to do and so we said if that's what he felt, then that's what he should do, and he should pursue it and go with it.

In spite of powerful motives, the parents of furloughing missionaries remembered hesitations about their children's decisions, much like the parents of newly appointed missionaries had voiced.

When my mother heard that I was pregnant, she said, 'Now that you're pregnant, you won't go will you?'

One mother of a missionary told her story this way.

I asked him, 'There are people here who need guidance, who need help, who need to find the Lord,' and I said, 'I don't understand why you have to go so far to do that,' and he said, 'Well, mother, here there's a church on every corner if someone wants some help, but where we're going, there's not, and that's why they need someone to build churches to help them find what they're looking for.'

However, one difference which appeared in the stories of the furloughing missionaries is that they occasionally voiced a vocabulary of motives that was somewhat less religious for the parents. For example, one set of parents reported that before becoming missionaries, their son and his wife would talk about the grandchildren living in another country. It may have been that the idea of children having an extended education would appeal to these grandparents more than interaction with God.

I think they would always talk about how wonderful it would be if their children could be bilingual and learn different cultures, and they would always say that it would just be marvelous that some day they could do that.

In Mill's (1940/1970) formulation of vocabulary of motive he suggests that motives may change or original motives be added if the new motive wins allies for some action. It is possible that these missionaries thought that the parents would respond more acceptingly to a motive related to educational benefits than one related to a religious supposition.

Like the parents of newly appointed missionaries, parents of furloughing missionaries expressed some pride that their child was a missionary. One missionary's mother asked rhetorically,

What more could you ask but that your child has chosen that way of life? But the thing that helps [my husband] and I through it is the fact that we know it's what they want to do, and they are happy doing it, and they're working for the Lord, and I just don't know what more you could ask to have a child do, you know, I mean, in this day and age with everything that goes on, you just have to praise God that your child is chosen that path to take, you know.

References to parents' call into missions were not present in the stories told by MKs. This is not surprising as the children of missionaries had very little part in the events surrounding the call. In fact, no missionary interviewed mentioned the children as participating in the call.

Doing Activity: Schooling of MKs

Unlike newly appointed missionaries discussing anticipated activities, the furloughing missionaries spoke with authority about their experiences in the missionary role. Topics of focus during interviews with furloughing missionaries were related to either family life while on the field or while on furlough. Common

subjects during interviews related to schooling of the MK while on the field. Both missionaries and their children spoke of school issues, i.e., the decision of where and how to do educational endeavors, activities related to school, etc.

One of the theoretical concepts which further elucidates the school issues related by missionaries is Prus' (1996) idea of doing activity. As one of the generic social processes, doing activity involves the subprocesses of performing activities and making commitments. Both of these processes were reported by missionaries and their children.

Making Commitments

One of the most obvious commitments made by missionaries was in relation to the education of their children while living on the mission field. The process of making decisions related to their children's education is best described in terms of Prus' (1996) proposals of how persons make commitments. The subprocesses which further help understand how missionaries participate in this educational activity are exploring and assessing options, dealing with (any) earlier commitments, organizing routines around particular activities, and neglecting other options ("closure by default").

Exploring and assessing options. Consideration of educational options was a part of the orientation process for missionaries. As demonstrated by the newly appointed missionaries, schooling of children is planned for during the orientation period at

MLC. Depending on whether children are schoolage when parents first go to the field, parents may have time after arrival on the field to continue exploration and assessment of options.

One family, whose children were preschool age when they went to language school, assessed the option of home schooling.

We are not home schoolers; we recognized that right off. We realized that if we were going to be on the mission field, someone else would have to teach our kids because that just wasn't who we were, and we had a lot of great families in our mission who were home schoolers.

Another missionary father echoed these sentiments.

I'm not an educator anyway.... they have to be pretty self-motivated or as parents you have to be pretty on top of that kind of stuff to be able to help them, which I have some sciences background, but my time is pretty limited as far as being able to do education work.

These thoughts are consistent with Blumer (1969) who posits that the assessment of options requires participants of the joint action to be able to think reflexively about their own part of the interaction. In these cases, missionaries were able to picture themselves as teaching their children at home and therefore assessing the situation as undesirable as they considered their role in their children's education.

As another family contemplated their family's educational needs, they reconsidered where to go upon completion of a leave of absence. They had considered going to Mexico rather than returning to Guatemala.

... but the places in Mexico were like home schooling and neither one of us are into that so we thought we should go back [to Guatemala]. Mexico didn't have anything where there was a school, so we thought we'd go back ... The schooling was a factor. In fact, it was a major factor.

An assessment by another couple resulted in a different outcome, that of schooling their children in the public school system of the country where they resided.

That's our goal for the kids is that they can stay in Argentine schools up through grade school so they get they culture and they really, you know, can appreciate the culture, and their language is so much better if they are in that system.... And there's not an international school where we lived, although it is a rather large city. We do have the option ... of a school ran by our mission, but the school is very, very small....

However, for their adolescent daughter who was now through grade school they decided on a home schooling option with a journeyman providing the instruction.

... when we go back the journeyman should arrive on the field about a month after we do, and her responsibilities will be the education of children so I can be freed up.

Dealing with earlier commitments. As they assessed their options, it was clear that the first priorities of missionaries was to their goal to be a missionary in an international setting and to do the work of missionaries. Therefore, their earlier commitment to be a missionary affected choices related to their children's education. Their commitment to schooling then had to be negotiated with that earlier decision.

Organizing routines around particular activities. Once families assessed their options and decisions were made, families then organized family endeavors around the activities related to their children's schooling. One missionary father expressed his involvement in his children's schooling.

As a family, much of our lives the last four years really centered around the life of the school. We were heavily involved in school, school board activities and things for me, but I didn't begrudge any of them. I was very, very thankful to be a part of our kids' schooling.... A lot of times we would be really involved in service days every year where they would go build a project outside the city at

an orphanage or some place like that. I always went as a sponsor with one of the classes or [my wife] went as a sponsor one year.

In like manner, the family, in interaction with school administrators arranged school activities to fit the activities available to MKs.

Medical teams, construction teams, they really enjoyed being involved in those and the school allowed them to get out of school to participate in those things.

Neglecting other options. One option that was not only neglected but almost abandoned was that of sending children to a school out of the setting where the family was living. In the past these children often lived in dormitories overseen by missionary “house parents,” during school terms. This arrangement was known as boarding school.

In more recent times many missionaries have opted either for home schooling or for selecting a setting where an international school is located. This is demonstrated by the following excerpt:

... it would be a boarding school type situation, but we chose not to do that. Besides, it would be about four hours away.

Another set of missionary parents supported this position.

The boarding school ... moved to the city and then shut down. So there was no missionary boarding school in the country, nor is there right now.... I think it was due to two factors. One is the parents wanted to move their ministry to keep their kids in school and live with them. Secondly.... many of them home school, and they don't really need it, and they don't want to board their kids at all. We find there are very few parents who want to board their kids to day at all.

A similar situation was described by a missionary from another country.

Therefore, boarding schools may have become a less desirable choice.

Performing Activities

While missionary parents make commitments related to their children's schooling, the kids themselves take a major role in school activities. Therefore, the actual process of going to school involves interactions between parents and their children. Prus' (1996) generic process of performing activities helps to grasp how missionary families participate in their children's educational activities. Two of the related subprocesses are developing competence and coordinating events with others.

The MKs spoke of developing competence as they discussed their schooling in comparison with other schools. One MK compared US schools attended on furlough and schools on the mission field in terms of how "hard" they were.

Coordinating events with other in their environments were implied as MKs discussed their school activities. In addressing events with others, it was evident that MKs coordinated events with not only family members but also school friends. MKs reported interacting with those friends.

You had a lot of time to be around people, especially since you didn't know a lot of people outside of the community usually. There was almost like a little bubble with the school so most of your friends were from that school. You didn't have a lot of friends that went to other schools or friends from church. I had friends from church but not from my school, and I really never saw them except at church or at certain get together.

In addition the MKs offered their assessments of their schools on the field.

I went to a missionary kids' school. For only missionary kids.... it wasn't a boarding school. It was a pretty good size. My graduating class had 22, and I think it was the largest one to every graduate from the school. Not real big but you know everybody really well.... I enjoyed the time. I really enjoyed it.

Joint Mission Activities

As missionary family members talked about their activities together, patterns of togetherness emerged. These patterns were apparent in light of Blumer's (1969) suggestion that the career of family is built up by a series of actions constructed over time. One father spoke with fondness as he recounted the interactions with his sons during their initial assignment.

I remember our first term⁸ that living in the village and being with the boys, we had a horse. It was a real open life. That was my high point. I loved those years. I don't know that I have ever had any better years.... to me it was as fulfilling as I have ever had in my life, and I think with the boys it was a great place to be.

This missionary's wife emphasized the amount of time her husband spent with their son's activities.

[My husband] spends a lot of time with the boys. I don't think they have any idea how much time he spends with them. I have seen other fathers who don't go to the games. [He] is at almost every game there is.

It is important at this point to note that the missionaries' jobs allow parents to be at home while fulfilling work requirements. This was made apparent by one missionary family's story. The parents stated that they did a lot together as a family which was made possible, in part, because the father's office is located in their house. The perception of their youngest child was that this may not be a positive thing. One

⁸A term refers to the period of time when the missionary was on the field. The time periods alternate between terms and furloughs with the furloughs being the dividers in between terms.

time their youngest daughter asked her mother if she could buy something. The mother's response was that the parents couldn't afford to buy her "new stuff all the time." The young daughter's retort was, "Maybe we could afford it if Daddy would get a job!" At this point the daughter did not appreciate the luxury afforded her by the setting of her father's work.

One missionary couple described how it was possible for their family to be together each evening.

Every evening our family was together. The churches don't have evening services because the churches don't have electricity. Sometimes people have to walk a ways to the service, and they want to be home by dark.

Another missionary couple reported that their job allowed more activities with their children.

Missionaries probably take more holidays than American families. We like to go to game parks. We've done some camping.... I think we probably spend more time together as a family than the average family would ... We've been more involved with our kids because there are not a lot of other outside things to get involved in.

One MK spoke of his cherished memories of family vacations.

What we did together was sometimes when we went on family vacations in the country, we had a mission house out there that we would just stay in. We just went down to the lake and stuff, and my dad was really fond of getting up early and watching the sun rise. We would go down to a little restaurant and order hot chocolate or something and watch the sunrise over the lake and stay up late at night playing cards and just talking and just doing whatever, just for a weekend or like during spring break. I guess that is what we did a lot. That was our main vacation spot.

One MK reported spending a lot of time with family because he couldn't drive.

Mom was always around. I couldn't drive so I was pretty much stuck to the

house when I was there. I didn't have a whole lot of freedom.

Joint activity reported was not limited only to time with parents and children.

Another behavior frequently reported was that of MKs participating in the missionaries' work activities. One MK related that volunteer mission groups came to the area to build needed structures or provide medical services for the nationals where his family lived. The boys often were excused from school to serve as interpreters for the volunteers.

The most interesting family thing was when teams came down, medical teams, construction teams, whatever. We would all basically do something. Actually, I was kind of young when I first started translating. Me and [my brother] would most of the time translate along with mom and dad, and dad would be the coordinator. And [my youngest brother] would do whatever he felt like.

This idea of the family's joint actions fitting together by all doing missionary work was recognized by one missionary husband's parents.

You know, they all, it's not just [our son] being the missionary. [His wife] is a missionary; all three children in their own way are missionaries. And you see that very much.... When you go to different homes and all, the kids are one-on-one with adults or their kids or in church you see them just scatter like you would in your church, you know. But they all, they all work as a family for the same thing. I mean they're all down there doing the same thing, you know, and it's not just [our son]. It's the whole family as a whole.

Interestingly enough, one of the things missionary families often may not do together is go to church. The missionary father may have to go long distances to church or to go to different churches on various Sundays. The missionary mother and children more often settle on one church either close to

their home or one which has more children the age of their kids.

[My dad] went to a lot of different churches. Sometimes I went with him, and sometimes I didn't. Usually the rest of the family did not go with him, but I went sometimes when he went other places.

Another missionary wife gave evidence to similar situations.

Our position is unique in that ... we as a family can choose to be identified with one church and stay there and minister in that one church. Not like someone whose position requires them to move from church to church to church. But, as their kids get older, many of them are finding a church where the mother and the kids could go, and the dad may be the one who goes out every week.

Another hint that there may be difficulty in fitting the actions of family members together was revealed by one missionary parent.

There is a tension between the Lord's work and family. It is hard to balance this. The weekends are busy times for missionaries, and my son had games on Sunday.

An additional comment to this effect was offered by one missionary husband.

It puts stress on the family ... actually doing two jobs. The church planters⁹ may be out 60 or 70 hours a week. In the name of their work, they may neglect their family life.

Support for this perspective was offered by a missionary's mother who had been a missionary most all of her married life.

Being a missionary is hard on family life.... The missionaries have a saying,

⁹A church planter is a missionary whose main assignment is to start churches. These missionaries usually are preachers who may preach at the church until a national pastor can be recruited.

‘What does it profit if you win the whole world and lose your family?’¹⁰

If the kids feel like the parents like their work more than the kids, it’s problematic. There needs to be a balance between the spiritual and family.

Joint activity in the missionary family consisted of parent-child interactions, often including vacations and travel. Many time the activities related to mission work with children working right along with the adult family members. The work of the missionary was sometimes problematic to blend with family life, presenting the family with a challenge in balancing work and family.

Doing Activity: Moving

Another activity reported repeatedly by missionary family members was moving. Whatever home was for the family, it changed periodically. One missionary father described the family’s experience.

[The kids] really got more difficult to move this last time. We just moved into a mission house.¹¹ We have lived in rent houses almost entirely for our career because we have moved so much, and there weren’t any available at particular times.... [The kids] finally got to the point where they said, “I don’t want to move, and I don’t want to leave this house. This is my room, and I don’t want to leave. Two Christmases in the same house was all they had ever done in their lives. So it got to them finally.

His wife then chimed in.

¹⁰This is a biblical reference, specifically to Mark 8:36. “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?” (New American Standard).

¹¹Each major international mission area owns no more than a few houses on the field. Some of the more tenured missionaries tend to live in these houses, while the newer missionaries have to rent from the local options.

And it had gotten to me, too. I was exhausted every time we moved. I was telling somebody last night, "It's not the packing that gets me. It's the unpacking and the decision making of where to put stuff."

Another missionary mother talked about the effect of moving on her children.

It's getting harder though. Our fifth grader still makes friends very easily and very quickly. Change is probably harder for her than anybody, but she is the most outgoing and makes friends. Our seventh grader, it would be very hard for him to go into a stateside school for a short period and then leave. He would find it hard.

One MK included moving in his first comment. After he was asked to tell about his family's life as missionaries, he immediately responded,

Well, first off, I've got two brothers, and we moved a lot. We usually didn't stay in a house for more than a year, but we were in one for a couple of years this last time.

His brother echoed his sentiments.

It is hard to move places. We have moved 13 times in the past 15 years. We are constantly moving.

Another MK stated that moving was one thing she did not like about being an MK.

I don't really like it because I have to move so often. I mean, you normally move really often, and it's not like you lose all your friends, but you don't live as close to them as you used to live, and I don't really like that part that much.

While changing home locations is often a necessary part of living as a missionary family, family members generally do not like that part of their life.

Children were more verbal about their feelings.

Experiencing Relationships with Extended Family

A common topic in narratives of furloughing missionaries were relationships with extended family members who lived “back in the states.” An examination of these stories is assisted by the generic process of “experiencing relationships.” Prus (1996) suggests that “the selectivity and continuity of association entailed by interpersonal ‘bonding’ signifies a vital element in social life” (p. 159). Two subprocesses specifically related to furloughing missionaries relationships with their extended families are evident in their stories, i.e., developing interactional styles and managing openness and secrecy.

Developing Interactional Styles

Once the missionary family leaves the United States, their methods of interaction will probably change due to distance between geographical locations of the family and their extended family.¹² These changes are demonstrated in the following missionary family narratives where missionaries did not attend rituals or family activities which usually are attended by family members.

One family stated it in a general way.

You're just not there for births, weddings, graduation, and deaths.

¹²The exception to having the change style of interaction is in the case of the MK who becomes a missionary while the parents are still on the field. The missionary in this situation who was interviewed acknowledged that her situation was unique. She further added that her parents were with her in Africa when all three of her children were born.

This family's children, however, seemed to schedule graduations and marriages during their parents' furloughs.

Another family was more specific as they talked about not being with family during significant family events.

While we have been on the field this last term, my sister got married and had her first child. I don't know my brother-in-law nor the new baby yet. Also, [my wife's] sister had breast cancer.... [My wife's] grandfather died during our first term, and during our second term, three of my grandparents died.

Most missionaries have contemplated their plans for family emergencies. This was evident in the following comments.

It's very expensive to come home on a spur of the moment type thing because if you can plan several months ahead where you can look for discount tickets, . . . you can maybe come home, do a round trip for \$1000 to \$1,200. When [my wife's] grandfather died, we checked into her coming back and it was going to cost us \$3000 to buy a ticket then for her to get back in time for the funeral.

His wife added,

Before we even left the very first time, we took time to sit down with our parents, and you know, we basically made it clear that we wouldn't be able to come home for family crises. It just wasn't going to be very feasible for us to do that.

The husband joined in again.

Because the losses when things like that start, you know, they're gonna be a continual part of your life. Family members, people are going to be in crisis, and you just can't go home. You can't go to the states every time something comes up.¹³

¹³This family did describe a mission board credit organization that will loan missionaries enough money to come home for family emergencies.

Since this family decided they could not be physically present for these significant family events, they changed the way in which they experienced and expressed their grief. The wife offered her insights.

We miss a part of grieving. It is very different when you are away. Being 10,000 miles away, we thought about what was happening a lot. You don't get to see the pain of other people. You can't be there. You can't physically embrace others. You miss being there for your family.

Another missionary told of seeing her father cry for the very first time when his father died and he could not go back for the funeral.

One of my earliest memories that I ever remember was seeing my dad cry. I had to have been 7 or 8 ... sitting on the couch out at our house when he got word that his dad had died.¹⁴ Back in the early 60's there was no way missionaries could come ... it was too expensive and too difficult. His mother died several years later, and he didn't get to come ... but I was at least 15 or 16 by then when she died. He didn't come home.

When recounting this same event, the missionary's father added that in 1973, just prior to his coming back on furlough, his youngest sister's husband died, followed by his brother's death two weeks later, which was followed by his mother's death two weeks later. Then he said,

We couldn't afford to come home.

His daughter stated that her maternal grandparents died much later, and her mother was able to come back to the US for those funerals.

A traditional time for interaction with extended family in the United States is at

¹⁴Her father stated that his father died in 1962. It was a missionary from town who brought the cable notifying him of his father's death. They family got a phone four years later although the connections were poor.

holidays. One missionary family continued this tradition because of the extended family's making efforts to be with the missionary family during the Christmas holiday.

I think when my mother and dad were able to travel the first term and the second one, they would come at Christmas and then my sister would try to come every year. I think that was definitely the high point. Because when they didn't come, like this last term, when mother didn't come at Christmas time, it was real hard for me.

While not during holidays, another family reported traveling to see their son's family about every two years. This interaction reportedly made a difference for the missionary's mother.

I came back feeling a whole lot better about the fact and just going.... it makes me feel better just to know where they're setting when they have their coffee and . . . just to visualize what they're doing. When [his wife] is cooking, I know where she's at, and when they're eating, I know where they are sitting, and it just makes you feel like you're more a part of them, knowing everything about where they are living and the surroundings of where they are at.

Technological improvements in long distance communications have been used by missionaries to increase contact with extended family. One missionary's mother told of their communication patterns.

We usually talk on the telephone. [Her sister] sends messages once in a while by e-mail. We'll go to the church and send them down, but we did talk to them on the telephone. Got expensive. Costs about a dollar a minute, but we kept in touch enough that we stayed close to the boys.

Some of the most poignant vignettes were told by missionaries talking about grandchildren. They know they cannot relate to these grandchildren in traditional ways practiced in interactions with grandchildren who live in the US. However, they work hard to develop alternative styles of interaction to maintain contact with their

grandchildren.

We missed not seeing the kids grow up. We missed not being able to just talk to them just anytime when they were on their first assignment in that remote area. We had to set up an appointment with them on a certain day that we would call their neighbors, and [our son] had to be there to answer the phone because we could not speak Spanish, and they could not speak English. It made it ~~and~~ like if we had an emergency, you know, because it was hard to get in contact with them. Well, we can now. We can call them. We call them, and we e-mail them a lot because we can e-mail now.

Another family reports sending video tapes to each other.

One grandmother delights in sending packages with lots of little surprises for her grandchildren. She reports sending at least one a month and more during holidays.

Although this family does not interact as much as the grandparents would like, they have adjusted by maximizing the time that their son and family are with them on furlough. They offered vignettes of times with their grandchildren, all who were at their grandparents' house during furlough. The grandfather added that on the next furlough, the missionary couple will be leaving two of the grandchildren in the United States to go to college. The grandfather reported that he told the parents,

It will be our turn to keep the kids while you leave. Then you'll get to see what it's like. That's what I told them. I said you're going to find out how hard it is now. Shoe's on the other foot.

Another grandmother speaking of her grandchildren stated,

It's just that we miss them so doggone bad.

One grandmother worked out a different interactional style with her granddaughter.

I guess it was that time that they were going back, and she was very sad, and we

were in the car, and we always sang “You Are My Sunshine.” That was her and I’s song. And so she asked me one day, she said, ‘Memaw, I’m gonna really miss you,’ and I said, ‘Well, I’m gonna miss you, too, honey, but you know,’ I said, ‘we’re never really apart. We always have each other in our hearts and when we want to talk to each other, . . . you just think about me, and I’ll be thinking about you.’ So [her brother] was telling me this time. He said, ‘Memaw,’ he said, ‘you know one time before we left last time you told [my sister] that we’d always be together in our hearts?’ and he said, ‘She came home running through the house yelling, ‘I’m not leaving my Memaw. She’s gonna be in my heart.’

Perhaps the comment of this same grandmother sums it up best. In telling how she has learned to interact with her son’s missionary family living so far away she stated,

You just learn long distance love.

Although grandparents make valiant efforts to keep in touch with their grandchildren and parents try to keep their children in touch with extended family members, MKs are less acquainted with extended family than their parents. This MK expressed the idea.

I didn’t have that much contact with my grandparents and my aunt, which basically were the relative that I knew.... I have met my dad’s sister and actually two of his sisters, I think, but I really didn’t have that much contact with them.

One missionary’s mother, who was also a retired missionary, described her children’s relationship with extended family. They made an effort to see relatives when on furlough, they exchanged letter and pictures, and their maternal grandmother wrote twice a week. In spite of all of this, the children knew their relatives, “but not that well.”

Managing Openness and Secrecy

One missionary family talked about this aspect of their relationship with extended family members. The wife stated that there is purposeful keeping of information from family members, and she adds that family members do the same.

Our family tries to protect us from the news. We were told on the day of the surgery that my sister was having a radical mastectomy. If someone is sick, they don't always tell us. On the other hand, we don't always tell our family things. One time one of our children was taken to the police station. Another time we took one of our kids to the emergency room. Our families may think that we are not getting good medical care, so we don't tell them.... Also, my mother is a diabetic. No one told me that. It was my brother who said, 'Did you know that mother has diabetes?' You get a lot of third hand information that mother and dad don't tell you.

The vocabulary of motives related to these practices was that the family wanted to protect the missionaries and vice versa.

Meanings Created by Furloughing Families

As missionary family members interact with each other, they create meanings about family life. Three themes emerging from the family member's narratives were the meaning of family, the meaning of home, and the meaning of furlough.

Meaning of Family

In spite of any difficulties families might have experienced, in their final analysis missionary family members expressed the desire for their families to be "close."

I'd say we focused on trying to be a close family, at times really at risk of not doing a lot of social events with other people all the time so we could maintain a time commitment to be together, to be together really throughout most of our family life.

One MK phrased the message in the language of the teenager.

I think we are united. It sounds corny, but I think we definitely love each other, and it's not like we are constantly talking trash about each other.

The goal of being close may have roots in their families of origin. A commonality of these parents was to describe their families, including their missionary offspring, as close.

We have a close, loving, supportive family. We're open with each other. We are happy.... We are open with our expression of love.

All three kids are close to each other. They e-mail each other a lot. They have lively family discussions.

Although missionaries describe their families as close, this meaning is related to either their own families of origin or the nuclear family they have with spouse and children. The same closeness is not characteristic of MKs and their biological aunts and uncles. Since these extended family members are miles away and are not seen routinely, MKs may not feel close to them.

Often, in place of the more traditional relationships, substitution of other missionaries living in proximity to the MK and family occurs. One mother of a missionary stated that her son's children are a lot closer to missionaries on the field than they are to their own blood relatives, noting that MKs call the missionaries "aunt" and "uncle." Another grandmother talked about feelings related to this

custom.

My kids grew up calling friends 'aunt' and 'uncle.' We had dear friends that our kids have just loved so much that they felt they were and still do call them 'aunt' and 'uncle.'... So, you know, we're not threatened by them being close with someone else. I think it's great. I think it's wonderful they can related to other people like that.

However, this is not always the case. One grandmother stated that during the parent orientation session at the appointment service, she resented having representatives from the mission board tell her not to worry about her grandchildren being so far away. She stated her son was told that the children would be so close to other missionaries that they would become their family. The grandmother stated she resented having someone else take her place.

Meaning of Home

In determining the meaning of home for the missionary family, Blumer's (1969) major premises of symbolic interactionism are enlightening. Since he posits that meaning arises out of interaction with others, in the lives of missionaries the meaning of home changes from what it probably was in the United States. Often symbolic of stability in the lives of family members, home for the missionary varies greatly in geographical terms. The definition of home does have a relationship to those in the surroundings, specifically to family member's presence.

In interviews with furloughing missionaries, the family members spoke to the concept of home that they have created. It is interesting to note that parents of

missionaries usually referred to “home” as being in the United States. Missionaries themselves used the term to talk about home in the United States as well as their home in their country of service. MKs tended to talk about home as being on the mission field, and they referred to places in the US as “houses on furlough.”

One family moved 13 times in the past 15 years. The mother’s comment explained how this family defined their home surroundings.

I think because every house we lived in, I think every decoration up on the wall I had, so as soon as I could get it decorated, it became home. I think they are attached to the things that I have for decorations. At Christmas time we have the same Christmas decorations, and every year I get more and add stuff to it. I think they feel like home is where we are and how I make it home.

Generally, all missionaries spoke of their home as where the immediate family resided. There was some attempt on the part of missionaries to keep some elements of sameness in their home environment.

Meaning of Furlough

Interviews with furloughing missionaries support the premise that the meaning of furlough arises out of the interaction of family members with others during furlough. Furthermore, as a missionary experiences furloughs, he interprets the meaning furloughs have for him, evaluates those meanings, and fits them to the furloughing situation which he experiences.

Furloughs according to missionaries. One missionary couple voiced the meaning they associated with furloughs.

While we are on furlough, we are going constantly. It really is not a vacation. It will be a relief to get back to the field. While we are on furlough, we are really on "home assignment." It is not vacation time. We are supposed to be working while we are here at home. Our families don't always understand why you can't come to see them at any time while we are here. Between the two of us, we were at 96 different speaking places in 7 months during the last furlough.

On the current furlough this family had been in the US four days when they drove from Oklahoma to Wisconsin to visit some of her family members.

Another missionary couple spoke of their hectic furlough.

Two months has not been a very restful furlough. I think every furlough became more difficult. I think that the older I get, the more resistant to change I become. This furlough I think I can't pack one more suitcase or look at one more thing. The kids are tired. "Do we have to go? Can't we just go back to Kenya?" A short furlough is good for that because there never is any down time. The older our kids get, the more time they require. You can't shuffle them around as easily. You can move preschoolers, and you can move young children in and out. Older kids complain more.

One family saw furlough as a time to orient their children to life in the United States. This mother stated that her young children had little adjustment going to the mission field, but coming back to the US on furlough was a different matter.

We always spent furloughs in the same place, with my parents. That way the children always had an element of sameness. This also gave them a better relationship with Americans.

Similar to published comments about furloughs in the introduction to this chapter, missionaries rarely refer to furlough as vacations. During furlough they are on "home assignment," meaning they are to work in the United States. This usually mean speaking at churches and conferences during their time here. In addition, they make an effort to see relatives while they are geographically closer.

Furloughs according to MKs. One MK expressed the satisfaction he associated with furloughs.

I really enjoyed furlough. The first furlough was the middle of third grade and all of fourth grade. I went to elementary school in Oklahoma City. I enjoyed it. It wasn't hard at all. My school in Guatemala was much harder. The schooling here was a breeze for me. I just enjoyed being around more people... I really enjoyed being able to walk to a friend's house and that kind of thing.

The same young man related that he also enjoyed the leave of absence taken by his family. During that time he described his involvement with a youth group in the church his dad pastored. Therefore, furloughs for him meant easier schools and more involvement with friends his age, both of which he interpreted as positive experiences. Both of the other brothers of this MK echoed the perception that furloughs were a fun time for them. One brother commented that there was "a lot more stuff here," referring to shopping and entertainment.

Another MK had mixed feelings about furloughs. On one hand she could get things in the US that were not available in Argentina, like Butterfingers. On the other hand she hated being away from all her friends in Argentina. Additionally, she expressed some difficulty with telling her peers in the US about furloughs.

It's hard to explain why you are moving back to Argentina in six months after you just got here and exactly what your parents' job is, stuff like that.

MKs furloughs may be filled with fun times, providing opportunities to be with groups of American peers. However, MKs were not as animated when they reported leaving friends in the country from which they came.

Furloughs according to parents of missionaries. Furloughs for parents of

missionaries are unquestionably times of joy, for their children have returned home, if only for a brief time. One missionary's mother told her story in relation to furloughs.

I guess that's one thing that when they are at home, we get to be with them so much, because they live with us usually the first couple of weeks, you know, until they can get into a home, so this time they were with us almost a month. And that even made it harder. [Our son] said, 'Oh mom, that'll make it easier because you'll be so glad when we are all out of here, but I told [my husband] when we came back from the airport, the house was like a tomb. It was just so quiet.... They didn't ever get to stay long enough, you know.... We just make the most of the time while they are here.

This family has established a family tradition for when this son and his family are home.

Each time they come home we try to get all of our kids together where we can take family pictures.

These parents look forward to the next furlough with eager anticipation.

We can't wait now for the next four years. That's the thing and they go back, you just look forward to, you hate for time to pass, especially when you're our age, but it still, you still hope for it to hurry so that they can come back.

The only set of parents not approaching furloughs as a time of happiness were parents who had been missionaries themselves. They described furloughs as a time of "instability." This certainly highlights the difference in experiences of the parents of missionaries and other nonmissionary parents in relation to how those differences contribute to opposite meanings attached to the furloughs of their children. For the former parents, furlough has been a time of physical presence with their son and his family, including lovable grandchildren. For the parents who have experienced many furloughs themselves, a dissimilar view emerges. Having packed their own children

and moving them from one country to another, furlough involves a hectic schedule while moving children from place to place.

Furloughs, then, are joyous occasions for most parents of missionaries, while the missionaries and their children may not look on this time with quite as much elation. The furlough does provide time for the missionary family to interact with extended family members and reorient themselves to the American culture which used to be home.

The Ritual for Furloughing Missionaries: a Conference

All missionaries on furlough are required by the mission board to attend a conference specifically for these missionaries.¹⁵ Missionaries on their first furlough must attend an eight day conference at MLC. There are sessions for MKs as well at a full session. Since more missionaries are now attending these conferences, the board has started conducting sessions at locations outside of the Richmond area where the mission board offices are. These sessions are a shorter version of the conference, lasting two and a half days. The staff person in charge of these programs stated that the board presents full eight day conferences six times a year at MLC and the shorter conferences three times a year “on the road.”

¹⁵Although the mission board has been conducting these conferences for several years, the requirement of this conference for all furloughing missionaries was instituted in 1998.

This particular conference was held in Dallas, Texas, June 12-13, 1997, at the Dallas Grand Hotel. This location was convenient for both board members and missionaries in that the conference was held two days prior to the annual Southern Baptist Convention, in Dallas in 1997. There were 35 missionaries attending these sessions. A few of these were retired missionaries for whom the conference is an optional activity.¹⁶

The mission board coordinator explained that the purpose of the conference is to provide training, debriefing sessions, spiritual renewal, and fellowship opportunities for participants. During these conferences, a photographer from the board also updates the pictures on file at the board. Official photographs often are used for publications with “prayer calendars” displaying the missionaries on their birthday at which time Southern Baptists are asked to pray for those specific missionaries.

Interaction of Furloughing Missionaries

There was always a lot of interaction before and after sessions as well as on breaks. Some missionaries were meeting for the first time. Almost every introduction involved conversation like, “Oh, do you know so and so? We were appointed with them,” or, “we were in seminary with them.” For those missionaries who knew each other from previous meetings, the conversation went more like, “How’s so and so?”

¹⁶Most of the retired missionaries still were active in international mission work as volunteers. Therefore, the content of the conference would be applicable to them.

or, “How are your kids?” It definitely was a time for catching up on each family’s situation.

Tools for Creating Impressions

Setting

The hotel meeting room was arranged much like a workshop or other conference setting. Sitting on the parquet floors, tables were covered with white tablecloths. Tables were arranged in rows with individual chairs placed on one side, all facing the same direction. On the table were pitchers of iced water with glasses at each individual’s place.

Props

At the front of the room were items common to an educational setting. A podium was at the center front with a blackboard (actually a white dry erase board), an easel with paper, and an overhead projector with a screen located behind the lectern. What was more reminiscent of a professional meeting room was the sign of the hotel on the podium and the crystal chandeliers lighting the room.

The importance of music to Southern Baptists was evident in that a moderately sized grand piano was placed at the right side of the front. This prop fit with the Baptist Hymnals place at each table by the meeting coordinators. While Bibles were not on the tables, many participants brought their own Bibles much like a student

bringing a textbook to class. Also, the president of the mission board held a Bible while he was speaking.

Costumes

This meeting was much more informal than the appointment service for newly appointed missionaries. The speakers, most of whom were mission board personnel and male, were dressed in short sleeved shirts and slacks rather than the more formal white shirts, ties, and suits.

Staging

The speakers all stood at the podium at center front of the room. There was a microphone on a stand which aided in hearing the speakers. The room was small enough that there was not a lot of distance between the speaker and the audience. This arrangement was in keeping with the informal mood evident in the dress of the presenters as well as the participants.

The Audience

The audience for this presentation was different from that of the appointment service. In the appointment service missionaries were actors, where in this conference missionaries were the audience. Also, the appointment service was open to the public, and the attendees were the audience. This conference was not open to the public.

Therefore, the main members of the audience were missionaries with some secretarial staff also attending. This resulted in a much different sized audience in the two events. In the appointment service hundreds of people were in the audience, while in the conference, only 35 persons comprised the audience.

Unlike the appointment service there was no difference in levels between the actors and the audience. In the appointment service there was a stage, which was on a higher level than the audience. In the conference, presenters and members of the audience sat on the same level with only a few feet between the first row and the presenters area. This may have been designed to promote interaction between presenters and audience during more informal sessions of the conference. Certainly this setting implied that board executives and missionaries were all on the same level and that board executives wanted to interact both verbally and nonverbally with the missionaries.¹⁷

Preparation

Although preparation for this conference was not observed, it was clear that the actors in charge of the conference had completed activities prior to the conference. Hotel arrangements were made, rooms were ready for presentations complete with hymnals and packets of materials for the participants, and water pitchers were on the

¹⁷One of the verbal indications of this was when the president used the term “we missionaries.” He also pointed out that his daughter was currently working as a journeyman in Bulgaria.

tables. The actors delivered their lines without hesitation as though their speeches were well prepared. Everything was ready for the presentation!

Program

The first afternoon was a short session consisting of introductions and overview. All sessions began with participants singing a hymn together, reading from the Bible, and prayer. Usually preceding the prayer, the leader read the names of missionaries having birthdays on that particular day. Two hours were allowed for supper, allowing missionaries to visit over long dinners. The evening session consisted of a sermon, usually not more than an hour in length.

The second day began with the familiar routine of hymn, Bible reading, missionaries names, and prayer. This morning session was conducted by the "Senior Executive Team," abbreviated SET. These actors included the president and two vice presidents of the board. Each of these officers presented a short speech about the "current state of international missions." This tended to be an update of new programs and progress reports of other programs which were a part of the mission board's strategies for mission work.¹⁸ Following the presentations, missionaries were encouraged to ask the executives questions, which were then answered by the appropriate member of the SET. This was somewhat analogous to the press

¹⁸Two interesting statistics reported to the missionaries were that 590 new missionaries were appointed in 1996 and that missionary retirements are diminishing after peaking in the past 10 years.

conference televised from the White House on a national level or the governor's office on a state level.¹⁹

After a two-hour lunch break, two workshops were offered for participants in the afternoon. One was on "Managing Conflict Creatively," and the other was "Principle of Supervision." Both topics tended to relate to the occupational behaviors commonly reported by international missionaries. The workshop sessions each lasted an hour, followed by a session entitled, "Mid-Career Dynamics." These were closed sessions in which missionaries had opportunities to problem solve situations in their field assignment settings.²⁰

Another two hours were allowed for dinner, followed by "spiritual emphasis" by the president of the mission board and his wife.²¹ These presentations ended the day's planned activities.

The third day began with another hour and a half of workshop presentations. The same two topics were offered. Each topic was a continuation of material

¹⁹This is not to imply any similarities between media reporters and international missionaries in this setting except for their question asking behavior.

²⁰While the mission board leaders were usually most generous in their permission to attend sessions, the researcher was asked not to attend this session in order for missionaries to maintain confidentiality about problems on the mission field. This was one way of making these conversations definitely backstage talk.

²¹It is noted that in most Southern Baptist circles, women do not "preach." They may "speak" or "bring a devotional thought," but they usually do not "bring the message," although all these terms are interchangeable for a male preacher's presentation.

presented the day before, rather than being repetitious, which would have allowed participants to attend both sessions. After a 30 minute break, a session entitled, “Missionary Support” was presented. This was a presentation about financial aspects of income to the mission board. Also, a staff person went over medical benefits for missionaries.²²

After lunch, the missionaries attended closed group sessions according to their country of service. The groups offered included Eastern and Southern Africa, West Africa, Middle American and Canada, Brazil and the Caribbean, Southern Asia, East Asia, and Middle East and North Africa. These groups were designed for debriefing and problem solving situations on the field. The final afternoon consisted of the last workshop sessions and a motivational talk by one of the board vice presidents.

The Impressions Created

One characteristic of this conference was the curious blend of business and religious messages. As one of the stated goals was “spiritual renewal,” missionaries participated in church type services with everyone singing and preachers preaching. However, sometimes immediately after the prayer the content of the session was more of a business nature with the primary goal of imparting information. This impression was imparted by the setting itself, a hotel meeting room with hymnals on the tables.

²²This session was to inform missionaries about managed health care, a concept new to most missionaries who left the US before managed care was a part of their medical insurance.

The dual nature of the conference was evident also in the stated goals for the conference. The training and debriefing sessions were designed to complete business oriented activities, while the spiritual renewal presentations promoted the religious perspectives. The process encouraged in this conference was one of interaction between board executives and missionaries as well as among the missionaries themselves.

Joint Action of Missionaries and their Employers

Two aspects of joint action as discussed by Blumer (1969) are important to a further examination of this conference. First, defining of joint action includes “the larger collective form of action that is constituted by fitting together of the lines of behavior of the separate participants” (Blumer, p. 70). This conference is action between group members, namely representatives of the mission board and their employees, the missionaries. As in other businesses, it is important to leaders that workers are “on the same page,” or as Blumer indicates, that the lines of behavior fit together. The geographical distance in this missionary enterprise may present some difficulties in that the board is located in the US while all the missionaries, except those who happen to be on furlough at any given time, work all around the globe. Therefore, it is important for board executives and missionary workers to interact for the purpose of fitting together their actions.

Secondly, Blumer indicates that in this process of joint action, one party must interpret and define the lines of actions from the other persons prior to continuing his activity in the interaction. This is the case for both the mission board and their missionaries. That is, missionaries must hear and interpret messages from their leaders before they decide on their own activity. In a like manner, the mission board must hear and interpret the messages from their missionary workers before they decide on their activity. This reciprocal process of listening and responding then produces the interaction between the corporation like group of mission board staff and the missionaries.

It is suggested here that the purpose of the conference designated as the furloughing ritual is designed to promote joint action between the mission board and their employees. They must be able to participate in this face to face interaction to fit their actions and behaviors together.

There are several examples of the mission board talking to the missionaries as they gave them information related to the board's activities. For instance, one vice president talked to the missionaries about the board changing its name from the Foreign Mission Board to the International Mission Board.²³ Another example was the report of the amount of money given to missions by states. The top states were

²³The motive for this change was stated that the word foreign connotes that the "others" are in a lesser role. While this may be the stated motive, it is interesting to note that international is the term used by more global enterprises in the larger business world. Perhaps the name change is a way to stay in sync with those participating in endeavors of a similar scope.

listed by per capita giving, by the percentage of increase during the past year, by the amount of increase in actual dollars, and by the total dollar amount.²⁴ Also, the executives had formulated "Basic Principles" for the mission board's operation. These were presented to the missionaries. (See Appendix X). One vice president's part of the presentation closed with the vision statement of the board. "We will lead Southern Baptists to be on mission with God to bring all the peoples of the world to saving faith in Jesus Christ."²⁵

Another vice president presented the objectives of the mission board. An example of those is "to reach every people group in World A²⁶ with the gospel in the shortest time possible and to establish churches that can continue to evangelize each people group." This issue revealed that the lines of missionary action and the lines of the mission board were not "fitting" in relation to the emphasis missions in certain locations. As was evident in the objective presented by the mission board, the goal was for new attention to be given to places in the world where there are few if any

²⁴For 1996 the top state in per capita giving was Mississippi, the top state by percentage of increase was Minnesota, the top state in increase in dollars was Texas, and the top state in terms of total dollars was Texas.

²⁵Many churches are now in the process of what businesses have done in the recent past in terms of the process they call strategic planning or long range planning. Usually a part of this process is the formulation of a vision statement, goals, and objectives prior to planning annual activities.

²⁶The mission board defines World A as geographical regions that do not have any access to Christianity in that there are no Bibles, Christian churches, or other visible signs of this religion. The figure reported was that 31.5% of the world's population is in World A.

Christian missionaries or mission work currently. While this sounds like something any missionary could endorse, the conflict arose in the awareness of the missionaries' perspectives. If the priority is on World A, then money and new missionaries will have to be sent to those areas. In order for this to take place, fewer missionaries and less money will be channeled into present mission work.

During the interaction between the missionaries and the board executives, missionaries were concerned about mission work where they had labored and were currently involved no longer receiving support. It was obvious the missionaries had become attached to the people and the countries in which they have lived and worked.

The response of the mission board was that for the past 10 years there has been a trend to turn current mission work over to the nationals as much as possible, thereby eliminating the need for extensive works in these areas where Christianity is now well established. In their responses, missionaries voiced insecurities about leaving these areas.

While the interaction observed did not resolve this issue for these groups of people,²⁷ it is obvious these meetings were designed to address this kind of question. It is clear that executives of the mission board are working to move in the direction of World A, and also the leaders would like the missionaries to not only support this goal, but help them work to achieve it. The president of the mission board later asked

²⁷The speaker who conducted the conflict resolution workshop session stated that missionaries tend "to gloss over conflict." An interesting question is what process will be used to help these joint action lines fit together.

the missionaries to mention the need for new missionaries in these areas when the furloughing missionaries go into Baptist churches and youth groups in the US to speak. This activity sound like a recruitment effort to enlist young people to these new fields.

The Call of God as Motive to Decrease Attrition

The theme of the call of God in the missionary's life was evident but this time in the ritual rather than in the interview with missionaries. When the president's wife spoke one afternoon, she talked about the missionaries being "people who have that call on their lives." Her message focused on staying with the call which was experienced when the missionary first applied for this work. The speaker identified "opposition" and spoke of extended length of time before one sees outcomes as designated situations causing missionaries to not be happy in their work. Her suggestion then was to "pray that you find joy in your journey."

Certainly the presentation was intended to manage the impression related to God's call. In the time identified by this speaker as "midpoint in the career" of missionaries, the possibility exists that as common workplace conflicts and problems occur, missionaries may interpret these and a lack of positive emotion as a sign that they are not responding in a way God would want. This follows their past experience of positive emotions related to experiences around deciding to become a missionary.

A certain amount of management is needed in order for missionaries to reinterpret the call of God enough to keep them on the mission field but in a new configuration which allows for all the difficulties attached to the daily work on the field. In this case, the management comes from a powerful person, the wife of the mission board president. The president also participated in this management as he stated that missionaries are “people of God struggling to know the mind of the Almighty.”

If the wife of the president promoted impression management on an emotional level, the president himself continued the theme with a more cognitive approach. He stated, “One of the most effective testimonies may be how missionaries respond to difficult times.” The dramaturgy of this statement is apparent. The emphasis was on what the audience needs rather than on the actors.

The remainder of the message was positioned around “lifestyle witnessing,” a way to communicate the principles of Christianity by nonverbal behavior rather than by preaching, the more common behavior associated with missionaries. In a dramaturgical sense and in consideration of the missionaries as the actors in their settings on the field, this concern underscores the importance of the actors staying in the role when on stage. Experiencing stresses is a part of the role, as is how the missionary-actor responds to those problems.

Certainly the point was strongly made that staying on the field is a part of continuing in the role. The president talked about how sometimes missionaries do not

want to return to the field after furlough. His comment about that behavior was to not let the problems of life “infringe upon your freedom of ministry.” He gave an example of how a missionary family had a child with a drug and alcohol problem.

Even though they were concerned about their child, they trusted God and returned to the mission field. After furlough they were willing to be obedient to the will of God. You can support family life in other ways, but stay on the field.

Clearly this was an attempt to address the attrition of missionaries.

Family Issues Discussed During the Conference

One of the times in the furloughing conference when family members were the focus of the group was at the beginning of each session when the moderator would ask the missionaries to quickly identify good things that had happened to them in recent times.²⁸ One response from a missionary was that she “got to see our eight grandchildren on a three month furlough.” Another response was that one missionary celebrated his father’s ninety-first birthday with him while on furlough. Another missionary stated that “the Lord led my son back into church.” One comment was that a family of four had been separated from their children in college for a year, but now they are with them again. A young couple voiced that their children had the opportunity to spend time with their grandparents. It was evident that the missionaries were thinking about their family members on this furlough.

²⁸In some Southern Baptist circles these brief responses are called “popcorn testimonies,” in reference to the hope that they begin quickly and do not last long.

Another reference to family members was noted in the informal conversation with a board employee. He identified four groups of persons who were in need of attention by the department. There were (1) adolescent MKs and MKs on furlough, (2) “special” MKs, e.g. those with learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, and those gifted, (3) adult MKs whose parents have decided to become missionaries after their children are grown, and (4) families with aging parents, especially when the missionary is the only child or the responsible child in the family.

On one of the breaks a female missionary talked to the researcher about how hard being a missionary was on her family. She reported that her son had been on alcohol and drugs in the past. Furthermore, she said her daughter had once said that she did not have “a home to go home to.” She described furloughs as a tense time.

It gets harder and harder to leave the kids and grandkids. All the time everyone is thinking in the back of their heads about [when we go back].

Summary

Interviews with furloughing missionaries reveal that these missionaries, like newly appointed missionaries, have backgrounds steeped in Southern Baptist traditions. As children they went to church and mission activities. Furloughing missionaries also report God’s call for them to be missionaries very similar to new missionaries. However, their vocabulary of motives related to family transitions tends to be less spiritual and more practical.

Unlike newly appointed missionaries, furloughing missionaries talked of their children's schooling and family activities related to their children's education. (See Figure 2.) Prus' ideas related to making commitments and performing activities are substantiated by the missionaries' narratives. Blumer's concept of joint action also was exemplified by the activities of missionary family members. The children as well as the missionaries participated in mission activity, and family members reported doing many projects together. Moving was another activity reported frequently by especially children of missionaries.

Relationships between missionaries, their children, and their extended family are characterized by how they develop interactional styles which tend to be different due to distance between groups. Even their method of expressing grief changes on the mission field. The families also spoke of how they manage openness and secrecy in relationships with extended family members back in the US.

The meaning of families created by missionaries include the closeness reported by most family members. More temporary is the meaning of home which missionaries attempt by something of sameness carried by the family from house to house.

Furloughs tend to be viewed as much more than vacations. Considered to be on "home assignment," missionaries consider furloughs hectic as they speak often and travel extensively during this time. MKs, on the other hand, tend to enjoy furloughs until they begin missing their friends "back home." Parents of missionaries relish

THE PROCESS OF BEING A FURLOUGHING MISSIONARY FAMILY

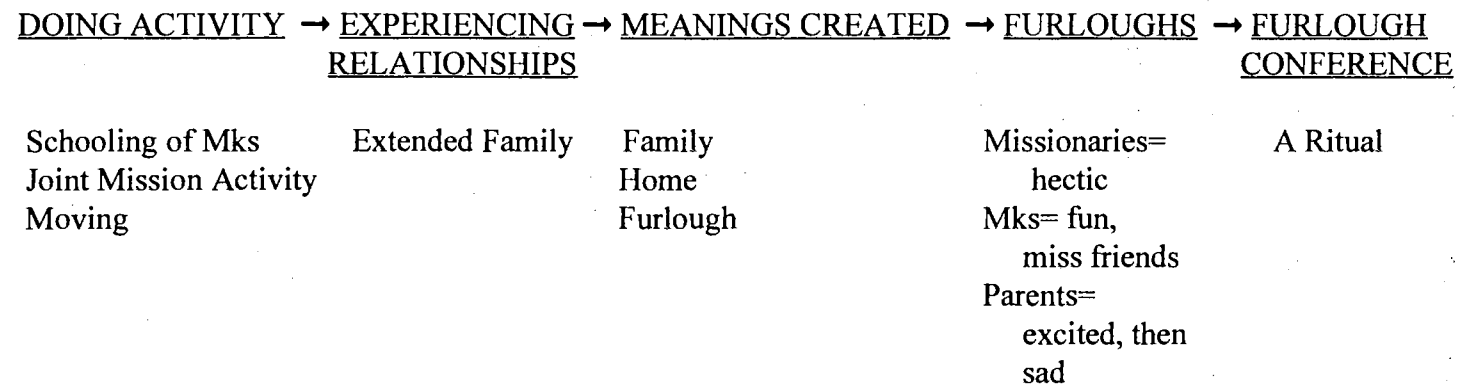


Figure 2. The process of being a furloughing missionary family.

this time but experience some sadness as time draws near for the missionaries to return to their assignment.

The furlough conference required of all furloughing missionaries is primarily a time when interaction occurs between the mission board and the missionaries.

Information is given to the missionaries who become the audience, as the board executives, or the actors, to encourage missionaries to stay on the field despite family difficulties. The call of God once again becomes important as vocabulary of motives. The main time for family concerns to be expressed was during testimony or prayer times or on breaks in informal conversations.

Furloughs are a time to come back to the US, but missionary family members have mixed feelings about these times in their family's life. The business of the furlough often makes returning to their assigned country a welcome journey.

CHAPTER VI

RETIRED MISSIONARY FAMILIES

The retired missionary families reminisced as they told of being appointed as missionaries, going on furloughs, raising children, and sending them off to college. Now they are experiencing several new processes at once, retirement and coming back to their native culture which they often describe as foreign to them. Even though they periodically have come back to the United States for furloughs, they talked about how much the country has changed since they were part of the American culture.

Relationships with family members once again are affected by this episode in the missionaries' lives. Children have come back to the US for college and then have decided either to transition to the way of life in the United States or to return to the more familiar society in which they grew up. Children who choose to live in the international setting often become missionaries themselves. Relationships with the missionaries' parents also have changed, and many parents have died while the missionaries were on the field. Parents still living find the connection with their missionary adult children different from that with other adult children.

The Families

Three families told their stories of becoming retired missionaries. The families had been missionaries in Chile, Thailand, and Korea. Parents of two missionary

families told their stories, and five MKs were interviewed. Of the MKs three were adults who had established their own home, and two were in college. One of the five was single and had been appointed as a missionary in the appointment service described previously in this study. Three MKs were born outside the US. While all retired missionaries had gone to school in the US, their children had most of their school experience outside of the US except for a few years here during furloughs.

All three missionary couples had been married between 26 and 49 years. One missionary couple was newly retired and had just returned to the US, while the other two couples had been in the US for more than five years. As they compared their return to the US with changes surrounding their appointment times, retired missionaries often voiced the sentiment that adjusting to the US was even “harder” than when they initially adapted to their international assignment. These are their stories.

Survivors of a Coup

These missionaries lived in Chile for 35 years. The wife describes herself as being very young when she left the US, at least “younger than most missionary wives these days.” She was 27. Their children were one, four, and five and a half years old when they left the US.

Their first assignment was in a remote area of Chile, and both missionaries and the wife’s mother talked of how difficult communications were between Chile and the

US. Family members were able to speak to each other about twice a year via ham operator. The mother mentioned how difficult it was to discuss anything with that system.

The family planned all along to send their children back to the US for college. The timing was altered, however, by a coup in Chile in September, 1973. Because of uncertainty within the country, the missionaries sent their daughter back to the US in August of that year for her senior year of high school rather than waiting until her college entry.

When the missionaries retired to Oklahoma City, the wife's mother was the only parent still living. She also lives in Oklahoma City and was interviewed for this study. The missionary couple has one son pastoring a church in a Spanish speaking area of Texas. Their other son and his family have returned to Chile as Southern Baptist missionaries. Both of their sons have children. Their daughter teaches Spanish in high school in the Oklahoma City area. The daughter was interviewed as a part of this study.

The Thai Family

This missionary couple went to Thailand as missionaries when they had one child, a daughter. The other three, one son and two younger daughters, were born and raised in Thailand. The mother described in detail the experience of home schooling her children. There was a verbalized effort on the part of these parents to raise their

children with some knowledge about the US.

The children attended a combination of Thai schools in the first few years of school, home schooling during the next few years, and boarding school in the high school years. Two of the daughters were interviewed. One daughter told of leaving home at 13 to go to school which was an eight hour train ride away from her parents.

The MKs in this family experienced some difficult times. The oldest daughter had been diagnosed with epilepsy at some point, the son had a brief experience with drugs, the next to youngest daughter had a serious car wreck after her first marriage, although she did recover to a limited extent, and the youngest daughter described a life of "sacrifice" as an MK. The two older children live out of state, while the two younger daughters live in Shawnee and an Oklahoma City suburb respectively.

After serving in Thailand for 39 years, the family thoroughly reflected the Thai culture. The missionaries' house was located near a Oklahoma pond and was built on the side of a hill. One side of the house was on the ground while the opposite side of the house was on stilts. The couple told of having monthly meetings for Thai friends that they have met in Oklahoma City. They related that Thais love to come to their house because it reminds them of their homeland.

The inside of the missionaries' house also contained artifacts from Thailand, and the furniture had been purchased while the family lived there. There were family pictures on one wall. The wife proudly showed off the picture of a Southern California scene, similar to her memory of her own childhood in that area. She stated

that wherever the family lived, she made sure that picture was displayed signifying that they were at home.

Family in Transition

The third family had been missionaries in Korea for 23 years. The wife had felt called before the husband. After his decision to enter missions, the couple applied to the mission board and initially went to Bangalore, India. However, after almost six months of difficulty with personnel who were already there, the couple transferred to Korea, where they remained the rest of their career. The ages of their boys were eleven, seven, and four with one other boy born a month after they arrived in Korea.

This couple served as educational missionaries. She taught English in a boarding school for MKs, and he taught physical education and coached at the school. They both had been teachers prior to going to the mission field. Because they continued in educational roles while on the field, they were able to stay in the same city throughout their assignment, thus allowing them to live in the same house during their time in Korea.

The wife's mother also was interviewed. She told of the difficulty of saying goodbye to her only daughter shortly after her own husband died. In fact, both mother and daughter told of how the daughter wrote a letter relating her call and their subsequent decision to go into missions. The daughter gave the letter to her brother who then gave it to their mother.

Of the four male MKs in this family, one married an MK from another country. The wedding was described by several members of the family as a mission family event. Another son spoke of applying for a two year term with the mission board. Yet another son was appointed as a missionary to Korea during the appointment service described in a previous chapter. He described this family as having one missionary going out and another coming in. Two of the sons were interviewed.

This missionary couple was a part of the emeritus recognition service provided by the International Mission Board. They attended sessions at MLC during the week prior to the service. The interview was conducted with the family after they returned to Oklahoma City. They were living in a missionary house of a church there but were in the process of buying a house in the area.

The Interviews

Comparisons with Newly Appointed and Furloughing Missionaries

As they told their stories, the retired missionaries echoed many of the themes voiced by the newly appointed missionaries and the furloughing missionaries. Commonalities included an experience where parents had promised their children to God, the acquiring of the missionary perspective, the call of God to missions, and the response of parents to their children's leaving.

Promise Experiences

The development of a generalized other which contributes to a person becoming a missionary is often related to experiences of a parent who interacts with the Divine in some way about her offspring. This characteristic was noted in narratives of newly appointed missionaries and also in the retiring missionary stories. One missionary told of her writing a letter to tell her mother of the decision to become a missionary. In her letter she referred to a story told to her by her mother.

When I was very young, I was sick. My mother prayed and told God that if He would heal her baby, she would dedicate her to the Lord. When I wrote the letter to my mother, I reminded her of that event.

Another mother of a missionary told of dedicating her child to the Lord but also spoke of how difficult it was to follow through with that commitment.

... I had dedicated my children to the Lord, but when you do that, you don't think of where the Lord might take them, and this I didn't quite understand.

Just as other parents of missionaries had family stories related to promising God that the child would be dedicated for a special purpose, parents of retiring missionaries had similar narratives.

Acquiring Perspectives

As was common to the stories of newly appointed missionaries and furloughing missionaries, the retiring missionaries related personal histories filled with church going and mission activities as children. One missionary stated that she grew up in

church and subsequently first felt called into missions about the age of 15.

Another missionary told of her own family background related to church and missions.

My parents had been thinking about being mission volunteers themselves, but it was during the depression, and they couldn't send anybody out then. They didn't tell us that until we were appointed because they didn't want to have any pressure on us.

Another couple related some activities in their adulthood which contributed to their mission perspective.

I ministered for nine years ... and was reading literature on missions, doing study courses¹ on missions and just came to the conclusion we would seek overseas appointment.

The MK who recently was appointed as a missionary revealed a different manner of acquiring the missionary perspective.

Personally I think that I was born to be a missionary because of the experiences. I adapt real well to different cultures. Hong Kong will be the fifth culture I've lived in, so ... I like going to different places. I feel more comfortable sometimes overseas than I do here, and I haven't really been in one place for more than three years since we left the states the first time. Just keep moving, move, furlough, comeback, move to a different place, furlough.

Even though the manner of acquiring the perspective was different for an MK, there still is evidence of past experiences which contribute to the formulation of the missionary identity.

¹Southern Baptists for many years published small books, each containing a series of lessons on a selected topic. Typically, a church would meet every night for a week to study the lessons in a book taught by either the pastor of the church or a special speaker. This format was known as a "study course."

The Call

The importance of the call of missionaries by God was evident in the lives of retiring missionaries as it had been in the others. One couple related their experience of call in relation to their being a married couple.

I married him without his feeling called. I knew he was not called at that time, but I didn't know how all that would work out.... We often discussed missions and were active in church work.... [One Christmas] our church was having a Lottie Moon emphasis. I was in the choir, and he was sitting in the congregation. On the way home we began discussing the service. That's when he felt called.... We had read an article about different countries needing educators.

One new issue related to call which appeared in the narratives of retiring missionaries was whether or not the call of the parents included the call of the whole family or just the parents. One retiring missionary stated very directly that the call of God to him and his wife did not cover their children. Another adult MK who had grown up on the mission field stated,

There is a lot of dysfunction in missionary families.... I often thought, 'You are the ones who are called, not me.'

Whether they felt called or not, all family members of retiring missionaries participated in missionary work, as reported by furloughing family members. One missionary wife clearly perceived the whole family as the unit of missionary work.

The family is one of the best ways of witnessing. Some missions require that the kids go off when they begin school so their parents can do mission work. There's a misconception of what mission work is.

While the point of discussion is whether the call of God is extended to cover the whole

immediate family unit, there is no question that missionary couples could specifically describe their own call.

Support from Parents

Even though parents of missionaries may have found it difficult to say goodbye to their children and grandchildren as they left the United States, they often verbalized support of family members, much as had other missionary parents. One parent described her situation.

I wasn't against them being a missionary at all. I just knew that I was going to be alone.... It was two weeks after [my husband's] funeral that she wrote a letter but gave it to my son so he could read it to me, because she knew that I would be crying. And he did. And I did. It wasn't that I didn't want them to do it. It was just a whole lot of shock. My husband's death and then her going away and going into training and all.

This mother's daughter acknowledged that her mother was lonely but stated that her mother never tried to make her feel bad about leaving. The missionary husband's mother was not quite as sympathetic.

Every time we would see her she would say, 'This will be the last time you see me.' She said that in 76, 79, 80, 83, 87, and 89. It kind of became the family joke. She finally died in 1990 at the age of 93.

One missionary's mother spoke in more detail how she went from not understanding her daughter's leaving to the point where she could accept it.

My thoughts were that ... Lord, there is so much to be done here. Why send them off somewhere, and I really felt that way ... We didn't understand why it couldn't be closer. We, we were behind them 100% even though we didn't understand. We were supportive, but I can't say that we didn't want to help the Lord out in His business a little.... I just wasn't ready to accept that in my life,

and, well, this went on with a dialogue between the Lord and me for a long time. We had some pretty good talks, but finally through praying and seeking the Lord's guidance in my life and making me understand it, I came to understand that they had to follow the dictates of their hearts where the Lord was leading them. So I finally did just turn them over, and when I did that, I had a lot of peace of mind.

Another couple expressed their appreciation for parents who were supportive.

With their encouragement we really had something ... We were both very fortunate to have parents who backed us up.

It was obvious that every missionary treasured the support from their parents.

Doing Activity: The Role of a Missionary Parent

One parent expressed his opinion of raising children on the mission field.

I feel like we were fortunate, and by God's grace, and I just feel like the mission field was a lot easier to raise children. I would hate to try to raise children in the United States right now.... I am grateful that they didn't have the peer pressure on the mission field that they have here or would have had here.

Just as newly appointed missionaries anticipated that parenting would be easier in a foreign country than in the US, the perspectives of retired missionaries reflected a preference for parenting on the mission field.

The missionary family often told of their children's schooling as an important part of family activity. One missionary family was able to remain together at home although their children attended a missionary boarding school since the missionaries were educational missionaries at the boarding school.

One family reported a combination of national schools, boarding schools, and home schooling. With pride the mother described her home schooling experience in

which she worked very hard to recreate the school environment she had known as a teacher in the United States.

I put my certificate up on the wall, and I had a school room. When they walked into that room, I was [called by my last name.] We had regular hours. When they disobeyed, they had to go see the principal.... We had the king and queen's picture in our school room. We had the president's picture, as best we could, and we saluted the American flag.... We took field trips.... dairy farms, different manufacturing places as part of our school work.

Certainly schooling was a major activity for the missionary families.

Developing Interactional Styles

In a manner similar to that of furloughing missionaries, retiring missionaries told of having to figure out how to interact with extended family members they left behind in the United States. All reminisced about how technological changes in communication through the years made contact with family much easier in more recent times. The family from Chile told of talking with family members once or twice a year by ham radio when they lived in a "remote area."

The families described efforts to connect their children with grandparents in the United States. One grandmother expressed her gratitude in the following way.

[They] kept their pictures, our pictures, before them to pray for every night and until they really never, they never lost that secure knowledge that we were their grandparents, and I've always appreciated that.... Grandparents don't have to be left out of the lives of missionary grandchildren if it's worked right.

Not only did grandparents in the United States but also missionaries away who had grandchildren in the states verbalized this sentiment.

I am grateful to [our son and his wife] because since we were out of the country so much during the early life, they kept us alive to the girls, and they worked at it, you know, talking about Nana and Papa and being sure that there were calls. So when we would come back to the states, the girls seemed like they knew us. It wasn't as if they didn't know who we were, and I know that took an extra amount of energy to do that.

What was different between the retiring missionaries and other missionaries was that retiring missionaries talked about children who had returned to the United States, had married, and now had children who lived miles away from their grandparents.

We had grandkids while we were over there. We would send video tapes back and forth. They'd sing and dance for us and draw pictures. They still have the habit of writing. We got one just the other day.

Grandparents and grandchildren worked on keeping in touch.

As with other missionaries, retiring missionaries recounted missing significant events with extended family in the United States. One mother told of missing "all of [her son's] graduations." That son has a doctorate. Another MK reported that her mother was not present for her high school graduation,² although her mother did attend the daughter's college graduation.

Another missionary couple talked about when their parents died.

When our parents passed away, we were not able to come back to the funerals. I missed both of my parents' and [my husband] missed his dad's.... I think that was the hardest.

Being a missionary for these families required missing family rituals which are a part

²This MK, unlike others in this study, was sent to the United States for her last year in high school because of a coup taking place in the country where the missionary family lived.

of most families' interactions.

Meanings Created: Home and Family

Like furloughing missionary families the retired missionaries talked about their homes. One missionary couple living in a temporary house at the time of the interview proudly pointed out an oil painted picture of the house they lived in during their tenure overseas.

Another missionary couple also pointed to a picture which served to define home for their children.

One thing we always did is that every time we moved to a new location with our family is that we would take this picture here and hang it up immediately. This southern California picture that someone painted for us. 'We're home now.'

The parents worked to make their situations a home for their families.

While the furloughing missionaries talked of missionaries becoming family for the families away from extended relatives, the retiring missionaries spoke of this occurrence even more. One missionary wife expressed this way.

It was a difficult process leaving our family here, but I think after we got to the mission field, it is really true what people say. The mission family does become your family, because that is where your support comes from.

Another missionary wife expressed similar thoughts.

I'm sure our children probably felt closer to the missionaries than they do our own brothers and sister because it is hard to keep up with that much of an extended family when you are so far away.

One missionary reported that her brother in the United States resented his nieces and nephews calling other missionaries “aunt” and “uncle.” One missionary’s mother also spoke of disliking her “replacement” by other missionaries. This is dissimilar to parents of newly appointed missionaries in this study who voiced an appreciation for these relationships for their missionary children

This family’s relationships with other missionaries was noted in the reference to MKs. The MKs refer to each other as cousins. One family spoke of these relationships.

I don’t think our kids ever dated another MK.³ They said they were too much like their brothers and sisters. I don’t think that we had any of our MKs to marry MKs from our country, but we had some marry MKs from other countries. They were just their cousins, and we were their aunts and uncles.

Their daughter agreed with this perspective.

It’s just the way we feel. The other missionaries, all the MKs call them aunt and uncle. Like they were our family, and the other MKs were our cousins. That was kind of like the family that we see, feel, and be with. The other blood kin family was back there in the states, and you try to get to know them.

The other daughter in this family extended the relationship with missionaries to their return to the United States.

Even any missionary from any country, I feel instantly close to, just because they have had the same types of experiences in another culture--culture shock--and the things you do being a missionary.

³This was a phenomenon described many times. MKs tend not to marry other MKs from their own country. It is as if they view MKs in their own country as “blood cousins.” When MKs do marry each other, they tend to have parents who have served in different countries. The distance in living arrangements seems to dilute the perception of other MKs as family members.

Another MK stated that she is able to establish ties with MKs easier than with other people. She maintains connections with MKs by phone and letter occasionally. The Chilean MKs have an annual get together which they started about three years ago here in the United States.

One family told of their son's wedding in their assigned country. They identified other missionaries who helped with the wedding as "the mission family."

Our second son got married in 1990. The whole missionary family provided the wedding. They started dating at mission meeting.⁴

One of the other sons described his brother's wedding as an international event.

It was an international wedding in that there were people from all over the world who were there, missionaries who happened to be in town, and they came, and it was a fun time.

Another example of how missionaries define other missionaries as family was noted in the comments of one missionary parent who went to visit her daughter in Chile.

When you go there as a missionary parent, I mean, you're everybody's parent.... I mean if you're somebody's mother or dad, you're just everybody's mother and dad, and I said I never had so many, so many brunches.

Many of the missionaries spoke of spending holidays with other missionaries.

Like other missionary families in descriptions of their families, retiring missionaries as well as their parents and their children repeatedly used the word "close" in their narratives. This designation is duplicated even though MKs often talk

⁴Mission meetings were reported by missionaries to be a time every year when the missionaries from all the countries in a region got together for business as well as social interaction. Several MKs mentioned mission meetings as valued times.

about their fathers being away from home much of the time.

One missionary father told of a letter they had received from their son.

[He] wrote and said, 'You may be 6,000 miles away, but we are closer than some people here in the United States are in the same room.'

Often family members supported their description with reports of activity

together. One MK stated it as follows.

We did a lot of things together. We'd go out on picnics.... We did a lot of stuff together.

The same MK later attributed the family's closeness to good communication.

We are a family who communicate a lot. Interested in what each other does We're not afraid of giving advice. We're not afraid of saying, 'Leave me alone.' . . . If anyone has a problem then the others rally around that person, and we try to help out.

Another MK from a different country reported many activities which the family did together.

We had a family night every Friday night. We had a lot of picnics on Saturday. Weekends were family time.

One mother attributed their closeness to the lack of television.

We've had a good close family, and we probably had more family life ... more than people here. We've had a lot more influence on our kids. They didn't have TV.

One daughter in this family suggested that the culture in which they lived promoted the togetherness they experienced as a family.

Maybe that's what produced the family togetherness. They felt the need for family being together and supporting one another, but that went along real well with the Thai culture because in really Thai families family togetherness is very, very important.

One MK described her family as close as she returned to the US in her adult life and compared her family with other families around.

We are pretty close. Probably more so than most families. We spent a lot of time together when we were there earlier and were home all the time. I thought all families were like that, but more as I am meeting people at work or my husband's work, I'm realizing it more and more. Some of them get along, but they are not close the same way.

These reports concur with Walters (1991) who suggests that MKs value about family life are much different from American youth. The MK usually experiences a very stable family in spite of many difficulties. They often express difficulty in understanding the relative instability of family life in America.

One of the joint activities of most missionary families interviewed was vacations. Both missionaries and their children fondly spoke of vacations taken in other countries.

Another thing that we tried to do was we would take a special vacation in Thailand every year, and we would go to the mountains to the north and to the beaches in the south or to interesting old places. A lot of our great vacation spots were in the mountains in north Malaysia. We would go down and spend a week or two at an elevation over 5,000 feet ... all these tea plantations ... and walk through the jungles and such.

Taking vacations together was definitely an activity MKs remembered with fondness.

Characteristics Unique to Retired Missionary Families

Although there were many commonalities in the three groups of missionary families, there were some issues which surfaced in the retiring families which did not appear in interviews with newly appointed or furloughing missionaries. These topics

were seeing missionaries as ordinary people, issues related to MKs, renewing relationships with relatives in the US, and matters specifically related to retirement.

Identities over Time

A recurring theme was in the perception of others that missionaries might be someone considered to be special. As they addressed this issue, missionaries displayed an ability to see selves as objects. The view of self did not match with the view of others who considered the missionaries and sometimes their family members as bigger than life itself.

One such example is demonstrated in the interview with missionaries who had contact with members of the Peace Corps.

I guess about half the time we were there we had Peace Corps. Some of them we related to real well. Others did not want to have anything to do with us at first.... They had this misconception of a missionary. They'd have to overcome that. You have to let them know that you are a real person.

Another MK described his family as normal in contrast to being something special.

To me we're a normal family. That's the first thing I think of. It's a normal family experience in that being Christians they did what they were supposed to do. They did what God wanted them to do, and as a Christian that's what you're supposed to do, and I don't see our family any different than any other family. It used to be that if we were a Falls Creek⁵ or someplace, and people found out that we were missionaries, they'd start gushing over them, but because they though

⁵Falls Creek is a Southern Baptist youth camp located in the Arbuckle mountains of Oklahoma. During each session the planners have missionaries from several different countries available to interact with the youth.

they were extra special, and we're going, 'Oh, brother!' . . . That kid of makes me uncomfortable because we're not, I don't see us as being special. I just see us as normal people doing what we're supposed to be doing.

This corresponds with the perspective verbalized by Kyle Parris, MK, in the article, "Kyle Goes to College," in The Commission, January, 1989. "I am a freshman just like anyone else going here. I don't want any special favors. I'm not ashamed--I don't think anyone is--of the fact that they are MKs. But a lot of times it is hard because we are picked out from the crowd. You know, this kid has spent all his time growing up overseas. It singles you out" (pp. 17-18).

A comment from one missionary father interviewed in this study may give evidence to why some missionaries are thought of as being different from the normal family.

We tried to be very positive about missions. People are not perfect. Missionaries are not perfect, so there were some interpersonal relationships with other missionaries, when maybe something would happen, but we never let our children in on any of that. They may have found out, but we didn't tell them. We just felt like it was better to be positive about things.

This kind of thinking is indicative of Goffman's notions about impression management. While this family practices the management of information in relation to their children, it is possible that missionaries in general make decisions about information related to their identity to communicate to others. In light of earlier comments, it seems as though while missionaries try to create a positive impression, at the same time they want to be seen as "real" or "normal" as opposed to experiencing an elevated position in their world.

Perhaps the impression was not managed as well in some families as in others.

I could have been a missionary. I thought about it so much when I was in college. Then I thought I wanted a normal family.

Although she did not see her family in a position of higher importance, one MK did see her family as something other than normal.

Issues related to MKs

In interviews with retiring missionaries many references were made to missionary children, most of whom were adult children at this point in family life. Two specific topics surfaced repeatedly. One, reentry issues of missionary children, usually was mentioned in relation to when the MK came back to the United States to go to college and the parents returned to their assigned country. Another matter related to the dual cultural identity of a child who was born of American parents and who lived most of life in another country.

Reentry issues. These reentry issues of MKs are apparent in the literature (Gray, 1995; Walters, 1991; Pollack, 1987; Viser, 1986). The experience of leaving parents in the host culture and coming to America to live has been termed “reentry” by these authors. Walters (1991) further delineates “furlough reentry” when parents come back to America for a relatively short period of time and “permanent reentry” when adolescents entering college come to America without anticipating return to the host culture.

In the interviews of this study one missionary family experienced the reentry of their son prior to college years. The family was on furlough the son's senior year in high school, and at the end of that school year the son graduated from an American high school. His parents stated that one of the son's disappointments was that he was not able to graduate from the international school he attended on the mission field. These feelings were similar to the MK who returned to the US in before her senior year due to a coup where her family lived.

Other MKs interviewed experienced reentry when they started their college education. One set of parents verbalized an understanding of the MK situation as they reentered the American culture.

The kids born overseas ... we'd come home every four years, which we did at first. Then they'd have a full year at home ... full school year. Home one year out of five. By the time they came back for college, they've only been here in American four or five years, if that much. They are really not up to the American way of life.

In most cases parents anticipated the culture change for their adolescents and made plans to help them make the transition. One family spoke of how most MKs have not had jobs as many American teenagers have. The vocabulary of motives was that it would be unethical to take jobs away from the national population. Also, the legal driving age usually is older in most other countries, and many times parents think the traffic is unsafe for young drivers. Therefore, many teenagers come back to the US not knowing how to drive as they enter college. Furloughing families also had talked of sending their children back to the states during summers between school

sessions on the field to prepare for this transition.

In some cases parents provided situations where MKs could practice skills needed when they would be traveling alone between their family's culture and the US.

One thing we did was to get them ready for that travel. We would get them airplane tickets and let them fly to Malaysia. Then we'd drive down and meet them there, and they'd have to go through customs. They would have experience then of handling the flight by themselves.

Once the MK was in the US, there were difficulties related to the differences in familiar family life and unfamiliar college life. One MK reported hating dorm life.

Her mother related the same event in more detail.

I realize that because our children were with the family and they were home a lot, that made a difference in their social life when they got back to the states.... Like our daughter, she loved to draw and read, and she was an artist, and she was by herself a lot, although they had friends. One of the most difficult adjustments back in the states was dorm life. She couldn't stand all the noise and never having anytime. I remember one time she just decided she wanted out of the dorm, so we gave her permission to move out of the dorm.

This family closeness was evident in another MK's story about his reentry. He talked about the difficulty he had as he stayed in the United States and his parents left him to return to Korea.

I was here, and they were on furlough, and then they went back to Korea. So I drove them to the airport, and then that, that was kind of an uneasy feeling. I know, I watched the plane take off, and then went back to school, and so the first few weeks were kind of, I don't know, it was just kind of different.... I knew I'd be seeing them pretty soon. I didn't know how soon, but it was kind of, it was uneasy for a while, but I got used to it, and now it's not easy to leave them, but I'm used to it, and in a way I can kind of mask the pain, or the disappointment or the uneasiness and just by thinking about other things ... the things that we're going to be able to do. I'm used to it now. It's not any big deal, because I know within a couple years we'll be back together, and we'll have a Christmas together or something.

This experience is consistent with other MK's accounts of loss of personal relationships with parents, siblings, other missionary family members, and national friends when they leave their country to return to the United States as described by Walters (1991). She furthermore asserts that separations are repeated experiences. "When they are not leaving their parents, their parents are leaving them as their furlough comes to an end, and they [the parents] again return to the mission field" (p. 23). Gray (1995) extends the objects of loss to include not only relationships but also meaningful places, culture, and lifestyles.

Missing family relationships, which have been described by MKs in this study as "close," was a common report of MKs returning to the US without their families. One mother surmised that perhaps this was the reason for a son's marriage at what she perceived as an early age.

I think it show up maybe in [our son] marrying so young, and some of the other MKs have done that, too. They come back to the states, and they are used to having home, and I think sometimes they marry young just so they can have a home unit.... He was 19 and she was 18.

Dual cultural identity of MKs. Upon returning to the United States MKs are confronted with perhaps the most glaring of differences. Living in the culture of the United States is often different from living in an international culture for most of their developing years. These cultural variations were evident in the testimonies of MKs and their parents.

Anticipating that their children would one day return to the United States, missionary parents told of ways in which they presented American cultural patterns

while their children were living in the midst of nonAmerican environments. The same family who had both American and Thai flags in their “schoolroom,” also made sure their children knew about American holidays.

We celebrated all the American holidays and all the Thai holidays. I wanted them to know about both.

Another family mentioned the holidays as a way of imparting American culture.

We tried to observe the American holidays and the Chile holidays So we had lots of holidays. We didn't want to lose the American culture, and at the same time we wanted to identify with the culture in which we lived.

The dual cultural nature of missionary life was noted in the comments about language in the home.

We had a rule we would speak English in the home, and that was so they would not forget English, unless we had a Spanish guest, and then we spoke Spanish.

Thus in celebration of holidays and in the family's rules about when to speak what language, MKs were able to acquire the perspectives of the American culture.

One striking contrast was seen in adult MKs who had lived in Thailand before returning to the United States. One daughter had recognized this difficulty even when coming back for furloughs.

Furloughs were challenging. It was exciting but at the same time confusing and stressful. Because we were coming back to a country we were supposed to be from. We're Americans. We're coming to America, but we were born and raised over there, and our hearts were there. I still to this day call it home. I still miss it. You see the pictures and stuff on the wall. I feel like an immigrant.

Another adult MK admitted that she still felt more at peace when she was in Chile than when she is in the US, even though she had lived in the US for 24 years at the time of

her interview. She was born in Chile, and left there at age 16.

The missionaries from Chile spoke of ways in which their adult children have been influenced by the Spanish culture in which they lived.

[Our kids] always spoke Spanish to each other. Even today when they get together they get in a heated conversation, they will switch to Spanish. They express themselves more in Spanish.

In this family all three adult children work in a Spanish related environment. Their oldest son is working with Spanish speaking churches in Fort Worth, Texas, their daughter is teaching Spanish, and their youngest son has returned to Chile as a missionary.

Gray (1995) defines MKs as “third world kids.” This is “someone who has lived for a substantial time in another culture other than his parents’ home culture. This individual has a foot in the present culture and one in his parents’ culture” (p. 15). Walters (1991) further suggests that MKs are relating to two separate culture but may not feel a part of either culture, thereby resulting in a third cultural category. In the same reflexive manner of the symbolic interactionist, Walters suggests that MKs “begin to question the ‘self’ intensively. They feel that they have no choice but to deviate from the cultural and social norms of their host countries in order to begin to adapt to the American culture” (p. 106).

Renewing Relationships with Parents

One of the missionaries interviewed described how family interactions were

different since her retirement.

I think we have a lot more time to be with like brothers and sisters. Our daughter has been really glad we have been able to spend more time with her because I think we have always felt maybe she got the raw end of the deal cause she had to kind of get shoved out of the nest so soon. So we have enjoyed being able to be with her.

This family activity is a part of the generic social process of “renewing relationships,” a subprocess of the major process of “experiencing relationships” (Prus, 1996). This statement also is an example of the support which Ebaugh (1988) says is necessary from significant others for a positive adjustment to a role exit such as retirement. Not only are family members supportive of the retirement, but also they have the opportunity to increase interaction with family members who often have been absent for family events in the past.

Another mother reported that due to the lack of interaction with her adult daughter through the years, she did not have the kind of relationship she would like with her daughter. Her words were, “She doesn't know how to be a daughter.” The same mother stated her relationship with her granddaughter was more like a mother-daughter relationship as the granddaughter had lived close to her most of the granddaughter's adult life.

Retirement as Role Exit

The three families interviewed were missionaries who had served on the mission field and had returned to the Oklahoma City area after retiring. While talking mostly

about their families, they often alluded to this significant change in their own lives. Earlier in their lives they made the decision to leave family in the United States to go to foreign places to live with their young children. Now they have returned to the United States after many years after parents have died or grown older and children have established their own families and even may have decided to leave to go to the mission field themselves.

Helen Ebaugh (1988) suggests a process of role exit which includes persons who are retiring. She asserts that “role exit is a social process that occurs over time” (p. 23). In delineating stages in this process, she posits that one exiting a role disengages from one role and then commits to a different role, often related in some way to the role from which that person exited. These ideas correspond to those of Prus (1996) who identifies “becoming disinvolved” as a generic social process as well as “becoming reinvolved” (pp. 154-55).

One of the factors discussed by Ebaugh (1988) as important in the decision to exit a role is family members. It sometimes is a family member of the retiring missionary who has provided missionaries with an acceptable reason for returning to the United States. One missionary mother referred to her daughter who had been in a serious car wreck several years ago as one of the reasons they “needed to get back.” Another of the interviewed missionaries moved her ailing mother into their home. Other missionaries participating in retirement ceremonies identified the presence of family members in the United States, both aging parents as well as married children

with grandchildren, as reasons retirement seemed appealing.

Perspectives of retirement. While discussing retirement specifically, one retiring couple expressed their perspective of this stage in their life.

We just feel it is a normal time in life that comes, and we are enjoying it. I'll put it like this. All my life I tried to find out what I wanted to be when I grew up. I found it. It's retirement. His wife then added her continents.

Also, I just feel like even on the mission field, it is time for new ones to come in and things are different, and let them do their thing.

One MK talked about how the United States had changed while her parents were on the mission field.

Mom and Dad's homeland was where they were born and raised. It changed while we were there. When you think how the US was in 1955 versus 1997, the change they had to adjust to. 'Hey, wait a minute, is this the country that we came from? It's all different.'

Retiring couples often discussed aspects of their former culture which they missed upon returning to the United States.

[I miss] the beauty of the country and the customs. Afternoon tea time is a big thing in Chile.... I got so excited about reading in the newspapers, you know, you've got all these tea rooms... They are not tea rooms; they are lunch rooms. They are open from 11-2:30, and it's not even tea time until 4:00, so it's not really a tea room.

These comments reveal the difficulty for the missionary whose time has arrived for becoming disinvolved. It is as though the missionary was attempting a reinvolvement with American culture, which she found dissonant with her previous experiences.

Role residuals. Even though they are retired, missionaries tend to volunteer for other short term assignments or continue their missionary related roles in the United

States. They live out their version of the common saying, “Once a missionary, always a missionary.” The retired missionary from Chile went back to his former assignment for five months. When reflecting on this activity, he stated,

We won’t go back for such a long time. Five months is too long.

This comment is significant as Ebaugh (1988) has observed that once one has shifted reference groups during the role exit process, extended role residuals become rather difficult. “There are simultaneous consequences for the group one is leaving that also make continued membership problematic and less a viable option” (p. 109). Although not specifically stated by this retiring missionary, it is very likely that the group to which the missionary returned had already said goodbye to their former missionary colleague.

The missionary wife, however, hastened to provide a vocabulary of motives for her husband’s comment.

I think that is because probably we have been here long enough, and we were still in the midst of getting our house together and everything, and of course, we went all during the months that were summer here, which means you have to have somebody to take care of your yard and all of that. So things like that make a difference.

This missionary husband is currently pastoring a church in the area.

The continuation of missionary type activity is further explicated by Ebaugh’s (1988) investigation of exes’ role alternatives from which to select a new role following the exit of a previous role. She states, “. . . translatability of skills and interests was a major factor in determining which alternatives were explored. This

was most obvious among the occupational exiters who tended to consider alternative jobs or careers in areas related, at least tangentially, to what they were doing” (p. 93).

This behavior leads to what Ebaugh (1988) identifies as “role residual.” This designation is defined as “hangover identity,” that is, “aspects of self-identity that remain with an individual from a prior role even after exiting” (p. 173). This work on role residual provides the impetus for further examination of retiring missionaries.

Some of the factors which contribute to this identity continuation are time in a previous role, the training and preparation for that role, and the centrality of the role to a person’s identity. The total time missionaries have served in their missionary role was from 23 to 39 years. The longer the time in the missionary role, the more their retirement plans mirrored their pre-exit work. Missionaries who had served 23 years were the educational missionaries did not mention any intent to continue educational activities in their retirement. However, the couples who had served for 35 and 39 years were both continuing work with the cultural group they had worked with in the international setting or in a church setting. Preparation for the missionary role described in the newly appointed chapter includes college preparation, seminary requirements, appointment process, and orientation sessions. Because of the length and intensity of the preparation period, role residual is not a surprise. Finally, the role of missionary is central to the person’s identities. Not only on the field are missionaries identified as in their occupational roles, but also when they come “home” on furlough, the missionary designation follows them and dictates their activities.

Summary of Characteristics of Retired Missionaries

While retiring missionaries told stories in many ways similar to those of newly appointed and furloughing missionaries, there were some unique characteristics of their families' stories. The description of missionaries as real people in normal families was raised by family members.

In addition missionary families spoke of issues specific to MKs. Those included reentry issues and the dual nature of cultural identity of children who have been raised in a foreign culture only to return to the United States for college.

The missionaries themselves spoke of various aspects of retirement. Included was the renewing of relationships with members of immediate and extended family. Also, missionaries presented evidence of disengaging from their cultures of many years and reinvolving themselves in the American culture, which had changed since their departure many years ago. Furthermore, the process of retirement is illuminated in examination of the emeritus recognition service provided for retiring missionaries.

The Rituals of Retiring Missionaries: Debriefing and Ceremony

Most missionaries interviewed planned the timing of their retirement for the end of their "final furlough." Therefore, when leaving for the last furlough, the family would not return to the country but would stay in the United States for debriefing sessions at MLC and a retirement recognition service at the conclusion of those

sessions.

For the purposes of this study the debriefing sessions were attended in the spring of 1997 at MLC outside of Richmond, Virginia. The retirement service was held at a Southern Baptist church in Richmond.

The Debriefing Sessions

Debriefing sessions were held primarily in the auditorium at MLC. The auditorium is a curious blend of a religious room and an educational setting. There is a Christian flag on the right side of the stage area. Baptist Hymnals were placed in every other seat, and a medium sized grand piano was placed to the left of the podium which had a microphone placed in front of it. The arrangement was much like the front of a church sanctuary. In this room were individual desks, like one would find in a schoolroom, arranged in horizontal rows for participants. There were dry erase boards to the left of the podium area with the potential for educational presentations as well as worship activities. This auditorium provided the setting for the main sessions for the retiring missionaries.

Down the hall from the auditorium were smaller classroom type areas named for various parts of the world, e.g., Asia, Europe, South American, etc. Smaller groups met in these areas, according to the place where the missionaries served most of their time with the mission board. Small groups met about once a day for the purpose of talking about their concerns in the geographic areas they were leaving. Former

missionaries acted as facilitators for these groups. The researcher was asked to not attend these sessions.

Beyond the auditorium was the cafeteria area. Meals were served buffet style with the conference participants sitting at round tables with about 10 places per table. The north side of the dining area was all glass, looking out on a green grassy area. The researcher ate meals with the missionaries as they talked about their families. Between the hall and the auditorium was a sitting area with smaller conversational areas grouped by comfortable chairs and couches. This area provided for much of the informal conversation with missionaries at MLC.

Sessions usually were presented by former missionaries who were now administrators with the mission board or former MKs. One session titled, "Opportunities for Continuing Service," emphasized how much the retiring missionary is needed for voluntary service in the United States. The speaker said, "Only your country and culture has changed. You're still needed."

Other sessions were provided for business purposes. The Annuity Board⁶ presented information to help participants make financial decisions related to retirement and the filing of related forms. During this session the definition of retirement was presented as "a missionary over the age of 65, over the age of 62 plus

⁶The Southern Baptist Convention owns and operates the Southern Baptist Annuity Board, an annuity corporation which provides for the management of retirement funds for Southern Baptist pastors, missionaries, and employees of other Southern Baptist agencies such as state organizations and universities.

25 years of service, or age 60 plus a disability.”

The defining of the age for retirement is important as Ebaugh (1988) points out that the time frame for one's exit from a work role is affected by the degree of institutionalization of the exit. Many pastors of churches are not provided with a formula for retirement. However, the mission board operates more like a business by providing a formula for retirement benefits. “Most companies either specify a retirement age or at least expect employees to retire at a given time” (Ebaugh, p. 199). Thus, while the vocabulary of motives is the call of God, the occupation itself has been institutionalized much as other jobs which provide retirement expectations and benefits.

Another debriefing session was provided by the mission board physician, a former MK himself. He spoke to the participants about chronic problems sometimes occurring in a retired population. These conditions included arthritis, estrogen replacement therapy, prostatitis, nutrition, etc.

The retiring missionaries interacted with each other with much enthusiasm. As they sat at the dining room tables, they shared pictures of family members, mostly children and grandchildren. They talked of those with whom they had been appointed. They spoke of where they would be living in retirement. Only briefly did they mention those people they were leaving behind in a country where they served for many years.

Two elements of these sessions are better appreciated when considering Ebaugh's suggestion that a group exit is preferable to a "lone exit." The camaraderie of the missionaries offers support during this time of change. "It is easier to make a role change when one is not unique and realizes the company of others" (Ebaugh, p. 201).

Another of the benefits of these sessions is the facilitation of information exchange among group members. Ebaugh (1988) proposes that "Organizations, as well as social institutions, create awareness contexts for their members, that is structures that allow or inhibit the free flow of information among members themselves" (1988, p. 200). These sessions at MLC the week prior to the retirement ceremony allowed the retiring missionaries to exchange retirement information with each other as well as with representatives of the mission board.

The frequent reference to other missionaries with whom they had been appointed emphasized the meaning of appointment for missionaries. The importance of appointment supports the notion of that time being an epiphany for the missionary, even years later when retirement approaches.

Another issue surfacing during the informal conversation times was the meaning of family for missionaries. They often spoke of other missionaries as family members. One example was a woman who went to the mission field after becoming a widow. While on the mission field, she was notified that her daughter, son-in-law, and their two children had died in a car wreck. She identified other missionaries as her

“missionary family,” who provided support for her during her crisis. She was very popular among her missionary colleagues. Many stopped and visited or joked with her frequently during mealtime.

The conversation related to where missionaries would be living in retirement exposed the problem of defining home. One couple specifically stated that they had no home to go home to now that they were retiring. Retirement for missionaries involves not only an occupational change, but also a change in residence.

Role residual was encouraged by representatives of the mission board as they prompted the retiring missionaries to stay active as volunteers for the mission board. The four main activities mentioned as possibilities for the retirees were praying, recruiting other missionaries, raising money, and returning for short term activities in international places. A brochure entitled “Be a Volunteer” was included in a packet of materials given to every participant.

Emotions expressed by missionaries were best represented by a retiring missionary from South America who spoke with ambivalence about her impending retirement. She talked about her children and grandchildren with warmth, smiling as she stated she was looking forward to being close to her grandchildren. However, her facial expression changed as she discussed her feelings of sadness as she left her friends, both missionaries and nationals, in a country far away. She stated that she and her husband would be busy in their retirement, but they would miss their friends.

The Emeritus Recognition Service

Just as the observed appointment service was conducted in a church setting, the emeritus recognition service also was held in a church. The actors were similar also in that the main players were administrative representatives from the mission board, including the president. However, in contrast to the appointment service, the retirees were members of the audience rather than actors on stage. In addition to the retiring missionaries, the audience was comprised of retiring missionaries' family members as well as members of the church.

The Setting

The setting was an auditorium containing seven sections of navy colored padded pews arranged in a semi-circle. Several rows of pews are marked "reserved" in the sections immediately to the right and to the left of center stage. The stage was accessible from the congregation but was separated from the lower level by three layers of steps. Artificial greenery divided the platform from the choir loft. A large orchid colored flower arrangement was placed on the right side of the platform.

Seventy-eight flags from around the world lined the walls behind the platform area. On the left side of the platform was a black grand piano, and an organ was on the right side. Two microphones were placed on the podium, one on the left and one on the right.

The Prelude

Upon entering the auditorium, one was handed a program which on the front cover was printed, "Emeritus Recognition Service." At 7:00 p.m. the organist began playing a prelude. Shortly after, the choir marched in from doors located in the rear of the platform into the choir loft. The choir wore rose-colored robes with white stoles. After all singers were in place, the choir director gave the signal for the choir to be seated. The choir director then sat down in a seat in front of the choir but behind the chairs on the platform.

Four men in dark suits walked up the steps to the stage area, sitting in chairs on the platform. They looked out over the congregation or looked at their programs during the musical prelude.

The Program

The first speaker was the president of the International Mission Board. He welcomed the audience. Then he talked about the purpose of the service, emphasizing that the missionaries who were retiring were "called from your churches."

As the president sat down, another man on the platform led the congregation in singing the hymn, "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty." As the singing began, the flag bearers marched down two aisles with flags in hand. Between each two flag bearers marched one missionary or missionary couple. The audience remained seated as they had been instructed to do by the previous speaker. The missionary males were all dressed in suits and white shirts, while the women were dressed mostly in suits but

some in dresses. The females all wore small corsages of white daisies, while the men sported white daisy boutonnières. The women had their hand placed on the extended arms of their husbands. The flag bearers placed their flags in holders placed in front of the platform.

One mission board representative announced that the missionaries retiring represented 1,897 years of service in 41 nations. He then introduced trustees of the board, mission board staff, and former missionaries present in the audience. Family members were then asked to stand. These families represented about 35% of the audience. He then announced that this church gave the largest amount of any church contributing to last year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering,⁷ \$50,000. He also mentioned that the pastor of this church is a former missionary. A prayer was offered then for the missionaries and their children.

Another hymn, "Blessed Assurance," was sung by the audience and led by the music director. A scripture was read, and another prayer was given. Included in the prayer were the words, "They were not there when their parents died, when their grandchildren were born, or for family reunions. They have given this sacrifice." Following the prayer three men seated on the platform moved to chairs in the audience, while the choir sang an anthem entitled, "Be Exalted."

⁷The mission board states that 100% of this offering given by Southern Baptist churches is spent on international missions.

In a manner similar to the appointment service the president of the mission board preached the evening sermon. He used a mobile microphone and held an open Bible while speaking. He spoke at length about his daughter's wedding which had taken place two nights previous to this occasion. He then compared the preparations for his daughter's wedding to the work of retiring missionaries. He stated that they had been "preparing the bride of Christ," with the church symbolized as the bride. He stated that in his daughter's wedding bridesmaids carried lighted lanterns and compared that to the biblical story in which virgins prepared for a wedding by lighting their lanterns.

The speaker then singled out some of the retiring couples who had been appointed with the speaker when he was appointed as a missionary to Indonesia. He mentioned other retiring missionaries who also had served in Indonesia. Then he spoke directly to the missionaries as he stated, "You have been faithful to the task." He told the missionaries that their reward would be that there would be many nationals in heaven. He then emphasized the international nature of his daughter's wedding as a Zambian choir sang the "Hallelujah Chorus" for the recessional.

The retiring missionary couples then lined up along both sides of the auditorium. One couple at a time ascended the steps to the platform to stand in front of the microphone. They stated their names along with where they served and what their roles were. About a third of the couples also mentioned their children by name. One couple related that their daughter had married an Italian pastor after which they said,

“She will carry on our work.”

As each couple then would walk across the stage, the mission board representative from their area read biographical information about each missionary. When talking about their greatest challenges on the mission field, family members were often mentioned, e.g., a son died, a spouse died, children needed to feel at home, etc. At least one spouse of three couples had experienced death of a former spouse during their tenure. Two now single missionaries also had a spouse who died, one before appointment and one after appointment. The couple shook hands with the president, who handed them a certificate of recognition rolled up like a scroll and a wooden plaque which served as a mounting for the document. Then each couple moved to a small table where their area representative handed each one a “service pen.” Somewhere during this process a photographer took pictures of each couple. The couples then returned to their designated seats in the congregation. Following the introduction of all retiring missionaries, the audience was encouraged to join the president “in recognizing these for their service.” The audience responded with a standing ovation. A vice-president of the board then preached while holding an open Bible. His talk centered around a scripture from the book of Hebrews which he entitled, “The Hall of Faith.”⁸ This person also talked about his daughter's wedding, using the same analogy as the previous speaker. He closed his address with a prayer.

⁸This passage mentions well known characters from the Old Testament who were said to have been great examples of those having faith.

There was a time of commitment. The speaker urged members of the congregation to “say to God, ‘I’m ready. You tell me what to do’.” During another plea the speaker asked the audience to “commit to prayer for God to fill the vacancies of these retirees.” He then addressed the young people in the congregation. “You would like to be able to say someday, ‘I’ve given 20 or 30 years to missions’.” There were men in suits standing in front of the stage to counsel with those who walked down the aisle. The audience was told that “these men will try to help you know God’s will for your life.” The audience joined in singing two verses of a song entitled, “Wherever He Leads, I’ll Go.” One younger person walked toward the men at the front. The speaker then said, “After the service, counselors will still be available.”

The congregation was told they could sit down. They were given directions to find the reception which followed the service. They also were instructed to remain seated for the recessional. A prayer followed in which thanks was offered to God “for those who have inspired us.”

A reception was held in a very large area which served as a gymnasium for church recreational activities. There were about eight round tables set up with punch, cookies, and paper napkins on each one. The missionaries stood around the periphery of the room while people shook their hands. As the researcher shook hands with one retiring missionary from Korea, he was asked, “How does it feel to be retired?” He answered, “I really don’t know yet. I don’t think I will know until all of this is over.” Another missionary had been in Brazil. When asked how he felt being retired, he

stated, "I feel like I just graduated. It seemed just like a graduation."

The Dramaturgy of the Ritual

In considering the setting it is interesting to note the words used to designate certain aspects of the environment. The audience is usually called a congregation, the auditorium is called a sanctuary, there are pews instead of benches, a message instead of a speech or address, and a service rather than a ceremony.

At the service missionaries put on their stage persona. While they were relaxed at MLC when the men talked about the Bulls playing in the finals and the women talked about their children or other MKs they knew, at the church they were much quieter and stood straighter and stiffer. Many of them looked uncomfortable at the reception, like they did not know what to do.

Preparation

The missionaries were taken by bus to the church to practice for the service at an earlier time for 1½ hours. They practiced marching in, talking into the microphones, and walking across the stage. While Goffman suggests that preparation is used to minimize unwanted impressions, for the recognition service the missionaries' part was minimal and did not require much rehearsal. When compared to the time for the appointment rehearsal, the amount of time for retirement rehearsal was noticeably less. Perhaps retiring missionaries were trusted to comply with directions more than the

newly appointed group.

The other preparation noted was prior to the service itself. About 45 minutes prior to the beginning of the service, people were busy arranging props on the platform. Arrangers included three women in dresses and high heels in addition to some males in dress suits. During this time a mission board representative was rehearsing the flag bearers who were teenagers dressed casually and who had just finished youth choir practice.

The representative talked them through where they would walk. First they practiced marching in without holding the flags. Then they practiced with the flags, after being told how to hold the flags. He told the flag bearers that he would give them a cue to start down the aisle. They were instructed to make a sharp angle when turning from the aisle to parade across the front of the church which would cause the flag to “furl.”

Props

The three main props were the flags, the Bible, and the scrolls. The flags and Bible were used also in the appointment service. Again, the flags against the walls as well as those carried by the flag bearers symbolized the international scope of the missionaries’ lives. Bibles held by the speakers added to the religious significance of their addresses.

The scrolls were the main prop used to symbolize the stated purpose of the

ceremony, to honor retiring missionaries. Certificates were rolled to add to the presentation effect and evidently served as an analogy to a graduation ceremony. Whatever the purpose, the scrolls were something the mission board gave to the missionaries, who had provided the board with many years of service.

An incidental prop was flowers used to decorate the stage area. The flowers designated the specialness of the occasion.

Music

Music was less prominent in the recognition service than in the appointment ceremony. Also, the one song selected for congregational singing was not a “missionary” song but one which extolled the virtues of God. It is significant, though, that during the recruitment segment of the service, the words of the song were “Wherever He Leads, I’ll Go.”

Costumes

The dress of the actors was much more simple than that used in the appointment service. One of the reasons for this was that there was no play presented within the service as there had been in the appointment service. Costumes for mission board representatives and for missionaries was “Sunday dress.”

The only other costume noted was that of the choir who were decked out in Sunday morning choir robes complete with stoles. These costumes on choir members

emphasized the formality of the service.⁹

In addition, Ebaugh (1988) the formality of the dress for the evening is a measure of the social desirability of the exit. Other indicators of social desirability in this setting included the church congregation's standing ovation and the flowers used in decorating the environment.

Lights and Sound

This setting provided adequate accommodations for using light and sound to enhance the impression created. The auditorium contained many track lights on the ceiling. In addition there were spotlights suspended from the ceiling and which were focused on the podium and choir. After the choir completed their selection, those spotlights dimmed to leave only the podium in the spotlight.

In the center section of pews about two-thirds of the way back was a sophisticated sound board surrounded by a waist-high wall of light-colored wood which matched the ceiling. A man dressed in casual clothes sat at the sound board unobtrusively. All microphones were on, and there were no problems distracting from

⁹Many Southern Baptist churches use choir robes for choir members on Sunday mornings, but it is common for Sunday evening services to be much more informal. If there is a choir on Sunday evenings, they often do not wear robes but rather are simply in everyday dress. This was substantiated by an overheard conversation. One of the early arrivers in the congregation. She said to another lady in the audience, "I didn't recognize you. I'm not used to seeing you all dressed up on Sunday night. We usually wear jeans."

the impression attempted. Although the missionaries spoke at microphones on stands, both speakers wore lapel mikes which allowed them to roam from side to side on the stage.

Staging

In the appointment service the missionaries were placed on the stage. In contrast, retiring missionaries were seated in the congregation. It may be that the platform in the church was not large enough to accommodate the retiring missionaries. However, the impression created in the comparison of the two ceremonies was that in the appointment service the candidates were joining the ranks of the important actors. In the retiring service missionaries returned to the ranks of the audience, becoming observers once again rather than active participants.

The Impressions Created

Themes emerging in the appointment service were themes which reappeared in the retirement service. There was reference to missionaries' call to the mission field, there were obvious messages related to recruitment of new missionaries, and there was encouragement for the audience to support missions, especially in a financial way.

The first direct reference to the call from God on the missionaries' lives was in the president's statement that the retiring missionaries were "called from your

churches.” In this way church members were affirmed for their part in participating in helping people identify an experience as a call from God. Certainly church activities, which provide for acquiring perspectives of missions, contribute necessary ingredients for future interpretations of a call.

The second reference was indirect but was apparent to those familiar with the message. During a prayer there was a reference to the sacrifice missionaries have made by not being in the United States at times of family crises. The implication was that missionaries were willing to do this because they were called by God to leave their families.

The third reference to the call of God was in the recruitment portion of the service when a board representative asked the congregation to tell God that they were ready to do what He wanted them to do. The desire was that some persons would interpret some part of their experience as a call of God to missions. In this way retiring missionaries would have replacements in the work force.

Recruitment of new missionaries was clear. The latter part of the service was called the “time of commitment” and was directed toward those who had not declared their intent to participate in missions but who would make that commitment during this time. An indirect reference was the request that members of the congregation would pray “for God to fill the vacancies of retirees.”

A more direct plea was offered to the young people in the audience when the vice-president asked young persons to put themselves in the place of those they had

seen on the stage during this ceremony. “Maybe you would like to be able to say someday, ‘I’ve given 20 or 30 years to missions’.” Drawing on the experience of the setting, the speaker was asking the younger people to exercise their reflexive ability to put themselves into the missionary role they had observed. Being able to see self in the role is certainly one of the steps in the development of the missionary identity as has been discussed in the case of newly appointed missionaries.

The financial theme was included in the president’s introductory remarks similar to the financial reference in the appointment service of newly appointed missionaries. In this setting the reference was in the form of an affirmation of the church congregation for giving more than any other church in the convention to the Christmas offering designated for international missions. This could be interpreted as a form of positive reinforcement for this congregation’s financial contributions.

Finally, just as the appointment service was a rite of passage for the taking on of a new identity as a missionary, the emeritus recognition service was a rite of passage for the role exit of persons who worked for years as missionaries. The analogy to a “graduation” ceremony was made by one retiring missionary.

The significance of the service is discussed by Ebaugh (1988) who suggests that such a service indicates a high level of social desirability in this role exit. “Role exits that are seen as social desirable frequently are associated with rites of passages such as retirement parties, giving individuals gold watches, or graduation ceremonies which

recognize the individuals moving from one social role into another” (p. 197). The retirement of these missionaries was perceived as a desirable change as retiring missionaries were rewarded for their sacrifices and for staying at their jobs for many years. The missionaries were given a traditional retirement token, a pen, in recognition of their service. Also, the placement of the ceremony in a church symbolized the social and religious acceptance of this event.

Becoming an Ex

Retirement is a time of leaving a role which missionaries have enacted for many years. One of the first points Ebaugh (1988) makes about the process involved in role exit is that this process occurs over time. She further asserts that it frequently originates “before the individual is fully aware of what is happening or where events and decisions are leading him” (p. 23). This characteristic was reflected in the comment by one retiring missionary at the reception who stated he was not sure how he felt and probably would not know until “it” was all over.

While the mission board provided many experiences representing the social desirability of the role exit, the emeritus recognition service is just the beginning of the role change for most missionaries. Unlike the missionary who returns to the US prior to retirement, the retiring missionary has spent most of life in a culture away from family. The return to the US is not only to a new occupational status, but also to a new cultural setting.

Summary

Retired missionaries, like furloughing missionaries, told of their call to missions, schooling of their children, and changing styles of interaction with extended family members as they lived in foreign countries. One of the unique factors to retired missionaries is the addressing of missionaries as special people. (See figure 3.) While one missionary verbalized the perspective of expecting recognition by others of her role, most MKs described their parent as “normal” with scepticism about any designation as “special.” Perhaps over time the identity of missionary is seen as ordinary by missionaries and their family members.

Retired missionaries described changing relationships with family members as they move their place of residence back to the United States. Some missionaries’ parents have died prior to this point in their life. Other missionaries decided to retire at this particular because parents were in need of physical care. In any case, the return to the US provided increased opportunities for relating to extended family members.

As missionaries approached retirement, they worked with their employers to arrange for retirement benefits. This activity was possible as retirement is an “institutionalized” exit as defined by Ebaugh (1988). The recognition of the event by the mission board emphasized the social desirability of the exit. Also, missionaries exited as a group rather than alone. Having peers retire at the same time allowed missionaries to have social support for the changes they were making in their roles.

Retired missionaries displayed role residual as they returned to the US. The

PROCESS OF BEING A RETIRED MISSIONARY FAMILY

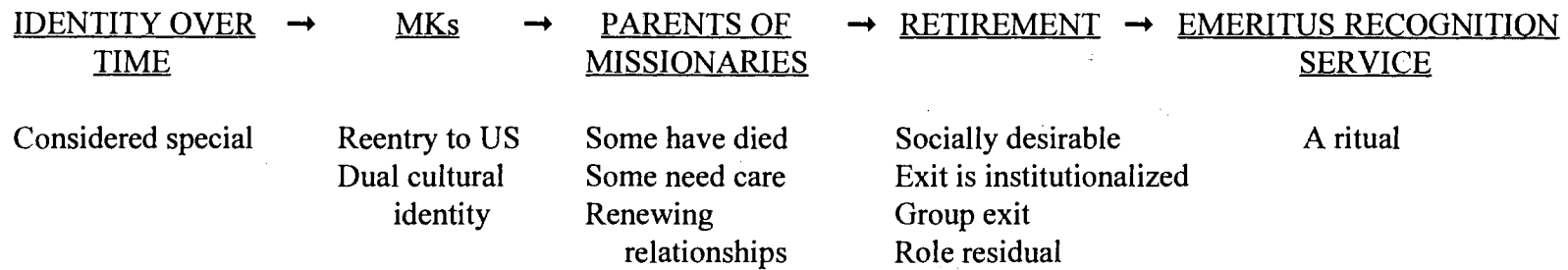


Figure 3. The process of being a retired missionary family.

men often pastored churches either full time or part time. The women worked in their local churches filling roles similar to those they filled on the mission field.

Furthermore, retired missionaries often exhibited a cultural role residual as they furnished their retirement home with furniture and mementos from the countries where they had lived. They continued to work with cultural groups in the US who were natives of the missionaries' former assignments.

The rituals for retired missionaries included debriefing sessions in conjunction with an emeritus recognition service. Debriefing sessions for retiring missionaries offered at MLC in Richmond, Virginia, provided opportunities for prospective retirees to exchange information about retirement issues with each other and with board representatives. The sessions culminated in an emeritus recognition service which provided a rite of passage for the role exit of missionaries.

CHAPTER VII

FORMER MISSIONARY FAMILIES

Previous chapters of this study examined the life of missionary families at their appointment as missionaries, during furloughs after having been missionaries for at least five years, and at retirement time when they are exiting their roles. Another type of exit from the missionary role is not as common as retirement. It is the plight of the missionary who goes to a foreign country but who for some reason decides to return to the United States before retirement.

These missionaries have been missionaries and have lived the process of being a missionary family through the furloughing phase. The question then arises as to how these missionaries shed this identity which has developed in their lives. The retired missionary has completed their course, but what about the missionary who does not finish the assignment? As the resigning missionary is considered, other questions develop. If the call of God is so powerful to take families across oceans, what happens to this call when a missionary decides to come home? Does the returning missionary feel like a failure as the work was left unfinished? How does the family explain their return to family members who were left behind previously? How does the missionary explain their return to those in churches who gave money to support them in their endeavors? Finally, what do they do when they come home? These questions present a need for examination of this group of missionaries.

This chapter explores the stories of those who have been in the role of the missionary but who have chosen some other role before the more traditional role exit of retirement. Family members of these families were not included in the interviews, but two families were interviewed who currently are working in occupations other than that of an appointed international missionary. Also incorporated in this chapter is the story of the Parris family whose journey is related in The Commission, the magazine published by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

The Families

The Doctor and Nurse

The first family interviewed was a couple whose children were eight, six, and one year old when they were appointed as missionaries to Yemen. After completing the orientation process and language school, the father worked as a missionary doctor in the country, while the mother, educated as a nurse, stayed home with their children. The children were home schooled during elementary grades and attended boarding schools or international schools thereafter.

After serving for seven years, the couple made the decision to return home. The father established a private practice before working for the public health service with whom he is now employed. The mother is a registered nurse but never returned to nursing following their return to the US. Instead, she teaches English as a second

language while the other two are in college.

The three children in this family are now away from home. One son works in an international setting with the Wycliffe Bible translators. The other children live in the United States.

The Physically Challenged Family

The second family interviewed was appointed when he was 26 years old. Their oldest three boys were four years, two years, and six weeks old. Not long after the fourth son was born, the wife became pregnant for the fifth time, but that pregnancy ended in a miscarriage. Shortly thereafter they had their fifth and final son.

This family lived and worked in Zambia during most of their 15 years on the mission field. They told of large, open pit copper mines in the area where they lived. During that time the father was first a pastor and later a principal of a seminary. The mother home schooled their children at times in addition to her work with women in the churches. She also taught in a Baptist seminary.

In the latter part of their time in Zambia, the wife began having physical problems. Difficulty during a hospitalization in South Africa resulted in their being reassigned to the seminary in Johannesburg. After about a year the family came back to the United States, first on a medical leave with the mission board which evolved into a leave of absence before finally resigning.

Since their resignation the husband has been in higher education, working as a

dean and then vice-president at a Southern Baptist university. The five boys are now grown and living away from home.

The Family with Many Crises

The third family included in this study is the Parris family. The father pastored a church when they decided to go into international mission work. Their children were 13, 10, and 4 years of age. The family lived in Costa Rica during language school for a year. Then the family moved to their permanent assignment in Venezuela.

The family returned to the states for a visit with the father's mother, who had been diagnosed with cancer shortly before her death. She died two weeks after their return at which time the father came back to the US for her funeral. Another difficulty for the family was the father's bout with hepatitis while serving in Venezuela.

The family took a leave of absence after they had been on the field for seven years. They returned to pastor a church for a predetermined time period of two years. Upon the completion of their leave, they decided to resign from the mission field and stay at the church which the father pastored.

Summary of Families

Each of the families providing information about this aspect of missionary

family life had been appointed to the mission field by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board. Each served in their assigned country for at least five years before deciding to return to the United States. All three families had children during their terms on the field. All three families spoke confidently of their call to career missions, and all three spoke of the struggle as they decided to return to the United States. Their individual stories had characteristics similar to those of retiring and other career missionary families.

Similarities between Former Missionaries and Career Missionaries¹

The Call

The former missionaries began their stories with their call to missions. They, like other career missionaries, told of resolving their call with their choice of spouses.

I guess we were both inclined towards mission before we got married. Most definitely. Then, I felt a call to missions, I guess, when I was a sophomore [in college]. . . . But then it became clear that I was going to be in medicine and the leaning towards missions, and so, I guess, when I dated, I dated, looking for young women who had similar goals or inclinations and found one and married her.

¹While the former missionaries were appointed as career missionaries just as were the newly appointed, furloughing, and retiring missionaries in earlier chapters, the designation of “career missionaries” will be used in this chapter to represent a combination of the other three categories to differentiate between them and the former missionaries who were career missionaries but who have resigned from the mission board.

Another couple married before resolving the issue of being called into missions.

We both began to think about missions when we were children. We met [in college], and it was an option, but it wasn't a firm calling. . . . I made a public commitment to missions during my first year of seminary. . . . And as I drove home, I realized that probably was a mistake, but I had these visions of, well, the Lord has spoken to her at the same time, and so when I get home, I'm going to be telling my story, and then she's gonna say, 'Well, that's really wonderful because I've had the same thing here.' That wasn't how it happened of course, uh, and I got home, and she said, 'You did what? Now every WMU² woman in the [area] is going to be wondering why I kept you from going to the mission field.' . . . It really caused me to question, and so, of course, I knew we couldn't go.

This husband then related how during a church revival meeting his wife had made a public commitment.

When she told me when she got home and told me, I said, 'Well, I don't know if I'm called now. So then, you know, it sort of dawned on me what I had said, 'If you want me, then you'll call her,' and so it was, the Lord had answered my prayer, and so we felt united about that.

In the article, "The Bittersweet Call to Missions," the missionary father describes his call coming as he was pastoring a Southern Baptist Church. After talking with his wife and receiving a less than positive response, he thought that if God wanted him to be a missionary, his wife would have to experience her own call. At the same time she reportedly felt guilty because she did not feel called.

²Women's Missionary Union is the Southern Baptist organization for women which emphasizes education about missionaries. They also are known for support of missionaries on the field, especially in the areas of finances and prayer.

I remember thinking one day, 'Lord, you're just going to have to kill me and get [my husband] a new wife!

After praying about the situation, the wife stated that slowly she began to feel the call. They both participated in a volunteer mission project to Venezuela which became a "final confirming factor in their decision" (Cresswell, 1982, p. 53).

Just as the three couples related their sense of call to missions, they also talked about their call to the specific place of mission service. The couple mentioned above returned to Venezuela as missionaries. Another couple who went to Zambia had a missionary preacher from that country staying with them prior to their decision to go to Africa. The third couple was more vague about the call being totally a divine revelation as they considered a choice from a list of Africa, Yemen, the Philippines, and South America. They decided upon Yemen.

We researched the different areas in a lot of detail, and there was something about the people that we felt drawn to. The fact that they had an ancient, very developed civilization, and there was another factor in that I didn't want to live where it was really hot. So that sort of ruled out Africa.

The Beginning of their Mission Experience

Stories of the three couples include the waiting periods between appointment and their departure for their assigned country. One couple's wait was extended due to the wife's gallbladder surgery during this time.

The couples spoke of going to language school for the first years of their service. One couple went to Costa Rica, one to Lebanon, and the third couple in a

small town in their assigned country of Zambia. The usual time for language study was a year, after which the couples proceeded to Venezuela, Yemen, and another city in Zambia respectively.

Doing Activity: the Role of the Missionary Parent

The mothers in these families spoke of their change in roles once they began their mission experiences.

I think those years were fairly traumatic, primarily because I hadn't worked much before, at least not since I had the children, earlier. . . . I always stayed home with my babies, and when that baby, when I left her, that was really difficult for me.

As the children became school age, the couples began to make decisions about their children's education. One family chose to homeschool their younger children. They talked about the advantages and disadvantages of this method of education.

[Homeschooling] has a strength in a way, that you may develop a spiritual bond in doing it with your child, but on the other hand, they don't have the opportunity to learn things and to go outside the family. I remember, I do have good memories of sitting with that little child under the tree, just he and I, and we were learning Bible verses. It all had to be generated from inside the family, all the training. Of course, I guess the other side of that is you don't have somebody else teaching your kids something you don't want them to be taught.

Later, this mother mentioned the lack of socialization as another drawback of home schooling.

[The children were] socially isolated except for, you know, some of the Yemen played with him, but it wasn't the type of interaction he needed to prepare him to play with western children. That would leave a gap there.

As their children advanced, these parents decided on boarding school, which later became a major factor in their leaving the country.

We eventually sent our oldest son to boarding school when he was nine. . . . It was one day's journey. . . . I think you could fly one day a week. It was probably about 1,000 miles. It was a pretty rough trip, actually. You had a two hour drive to the city where the airport was, and then it was probably ½ hour away, and you weren't always totally sure exactly when the plane was going to get there and then about a four hour flight minimum in an old DC 10 that was a propjet . . . an experience surviving.

They went on to describe the difficulty with communicating by letter.

Letters took two weeks one way, and so, you know, he knew he was there, and we knew he was there, and we worked, and it was very difficult. . . . That was a traumatic year for us and him.

The family decided to take a furlough at the end of that year. After furlough they requested a transfer to a city where there was a private, international school, which the parents evaluated as a positive move.

Another family sent their children to national schools. After returning for furlough in the US, the parents became concerned about the lack of adequate teaching in their assigned country and subsequently decided to home school when they returned from furlough.

One of the teachers there, our oldest son's teacher, as we talked to her about it before we did it, said, that, 'Well, they're going to miss out on the contact. The social interaction and all that. They'll be really deprived.' Of course, she didn't realize how many kids we had in our backyard every afternoon either. I mean there were kids living around where we lived, and we were not isolated.

This same family found that furlough presented school difficulties once again for their children. After furlough the oldest son, age 14, went to boarding school.

He liked it and had a good experience, It was not nearly as problematic as it had been in the states, and he liked his roommate and most of the things there. The other kids went to an international school except for [the youngest son].

Joint Mission Activities

Once again there were references to the children's part in the work of the parents.

Our children had projects. They boiled eggs and bought juice and took it down. We had some undernourished children, and they would take it down, and they would sit with the children on a mat and talk to them and give them this. There was a way for them to participate in ministry.

Meanings Created by Retired Families: Home and Family

Another similarity in former missionaries and career missionaries was noted in the methods families used to identify home when they often were very mobile.

We always took pictures off the walls. Somehow if you have the same pictures on the walls, you've got the same house.

Just as missionaries adjusted the meaning of home to fit their situation, they redefined family to include other missionaries.

The family support of the whole mission, I think, was fairly strong there and that helped alleviate our situation.

This definition of missionaries as family seemed to require the presence of other missionaries.

If you're part of a bigger mission, the children are more like families, and

if there are several like our children's ages, it seems to work better.

A questionable side of substituting missionaries for family members is noted in one missionary's comments about the nature of family members.

One of the biggest problems we faced on the field was interaction with other missionaries. I mean, you know, you just get so close, and you are family, and boy, you really see everybody's warts and all, and they see yours.

These families, as other career missionary families, described their nuclear families as being close. They related activities demonstrating this characteristic.

One couple talked about marriage being easier to maintain on the mission field.

I'd have to say that I thought marriage was easier on the mission field than it was in the states . . . probably because you did all your interaction with the same people, and here we interact with one group of people at church and then another one at work and another socially and so forth, and there, you lived, worked, and your neighbors were everything. You know, the whole thing was all closely interwoven together, but you know, you weren't far from work. You could walk and somebody could come down and go home for breakfast.

This family further described activities which children and parents shared.

You know, the kids, the kids knew what I was doing and where I was, and from time to time showed up, and they, you know, they would even go, like in the operating room occasionally, and so there was, there was, you know, much closer association with kids with what I was doing and what [my wife] was doing than what you get here.

In their stories retired missionary family members talked about how they established residences to be home for family members. In addition, they talked about how interactions with other missionaries came to define those associations as family relationships. Finally, they described their interactions with nuclear family members

as contributing to a closeness within the family.

Identities Over Time

In their narratives, retired missionaries mentioned the perception of missionaries by nonmissionaries. As one couple revealed an awareness of churches' opinion of missionaries as they contrasted that with the kind of housing provided them while they were attending seminary prior to going to the mission field.

Our children had difficulty in understanding how the churches seemed to honor us so much for being missionaries, and yet the seminary would provide such poor housing for us to live in, and they had difficulties.

While this missionary attributed the awareness of the elevated position of missionaries to her children, it is evident that the family perceived a difference in the status they enjoyed in churches with that of the seminary.

In contrast, one missionary wife stated that she and her husband always had negative view of putting missionaries on a pedestal.

Why do they bring in a missionary to tell people what to do to evangelize? I always hated being classified as a missionary. Is everyday, ordinary ministry as important as what special people do? I have thought about that for the past 20 years. It has to be equal.

Missionaries are cognizant of other's impressions of missionaries as special people.

This coincides with the views of MKs of furloughing missionaries. These MKs acknowledged this status attributed to missionaries while usually commenting that their families were more "normal" than "special."

Dual Cultural Identity of MKs

The MKs of former missionaries had spent enough time on the field to begin formation of dual cultural identities. One family related their children's experiences with the nonAmerican culture.

The culture was at a time when the kids just did anything, and it was wonderful. They would go to the bakeries, and I mean, they made bread in the back rooms. They didn't just watch, they made bread. . . . It was a wonderful time in the culture because they had, they were very hospitable to foreigners, and they treated the children just wonderfully. They could do anything they wanted to, and the people were probably nicer to them than they would have been to the local children. . . . He really probably knows more about street culture than anybody in our family. He just, you know, he could probably fit in better maybe than any of us, even though I never felt like we had a problem.

One couple spoke of their daughter's familiarity with women of the culture to the extent that she had difficulty relating to women in the US when they returned on furlough.

You have to remember, too, that the women are veiled in Yemen, heavily veiled, and when they'd come to our house, they were heavily veiled, totally in black. So the whole concept of a child seeing this lady in black with these veils she flips back in your house, those are the women you've seen except for a few young women who are nurses who work in the hospital. . . . So when on furlough she went to Sunday School and some American lady wanted to take care of her, she was just really befuddled, and grandmother, even my mother, my mother tried so hard. She was even afraid of my mother, basically.

This family later talked about how this daughter had difficulty wearing a swim suit in her teenage years.

We finally got her into a swim suit, but she always wore a long sleeve shirt over it. She just would not at that young age, she reflected the culture. She was probably, I would say 14 or 15 before she would wear a swimsuit without a t-shirt.

The couple then spoke of how the children interacted with the culture.

That's a real family matter. Those things hurt when your children really have so much difficulty fitting back in and when you really feel that it is really culturally related. The culture, we've lots of culture, we blend in, but the culture is so far from American culture that it's really difficult . . .

However, in retrospect the parents surmised that one of the children may have benefitted from his cultural experiences.

Well, he's been in situation where they've asked missionary children to give information to future missionaries who were ready to go to the field, to give them a few points, and we've heard some of that on tape, and he thinks it was a great experience even though we thought that he was the one that would be the most damaged by it.

According to former missionaries, the dual nature of their children's cultural identity is one of the aspects that contributes to the usefulness of MKs as missionaries themselves.

The missions where they have second generation missionaries, those second generation missionaries probably, you know, the culture is theirs, you know. It's not one that's been adopted by the parent, and they are probably more effective than their parents were not matter what their success has been.

This family further elaborated on their own son who went through orientation for his own role in international mission work.

He is extremely remarkable, and he says those times that we didn't have water to brush our teeth and some of those types of things, when the stool didn't flush, and you had to boil your water all the time, he said, 'When I got to orientation everybody else was saying, "Well, that's gross. This is terrible. How do you brush your teeth?"' and he said, 'Well, it's no problem. You just do it this way,' he said. 'I knew how to do it all.' So he's not very American, but he's a pretty good Christian.

Although not a specifically cultural experience, one family's experience with a child's birth on the mission field led to that child's becoming a missionary. This family had difficulty getting into a hospital setting for the birth of the baby. When they finally were able to be admitted to a hospital, there were problems during the birth process. The father spoke quietly of their experience.

It was really just a tough birth, and [my wife] about bled to death . . . It was during that traumatic time that I realized how much we wanted the baby. I was over in the corner praying, and, you know, and it dawned on me, you know, that this is a very important life, and I made the statement that, you know, 'if you let him live, we'll just give him back to You,' and he is preparing for ministry. He and his wife are preparing for missions for sometime next year.

In this instance the father voicing the prayer, a missionary himself, promised the child to God, and that child became a missionary.

Resignation as Role Exit

Missionaries who retire go through a process of exiting a role as they change their daily work activities. Former missionaries also change roles, but there are some blatant differences. If retirees experience a socially acceptable exit, what about the missionaries who return prior to retirement? The retirees exit as a group while the resigning missionary has little support for other missionaries are not exiting at the same time. While retirees have a ritual to solidify and celebrate the exit, resigning missionaries have no ritual. The issue of celebration is questionable.

One process for further examination of the resigning missionary is offered by

Ebaugh (1988). This process has the ability to inform the research related to former missionaries.

In her study of persons who become an ex something, Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) suggests that the process of role exit occurs over time. After interviewing ex-nuns, divorcees, transsexuals, retirees, and others, she posits that the process involves the stages of (1) first doubts, (2) seeking alternatives, (3) a turning point, and (4) creating an ex-role. These stages are identifiable in the narratives reported by former missionaries.

First Doubts

The stage of first doubts, according to Ebaugh (1988) “occurs when the role incumbents begin to question and experience doubts about their role commitment. The doubting stage is essentially one of reinterpreting and redefining a situation that was previously taken for granted. Events and expectations that had been defined as acceptable begin to take on new meanings” (p. 41).

In former missionaries in this study, first doubts were clearly evident. For the family living in Venezuela, first doubts occurred early during their first year in language school. At this time the husband’s parents came to visit their only son in Costa Rica. Three days after returning to the states, the husband’s mother was diagnosed with cancer. Two months later the husband returned to the states to see his mother for the last time. As he arrived in Costa Rica, the missionary knew his mother

was dying.

I began to feel some real responsibility about 'where is my ministry?' It is possible my ministry might be back there. . . . This might be another time when God confirms our call, or it might be a time when he says, 'Right now your ministry is here with your parents' (Cresswell, 1984, p. 55).

In this experience the missionary decided he would stay true to his call and return to the mission field. His mother died in January, and he returned for her funeral at that time. Completing language school, the missionary family went on to Venezuela where they served for seven years.

However, there were other periods of doubting, including when the husband of the missionary family had hepatitis. Shortly after this he expressed his question in this way.

It has been a hard time for us. We've had to reexamine our call, and recommit our lives to missionary service. I wonder how many times we will have to make that recommitment during our missionary career.

The family lived in Venezuela for the rest of their first term, went on furlough in the US, and returned to their assigned country after furlough. Two years later the family returned to the US on a two-year leave of absence. Three conditions enumerated by Ebaugh (1988) are connected to the missionaries doubting period prior to their return. One was organizational changes in their job assignment. The missionary wife stated it as follows:

Our ministry has always been evangelism and discipleship. We're not interested in being organizers of big projects; that just wasn't us. And that's what was going on in Venezuela--projects after projects. I felt forced into someone else's goals and agendas (Skelton, 1990, p. 56).

The second condition was a change in family relationships. Their oldest son had returned to the states the previous year to enter college. The third condition was a specific event in that the missionary wife was told she needed surgery. The husband's comments were,

We realized that to minister to our family, we needed to be away from some of the pressures we were feeling on the mission field. Our family was suffering. It was affecting our ministry.

Illness was the specific event which became a part of another family's first doubts. The missionary wife had been experiencing pain in her legs. After seeing a physician in South Africa, the wife was hospitalized for several days. The couple ended up staying in Johannesburg, close to medical care. While there, they both taught at the Baptist seminary. During that time, her condition alternated between better and worse. As her illness progressed, she became weak, began to be stooped, and was short of breath. Her husband voiced the thoughts of coming home.

The first of February I guess we started thinking about coming home. We went to the doctor, and he said, 'You know, we're only treating symptoms. We have no idea what this is.' I said, 'Well, do you suppose that medicine in the US where it's more computerized and everything . . . would be able to find out what is wrong?' and he said, 'I think probably so.'

Changes in relationships between missionary parents and their son when he was in boarding school became the event precipitating first doubts of one family.

The next year we were facing sending [our other son], and we had more reservations with that. In fact, when [our oldest son] came home at Christmas at the end of the year, it took several days for the family unit to sort of mesh again. He was an outsider coming in, and the other two kids were getting along, and, you know, there was a lot of inner sibling rivalry and so forth. And then, anyway, we were looking at, 'Well, if we send both the boys off,

you know, do we really want to abdicate our parental role during their high school years?' and that was basically what we were facing.

In addition to the family situation on the field, the maternal grandmother in the US had some health problems.

Plus, my mother-in-law has pretty bad rheumatoid arthritis, . . . but we didn't know what was going on, and we had concerns about her health and felt the responsibility there, too.

These reports indicate that people experiencing first doubts often describe situations in which they were unhappy long before they decided to actually leave the role. Changes in organizational expectations, illness, and prospective school arrangements all were reported as situations in which missionaries were unhappy while they were still on the field.

The situations must be defined as critical to counterbalance the power of God's call of a family to the mission field. Questions arising out of these doubts were voiced by former missionaries. The first deliberation seems to be related to if they interpreted God's call correctly initially. If God did call them, then why were things not working out smoothly? This inquiry was based on the assumption that God's will is communicated to human beings in experiences similar to those reported by newly appointed missionaries.

Seeking Alternatives

In their stories former missionaries continued to look for alternatives to their current situations. This is the second stage of the process outlined by Ebaugh (1988).

“Alternative seeking behavior is essentially a comparative process in which alternative roles are evaluated in comparison with the costs and rewards of one’s current role” (p. 87). One of the factors considered as missionaries weighed alternatives was the ability to use their skills and to fulfill their interests in the alternative roles.

One former missionary couple verbalized their perception of the decision with which they were faced.

For me it was, I had to decide if I thought that helping other become Christians is more important than helping my own children achieve their spiritual maturity or being their parents.

This couple became painfully aware of their inability to remain on the mission field and simultaneously be the parents they felt they needed to be. The alternative of returning to the US provided them the ability to parent to the best of their ability.

At this point in the alternative seeking process other people make interpretations about the situations as related by the information seekers. Based on these perceptions, persons in the social arena respond to questioning behaviors of the doubters. These responses become part of the consideration of pros and cons of each alternative. The consequence of receiving positive social support for considering alternatives is that the person realizes that there really is a freedom to choose a path from the alternatives.

This realization of the freedom to choose was verbalized by the missionary family in Venezuela. As they considered returning to the US, they consulted with a mission board representative for their area. The missionary stated,

No one makes the decision for you. We [had] the freedom to seek God's will and to do God's will and that they would be supportive and not questioning. We've never sensed that anybody at the board second-guessed anything we've done (Skelton, 1990, p. 56).

As the role exiter narrows down the alternatives to a select few, there is an increased focus on a specific choice. The person then begins shifting reference groups and may actually try out a role before fully committing to the exit. The aspect of Ebaugh's (1988) proposal which is strikingly evident in the narratives of former missionaries is the trying out of an alternative.

This behavior was exhibited in the taking a "leave of absence" before permanently resigning from the mission board. The missionary family in Venezuela decided on a two year leave of absence. The couple from Africa took a two year medical leave upon recommendation from the mission board. During this time they kept in touch with the mission board to notify them of the wife's progress or lack of it.

As a part of seeking alternatives, missionaries contemplated leaving their assigned countries to return to the US. They consulted with others but realized they had the freedom to make their own choice. As they narrowed in on one specific alternative, they often told of trying out new roles by taking leaves of absences from their assignments with the mission board.

The Turning Point

At what point does the doubting missionary have a clear enough direction to take action or make a move toward doing something about the situation? Ebaugh

identifies this moment as the turning point. “A turning point is an event that mobilizes and focuses awareness that old lines of action are complete, have failed, have been disrupted, or are no longer personally satisfying and provides individuals with the opportunity to do something different with their lives” (Ebaugh, p. 123).

Ebaugh (1988) further lists the types of turning points as specific events, the last straw, time-related factors, excuses, and either/or alternatives.

A specific event led to a turning point for the missionaries in Africa taking a medical leave following the wife’s hospitalization and subsequent year of chronic illness problems in Africa. Medical leave in the US was a temporary measure, as described by the missionaries, but the decision of when to return to Africa was never clear.

The mission board had a rule that missionaries have to have a clean bill of health for two years after being on medical leave. By that time our kids were the wrong age.

Although the wife’s illness was identified as the specific event in their return, the timing of events in relation to the age of their children also impacted their considerations. Once the couple decided to leave their role permanently, they mailed their letter of resignation to the mission board.

Another missionary couple described their turning point in terms of a time-related factor connected to their children. As they decided to return to the US, the consideration of how long their children would have been away at boarding school was a significant element.

It was the most difficult choice I have ever made. I love, we both loved Yemen, and we still do, but we just thought that, I don't think that God changes the natural orders that he set up for families whatever that natural order is. . . . I had to decide if I thought God could do some sort of a spiritual supernatural thing in which my children really didn't need me or their father for X number of years, and I came to the conclusion that the time frame was too long. You know, if it were one more year, that might be one thing, but we were talking about a long time frame, and it just wasn't, it didn't balance out for me.

In addition to identifying the types of turning points, Ebaugh (1988) suggests that turning points serve as a way of announcing the decision to others, reducing the cognitive dissonance, and mobilizing the resources needed to carry out the exit. She further reports that the feelings which accompany this stage are freedom and independence, although a "vacuum" often is experienced.

For former missionaries, cognitive dissonance clearly is created by thinking God called them to a place but later sensing a need to return to the US. The resolution of what God's call means is evident in every narrative. One missionary husband verbalized this problem.

You wrestle with your call. You have an ongoing tension with that. . . . I finally realized, it doesn't matter where I am. If I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, I don't have to worry about God. I don't feel bad because my children are okay.

In this instance the turning point, i.e., deciding to return for the good of the children, is the reason that is voiced for reversing their previous decision based on God's call.

This becomes a way of telling others of their decision. The husband's comments also reveal the resolution of cognitive dissonance resulting from the decision. If one can expand God's call to be doing the right thing anywhere or anytime, then one can still

be in the will of God when returning to the US from the mission field.

In the case of the Parrises the resolution of cognitive dissonance in their interpretation of God's call came when they decided to take their two year leave of absence. A church in the husband's home town contacted the family when they returned from Venezuela and offered him a position as pastor. The family construed this event to be a sign that the leave of absence was what God wanted them to do. They stated that they had not been offered such a position when on furlough the first time, indicating that was not God's will at that time, although returning became God's will at the time of the two year furlough. The time element was apparent in the husband's statement.

This is a different call--it's a two year call. We made that very clear to the church when we came. The rest of our lives have missions stamped on it. That's where we're standing right now (Skelton, 1990, p. 58).

Once the family completed their two year leave of absence, they decided to stay in the US. The resolution of their cognitive dissonance was once again evident in the husband's comments about their decision.

We had no peace about going back and leaving our children [two oldest] in the States. We saw it as a priority, our being in the States and being with them at this time in their lives. This is not true for every missionary family. I have a peace about being where we are at this point in time. . . . There is no guilt. We are in the dead center of God's will. I feel good about being here; the Lord is using us. But I still have a strong heart for missions (Skelton, 1992, p. 70).

This family further interpreted two other events in their lives as confirmation of God's will for them to stay in the US. One event was in relation to the husband's

father. Since the family returned to the US when they did, they had two years with his father before the father died.

[My father] was supportive of our going, even after my mother died. It meant a lot to me to have that time with him (Skelton, 1992, p. 71).

The other event was identified as the opportunity to use their Spanish. There was enough of a Hispanic population for the church to start a Spanish-speaking mission during the leave of absence period. In addition, the husband returned to Venezuela and Guatemala for mission trips.

In one case the missionary wife told of the resolution of cognitive dissonance in their situation. It differed from other accounts in that the conflict was eased only after a 13 year time period.

For a long time I felt like it was all my fault that we couldn't go back. The kids missed Africa. I tried to bargain with God. When we took the medical leave of absence, we had no intention of staying here. The adjustment to American life was not good. . . . Life was very fragmented here. We often thought, 'If we could just go back to Africa, everything would be ok. Then about three years ago we went back to Africa. I thought to myself, "We are now where we are supposed to be." I saw African soil from the plane and cried, but I didn't feel called back there.

This missionary further stated that she had been pain free prior to returning to Africa but began to experience pain while there. Her pain free experience while living in America was interpreted by this wife as confirmation that God's will was for them to be in the US.

This resolution of the conflict between God calling a family to the mission field and the subsequent resignation of the missionaries can be resolved by an

acceptable vocabulary of motives. In each of these cases families made decisions to return because of family issues or illness. These acceptable reasons answer the question of why people would give up a role which they at one time perceived to be a call from God.

Just as the decision to become a missionary requires interaction with others in one's environment, cognitive dissonance apparent in resignations develops also in interaction with others. After all, not only have missionaries interpreted experiences as a call from God, but they have told friends and family that God want them to be a missionary. Now there is a searching for specific events which can be interpreted as God changing the direction of His will.

The time issue related to the turning point is interesting in that it allows for a vocabulary of motives related to a change in what God's will for the family is. Each family implied that when they went to the mission field, they were very sure of God's call to that role. Some years later as the family contemplates leaving the mission field they indicate that God's will at the new point in time is different from that original perception. It is as though over time God changes where He wants the family to be and what they are to be doing. The progression of time allows for the formulation of motives which will be acceptable to family members and colleagues to whom the resigning missionary returns.

Another possibility involves Kleinman's (1984) idea that one way to resolve the issue of God's will in role change is to broaden God's call to nonreligious

occupations instead of the more narrow definition of only religious roles. If the same notion is applied to geographic location, it allows the missionary to broaden the view of ministry to the US as a positive response to God's call, even if it is in America rather than a foreign country.

Creating the Ex Role

Ebaugh (1988) describes the last stage of becoming an ex in terms of realization that the old role is in the past and the new role needs to be developed. "In a very real sense, the process of becoming an ex involves tension between one's past, present, and future. One's previous role identification has to be taken into account and incorporated into a future identity. To be an ex is different from never having been a member of a particular group or role-set. Nonmembers do not carry with them the 'hangover identity' of a previous role and therefore do not face the challenge of incorporating a previous role identity into a current self-concept" (1988, p. 149).

Furthermore, Ebaugh (1988) identifies two types of role exits, the socially desirable and the socially undesirable. From the interviews in this study it is proposed that the success of resolving the cognitive dissonance described in the last section as well as the acceptance of the missionary's vocabulary of motives affect the desirability of the missionaries' returns. For these missionaries, family and illness work well to allow the missionaries to return gracefully.

One commonality resigning missionaries have with retiring missionaries is role residual as revealed in interviews with former missionaries. One missionary expressed his thoughts bridging his past role with his present.

Ex-missionaries are not through with their careers when they come home. Once they are part of another culture, they are always bicultural. Whenever we were in Yemen, we overlooked the differences. How here we are different because we don't feel a part either. The materialism bothers you.

This cultural residual is evident also in the statement by the Parrises.

Our kids have a world view. When a lot of Americans read about world events, they think mainly about how it affects America. All the Parrises think about and discuss the effects of world events on the people involved. They still get angry when people only look at what it means for America.

Also, there was inclusion of culture as the former missionary spoke of his American church.

I miss the genuine, authentic, heart-felt commitment and worship of the Lord. Sometimes I just want to throw open the [church] windows. We need to bring in some dogs and chickens, a drunk off the street to sing, get some mothers breast feeding their babies on the front tow; get some Hush Puppies on our feet and get rid of those things called ties!

It is evident that this physician's present identity has a leftover component of his former cultural role. Not only did the husband in this family experience role residual, but his wife also had some "hangover identity." She was involved in establishing an international ministry at the church they first attended when they returned to the US. Currently she is teaching English as a second language, therefore working with many international students

In speaking of his occupational transition rather than a cultural change, the former missionary physician described his transition to public health physician.

The tension created by your call may be better for a preacher missionary than a doctor missionary. [Preachers] can still do their call.

This physician is currently working in public health and more specifically with homeless persons who have tuberculosis. His work with infectious diseases is very similar to the area of expertise required of the missionary doctor. However, he reveals a change from being a “missionary” to being a physician practicing in the US. He states that preachers can still “do their call.” The implication is that perhaps physicians are not “doing their call.”

The family who had worked in Africa also demonstrated some role residual. They verbalized their current calling as working with MKs in a major denominational school at which the husband is an administrator. In his role he has developed a curriculum specifically for students who plan to be missionaries. One of his former students is now serving in the country in which he lived for many years.

For the Parrises the obvious role residual is the husband’s pastoring of a church. In this role he emphasizes the responsibility of his church to support missions through financial support as well as through short term volunteer mission trips. His wife is active in a Woman’s Missionary Union group which meets weekly for missions programs and crafts, which are sold for financial contributions to missions.

The fourth stage of becoming an ex, that of creating the ex role, is well documented by interviews with former missionaries who have resigned from the

mission board. Role residual was especially evident in the narratives of the former missionaries.

Summary

Two families were interviewed to obtain the perspectives of former missionaries who had resigned from their mission assignment. Information from a third family was gleaned from a series of articles related to the missionaries' career from appointment to resignation.

There were many characteristics former missionaries had in common with newly appointed missionaries, furloughing missionaries, and retiring missionaries. Those included their identification of a call from God to be a missionary in an international setting, the waiting period between being appointed and actually going to the field, the transition to parenting as a missionary, including children in their ministries, defining the family as close, including other missionaries as family members, identifying missionaries as normal people, and the cultural identity of MKs.

The process of becoming an ex as formulated by Ebaugh (1988) provided a theoretical foundation for the analysis of the transition from being an international missionary to becoming a former missionary (See figure 4). The four stages of first doubting, seeking alternatives, a turning point, and creating the ex role were important to understanding the process of shedding the role which was previously acquired.

THE PROCESS OF BEING A FORMER MISSIONARY FAMILY

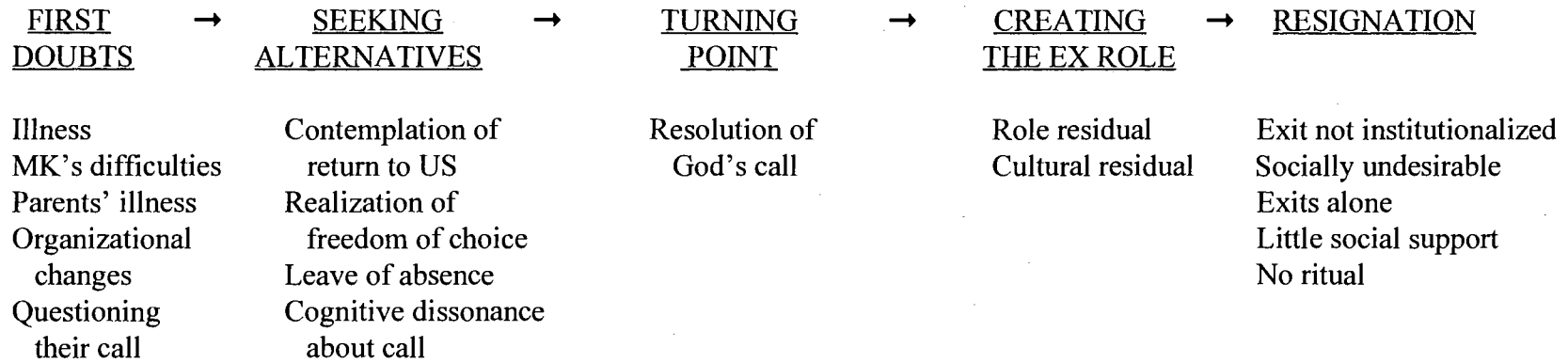


Figure 4. The process of being a former missionary family.

First doubts, as identified by former missionaries, were related to illness of the missionaries, MK difficulties, illness of missionaries' parents, or organizational changes at the International Mission Board. In all of these cases, missionaries began to doubt their call from God to be a missionary.

The missionaries then began to seek alternatives to their missionary role. As they contemplated a possible return to the US, they often told of realizing they had a freedom to choose what they were going to do in their situation. This thought inevitably led to cognitive dissonance related to their call to missions. As they tried to think through this process, two of the families took leaves of absence to try out the alternative of returning to the US.

After a leave of absence, missionaries were able to resolve their conflict related to God's call for their lives. This resolution often was a sign that they had turned the corner and were ready to exit their role.

As missionaries exited their role in an international setting, they began to look for another role in the US. Missionaries in this study exhibited role residual as they chose occupational activities which closely related to the roles they just left. Furthermore, they demonstrated cultural residual in that they maintained some connection with nonAmerican persons in their US settings.

The final resignation from the International Mission Board is not institutionalized. That is, there was no ritual involved in the resignation. Also, a resignation is more socially undesirable than the formerly discussed exit of retirement.

The former missionaries exited alone and subsequently had little social support.

Former missionaries, like retired missionaries, left their role as a missionary living and working in an international setting. However, the former missionary had a transition different from that of the retired missionary. Role residual especially was noted as former missionaries bridged their past experiences as international missionaries with their present experiences as exmissionaries.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study is an attempt to understand the life of the missionary family. In many ways the missionary family is similar to the traditional American family. Missionary families date, marry, and have children. They plan their children's educational careers and eventually send them off to college. They have aging parents about whom they are concerned. After the required number of years of work they retire. However, there are also many ways in which the missionary family varies from the more traditional model. This study was based on their stories.

The Process of the Research

Symbolic interactionism provided an appropriate theoretical perspective for understanding what it means to be a missionary family. Symbolic interactionism acknowledges the processual nature of human life as well as the interactive nature of families. The concepts of Mead, Blumer, and Prus became the maps which guided the analysis of missionary stories. The previous grounded theory of Ebaugh provided direction for the exploration of becoming an ex missionary. To examine the rituals associated with missionary life, dramaturgy provided the principles which illuminated the way in which rituals affirmed the perceptions and actions of missionaries. The

three missionary rituals, the appointment service, the furloughing conference, and the emeritus recognition service, are pieces of drama in the life of the missionary family.

The methodology used to examine interactions and to disclose the processes involved in being a missionary family was the naturalistic method. This consisted of field work, participant observations, and interviews. The field work consisted of talking with families in their homes, the place where people live as families. Participant observation also was in the field as rituals were attended. The interviews were designed to elicit from missionary couples, MKs, and missionaries' parents their family's story of being a missionary family. The persons interviewed were asked to tell their family's story. Ebaugh (1988) identifies this method as a life history approach. "The life-history approach emphasizes process as an organizing theme. Emphasis is on studying perspectives, negotiations, and relationships in process terms rather than on analysis of the impact of static structures on human behavior" (p. 32).

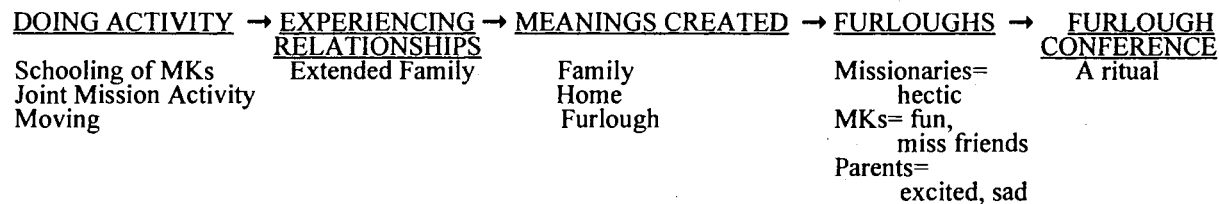
The Process of Becoming a Missionary Family: Developing the Missionary Role

The stories of all groups of missionaries revealed early experiences in which future missionaries acquire the missionary perspective (See figure 5.) This process involved encountering other missionaries, assessing the perspectives of missionaries, and managing any reservations they had about becoming missionaries. The process of becoming a family was intertwined with decisions about becoming a missionary.

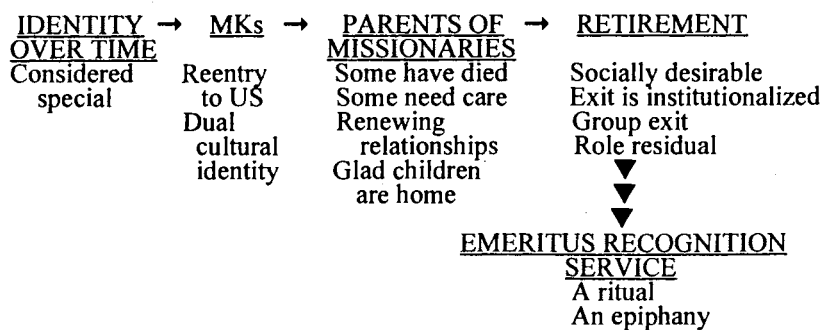
NEWLY APPOINTED MISSIONARY FAMILIES



FURLOUGHING MISSIONARY FAMILIES



RETIREMENT



OR

RESIGNATION

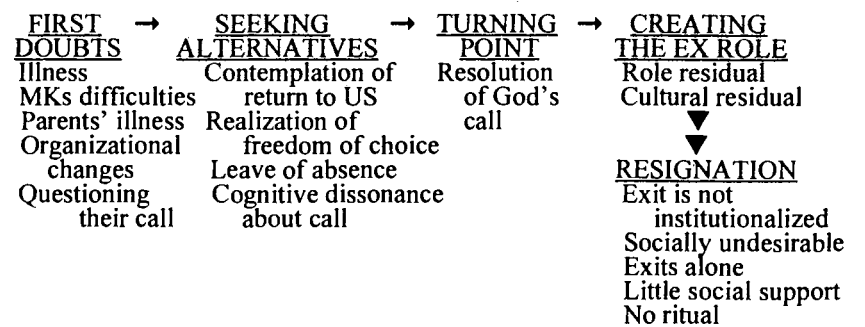


Figure 5. The process of being a missionary family over time.

An important part of every missionary's story was their call to missions.

During this period the person described experiences which they interpreted as a call from God. This call from God served as their vocabulary of motives in relation to leaving family members and moving children with them to a foreign country. The call provided the "unquestionable answer" to any concerns or doubts expressed by parents, also the grandparents of MKs. The call also served as the entry into the professional role as it became a point of reference for introduction of new missionaries during the appointment service.

In recounting events in the development of their role identity, the missionaries often talked about their associations with other missionaries prior to the time they had formalized their own decisions. This work with others allowed for the preparatory stage when they could observe first hand what it is that missionaries do. The role taking stage where they were able to practice the missionary role was made possible by short term mission projects in which many of the missionaries had participated prior to their own appointment. The game stage was fostered by the attendance at orientation sessions where the about to be appointed missionaries were told the rules of the game as well as the roles played by others at the mission board as well as coworkers also employed by the mission board.

As missionaries were appointed, they exercised their reflexive nature as they rehearsed how they would family life would proceed once on the field. They expressed concerns about their abilities to meet their own requirements as well as their

children and family members they were leaving behind.

New missionaries spoke with excitement as they described their prospective work as an adventure. In contrast, their parents were obviously more ambivalent about their children's leaving. However, the immediate follow up was that the parents wanted them to be where God desired for them. They often verbalized their own position as "blessed" and often stated they were supportive of their children's decisions and subsequent activities.

As missionaries were formally appointed and orientations were scheduled, the initiates often expressed frustration about having to wait to begin their work. Even older missionaries remembered how long it was from the time they were appointed until they actually arrived on the field. Often the more experienced missionaries remembered language school as a part of the waiting period.

The ritual which is held at the formal induction of the missionary into the profession is the appointment service. Prior to the service usually conducted toward the end of the week the missionary candidates attended preliminary sessions which served as orientation to the appointment service and to more extended sessions held in North Carolina.

The appointment service itself was a colorful display with international highlights and provided an opportunity for mission board staff and for family members to affirm the identity transition of the missionary candidates. Many family members of candidates were present for the service. This rite of passage is an epiphany in that

the person's identity is altered forever. After the work of the missionary is terminated the missionary becomes a retired missionary or a former missionary, but the missionary identity is never obliterated.

The Continuing Process of Being a Missionary Family: Furloughs

As furloughing missionaries talked about their life as missionary families, they talked about the activities of their families such as the education of their children. Another activity reported by the missionaries was joint activity as family members reported working together in mission work and frequently vacationing together. An additional activity common to missionary families was moving.

Missionaries reported making efforts to continue close relationships with extended family members back in the US. Since the family now resided out of the country, alternatives were initiated to promote these relationships with extended family members and specifically with grandparents. One of the differences in relationships between missionary family members and their US counterparts was that the missionaries often are not present for significant family events. However, parents told of coming to visit their families on the mission field.

Missionary family members created the meaning of being a family in interaction with each other. The primary perspective of missionary families is that other missionaries with whom they live in international settings become incorporated as part of the family. Other adults are called "aunt" and "uncle" by missionary

children. The MKs refer to each other as “cousins.” MKs often spoke of being closer to the missionaries than they were to extended family members, especially in the case of traditional aunts and uncles.

It was notable to learn how missionaries and their families defined home. Missionaries often referred to the United States as “back home.” However, MKs usually referred to the country where they had spent most of their life as home. The US was the place where they went on furlough.

The main commonality in the comments of missionary family members about furloughs was that these periods were spent in the US. Beyond that there were several differences. The continual traveling during this period contributed to the designation of “hectic” when missionaries described their furloughs. MKs, on the other hand, talked about furloughs initially being fun. At the same time they often talked about missing their friends “back home,” in the country across the waters. Missionaries’ parents were very open about how excited they were as their missionary children returned home during furloughs. The conversation inevitably took a turn as they expressed the difficulty they had saying goodbye again and again as the missionaries left to return to the mission field.

The ritual attended with the furloughing missionaries was a conference required of all missionaries sometime during their furlough. The conference was a curious blend of business and religion. The workshops related to work issues such as conflict resolution and management strategies often opened with prayer. Business

sessions blended in almost seamlessly with sermons.

Becoming an Ex: the Process of Retirement

In the interviews with missionary family members two paths were taken by persons deciding to leave the mission field. One route was the more traditional retirement when missionaries met the criteria set by the mission board for leaving the field to return home and receive financial retirement compensation.

When reflecting on their time as missionaries, retired missionaries spoke of their identity over time, specifically the consideration of missionaries as normal people. The adult MKs talked about how their families were “normal” as opposed to be “special” people because they were missionaries. Missionaries also wrestled with the issue of how others see them.

There were two issues which repeatedly surfaced in the stories about MKs of retired missionaries. One was reentry of their children usually at the point they returned to the US to begin their college education. The MKs were not alone in their re-entry experiences. The retiring parents also told of returning to a country they did not know anymore.

The other issue was the dual cultural identity of missionary children. Most MKs have lived in two worlds, that of the country around them and the US which is home to the parents. The dual cultural orientation of the MKs ushered them into adulthood with a broad worldview. Parents often spoke of the cosmopolitan

perspective of their children.

Another characteristic was the return of the MK to their international setting to be a missionary. One MK who had grown up in Zimbabwe returned to Africa as a career missionary. One MK from Korea was going back as a missionary as his parents were retiring to remain in the US. The missionaries from Chile had a son and his family who were serving in Chile. It was as if the MKs were returning home as they decided on a career in an international context.

The parents of retiring missionaries often told of how glad they were that their children finally had returned home. With a tone reminiscent of the ambivalence when their children first left, they also reflected a note of sadness in their voice as they spoke of family members who had died while the missionaries were so far away that they could not make it home for the funeral. They spoke of relationships that could never be quite as close as with children who had lived in the US.

As the retiring missionaries spoke of leaving their former residence, they often expressed a desire to return home as children's families and aging parents were both in the US now. However, they also told of how they missed the people they had grown to love in their assigned settings. They seldom spoke of missing the job, they sometimes spoke of missing the place, but they repeatedly spoke of missing the people.

The missionary's retirement is one of those exits which is a socially acceptable way to end a career. As retirement is experienced by most other employees at the

conclusion of their occupational experience, the role of retiree is socially acceptable and often even desirable. It is the honorable way for a missionary to leave his sacred assignment. Furthermore, missionaries retire as a group, which is much easier than an exit alone. The missionaries in this study retired in a group of 45, all of whom were involved in a ritual known as an emeritus recognition service conducted by the mission board. Another characteristic frequently observed in those who are exiting a role is that of role residual. Retired missionaries exhibit this phenomenon as many of their activities in their retired role involve nonAmerican cultural groups. The carry over from their roles is seen also in occupationally related activities.

The ritual celebrating the retirement of missionaries is the emeritus recognition service. The service itself was more like the appointment service in that the format was that of a church service. Just as appointment is considered an epiphany, the retirement of the missionary is another life changing event. Of more concern to the missionaries was leaving the country where they had lived for so long.

Resignation

Exiting the role of missionary by resignation has quite a different flavor than leaving by way of retirement. If retirement is the honorable way to exit the stage, resignation has all the potential for disturbing questions if not downright disapproval. The former missionary decides to return to the US as did the retiring missionary, but this one comes home before the mission is completed. The former missionaries demonstrate role residual in a manner similar to retiring missionaries. However, there

are differences in the two exits.

The first step in the resignation process was the appearance of doubts about the missionary's continuing work in the current setting. These doubts were identified by missionaries as having the form of their own illness, difficulties their children in the US were having, their parents' illnesses, and changes occurring in the mission board organization. Along with these events, the missionaries began to question their call to international missions.

As the missionaries realized their concerns, they began the next phase of the exiting process known as seeking alternatives. At this point missionaries contemplated returning to the US to live and work. They verbalized freedom of choice in that the mission board did not put pressure on them to stay on the mission field. However, before resigning most missionaries chose to take a leave of absence to think further about their decision. One of the nagging thoughts was related to the cognitive dissonance produced by their perception that God had called them to this career and to the place where they lived. Now if they returned to the US, how were they to explain God's call? If God wanted them to be missionaries, then how do they exit in a religious honorable fashion? The resolution requires a reformulation of God's will, for the former missionary needs an acceptable motive for returning.

The third phase in the exiting of a role is a turning point, the time when the missionary has decided to resign. This phase requires that missionaries resolve their dilemma related to God's will for their lives. Missionaries exhibit this behavior as

they reformulate their motives to be in relation to why God now wants them to be in the US. The most common explanation is that while God's will at some point in time was for one to go as a missionary, God's will for the present is different. Thus the passing of time becomes a process accommodating the change in a desire of the Divine.

Once home, the former missionary then creates a role, often incorporating characteristics of the previous work role. This is a continuation of the resolution of the question of God's will in that the missionary is fulfilling a role very similar to their role on the mission field; only the setting is different. Even the cultural experience of the missionary may provide some carry over activities.

Unlike retirement, a missionary's resignation is not an institutionalized event. The mission board's language for the exit is "attrition." Similar to the student who begins a college education but never graduates, the missionary has begun a career which he never finished, at least with the mission board.

The undesirability of this exit may extend to the religious community. Without explanations, the exit may be viewed as "quitting," or not have the hardiness to complete the task. The missionary's call has been told in public interactions within church settings many times since appointed. Those same church audiences very likely question why the missionary is not doing God's will. Another characteristic of resignation is that the missionary exits alone. Subsequently, there is no ritual for resigning missionaries.

Conclusions

An intense investigation of missionary families has led to the following conclusions.

1. There is a process inherent in the career of being a missionary family.

Mead (1934/1962) suggested that interactions between people are the basic elements of life. These interactions in the missionary family continue over time to come together in a series of events which can be construed into a process. Missionary family life, like the life of other families, is ongoing. It continues over time. During this time as family members interact with one another, they adjust meanings, communication, and activities to fit with other family members and other missionaries. How these meanings change over time constitutes the process of family members. Furthermore, in a manner described by Blumer (1969) as joint action, interactions are adjusted to fit together. These activities combine to form a process over time.

The stories of missionaries reveal some of the same events in certain phases of their lives. By comparing and contrasting the missionaries' narratives, similarities were noted at significant points along the way. These likenesses combine into a series of events over time common to missionaries. Some of these events are discovered to be specific generic social processes as suggested by Prus (1996). The first of these is acquiring perspectives as missionaries revealed the events in their life which very early in life gave them the language and the perspectives of missionaries. Thus these

childhood activities become very meaningful as the person incorporates these same values and behaviors in their own life. In this way the child has developed Mead's idea of a "generalized other" which is provided by these earlier experiences from his environment and which serves as guides for behavior as persons take on the roles of the missionary.

Another generic social process noted in narratives of missionaries was doing activity. In the living out of the missionary perspective missionary family members together participated in the activities which defined their missionary work. They also participated together in educational activities.

A third generic social process revealed in missionary families' lives was the experiencing of relationships among missionaries and their children as well as among missionaries and extended family. The missionaries and their children described their relationships as close, and they developed alternative interactional styles to continue relationships with extended family members miles away.

These activities observed repeatedly in missionaries' lives occur in a timed sequence which forms the career of the missionary. Three significant points in the life of the missionary family contain events within each phase which can be plotted over time to represent the process in the life of missionary families (See figure 5.)

2. The concept of the call of God is a requirement for entry into the profession and serves as a vocabulary of motives for missionary decisions.

All missionaries interviewed reported a call from God to be a missionary.

This call of God is and is more than a requirement of the mission board to become a missionary. Missionaries have heard other missionaries give testimony about their call to missions. In this way the future missionary has acquired the language and the notion of some experiences being interpreted as a sign from God that one is to take on the missionary role. Once this decision is made, the call becomes what C. Wright Mills (1940/1970) describes as “the term with which interpretation of conduct . . . proceeds” (p. 472). Therefore, because God has called, these missionary families leave friends and family to live in a foreign culture.

Furthermore, this call of God becomes the “unquestioned answer to questions concerning social . . . conduct” (Mills, p. 474). Because God is sacred and is perceived as the ultimate power, the questioning of God is unthinkable. Therefore, when a behavior is questioned, the attribution of the motive to God ends the questioning by friends and family. The call of God is a successful attempt to explain behavior of missionaries.

3. Missionaries are reflexive in nature as they anticipate future plans for their family's life.

Mead's idea that man in reflexive is operational in the lives of missionaries. Mead suggested that man has the ability to see self as object which allows one to communicate with self and to anticipate self acting in future situations. The words of missionaries literally were “I can see myself doing . . .”

In this way missionaries were able to project what they would do in terms of

family life in new settings as they prepared to move their family members to foreign countries. The result of this reflexive activity was the identification of concerns related to family members especially as the family was moved.

4. Missionary family members participate in interactions in which they attempt to fit lines of communication and behavior together.

The life of missionary family members can generally be considered “group life” as defined by Prus and more specifically as “joint action” as suggested by Blumer (1969). Missionary family member’s interaction with each other are understood as a series of acts. One member offers a perspective which is responded to by a second member. The initial member then adjusts the next response complements that offered by his responder. As this communication continues, members perceptions are adjusted until there is coordination in the interactional dance. This type of interaction continues in the life of the missionary until family members act together on the perceptions that have of things such as education of their children and mission activity.

This process is repeated in interactions between missionaries and their employers, specifically mission board executives. During furloughing conferences information is given to missionaries from the perspectives of the executives to promote a fit of the communication of what the mission endeavors are to be. Therefore, communication of missionary family members with each other and with other professional colleagues proceeds in such a manner to result in a shared meaning of being family and being a missionary.

5. Missionaries interact with each other to define what family means.

Traditional definitions are expanded to consider other missionaries as family.

This conclusion incorporates the work of Blumer (1969) to understand that missionary family members act toward family members on the basis of how they define family. While the parents and their children comprehend their relationships much as other families, their relationships with extended family require some adjustments. Because of their perceptions of what relationships with extended family members ought to be, much effort is exerted by members to relate to each other in spite of geographical distances. Also, because missionaries in their interactions with other missionaries define them as family members, their children call other missionaries aunt and uncle, and they call other MKs cousins. They continue to act toward these nonblood relatives as family members as they describe their relationships with these defined relatives as closer than those with grandparents or blood aunts and uncles.

6. Missionary retirement is a role exit which is acceptable to others.

After developing the identity of a missionary and acting in that role for some time, the missionary is confronted with how to exit the role. Usually family situations such as children now living in the US or illness of family members are the motives offered for the timing of the missionary's retirement. These situations coupled with the formula of the mission board about when retirement benefits may be collected provide the motives of the missionary family to consider retirement.

In terms of Ebaugh's (1988) proposed process of role exit an exit is deemed acceptable to others in society when the exit is institutionalized, when the exit is done in a group, and when the exit is associated with a rite of passage such as a retirement ceremony. The missionary's retirement is institutionalized in that the mission board offers age requirements for the timing of the retirement. These regulations reflect society's general ideas about the appropriate time for retirement. That is, missionaries are retiring about the age that other persons in this culture are retiring from their work roles.

In addition, missionaries retire as a group. There were 45 missionaries attending the debriefing sessions preceding the retirement recognition service and participating in the ritual. The benefits of retiring as a group posited by Ebaugh (1988) were observed as missionaries shared information in their vivacious interactions with each other at MLC.

The ritual of this role exit provided support for the missionaries' definition of the situation. The elements of staging the definition of the situation as delineated by Stone and Farberman (1970) assisted in affirming the positive aspects of this role exit. The impression projected was one of celebration as missionaries were dressed in special attire and wore corsages. The dignified service supplemented the importance of the occasion. The theme of the script was that the missionaries had run a good race and had finished the course.

7. Resignation is a process for a role exit which may be perceived as undesirable. Therefore, a vocabulary of motives must be developed to adjust the acceptability of the exit.

The resignation of the missionary has all the characteristics which are opposite to that of the retiring missionary. The resignation is not institutionalized. The mission board does not desire it. In fact, there were specific attempts at the furloughing conference to curtail this "attrition." The emphasis on God's call served to impress upon missionaries the need for them to not resign when crises arose.

The resigning missionary does not have a group to provide support during this time. In contrast, the resigning missionary couple struggles together with very little support from outside sources as they acknowledge their doubts, they search out alternatives, and finally come to a decision about their work and life as a family. Finally, there is no ritual to mark the return of the missionary to the US.

Perhaps the biggest dilemma involves how the missionary family will communicate the role exit to others--to the mission board, to family members, and to others in the religious community. Given the power of the call of God in providing motives for previous moves, the missionary must now figure out how this call fits into the leaving of the mission field.

The resolution of this predicament is handled by an adjustment of the perception of God's will in relation to time. The passage of time allows for the missionary to offer that while God willed for him to be in a special place at a previous

time, God's will at the present time is for him to be somewhere else. The interpretation of God as ultimate power supports this interpretation as "God can do anything He pleases whenever He wants to."

Involved in this formulation of motives is the interpretive process. In earlier days missionaries had identified specific experiences as important and had interpreted those to be God tell them to go to the mission field. In a similar manner, the return usually is marked by an event or perhaps series of events which are interpreted by the missionary to be a revelation from God indicating that now the missionary is to return home.

8. The rituals associated with specific points in the life of the missionary family offer strong support for the processes of becoming a missionary family, for being a missionary family, and for exiting the missionary role.

There are three rituals which emphasize the important meanings assigned to significant times for the missionary family. The rituals are the appointment service, the furlough conference, and the emeritus recognition service. According to Goffman (1959) who uses the metaphor of the theater to explore life, there is drama in everyday situation. The rituals in the life of missionary families are theater like presentations which help to emphasize the desired impressions.

The appointment service used a stage and the drama acted on it to communicate in multi-sensory modes the taking on of the missionary role by the appointees. The players, some of them truly actors, on stage, the music, the props

such as the flags and the Bible combined to create the drama of the evening. The importance of this ritual lingered as furloughing missionaries, retiring missionaries, and even resigning missionaries referred to their appointment service and those with whom they were appointed.

The presentations of the mission board staff, while not as literally dramatic as in the appointment service, were theatrical in their presentations which attempted to communicate to their audience, the missionaries on furlough. The messages were directed to updating the missionaries on the goals of the mission board staff and soliciting perspectives of missionaries who had been out of the country for several years. The conversation was an attempt to fit together the lines of communication between the two groups, the presenters and their audience.

The emeritus recognition service was another dramatic attempt to communicate to missionaries, their families, and friends the importance of the missionary life and the rewards of staying on the job until retirement time. The elements of the theater were utilized to communicate these messages.

Recommendations

With the conclusion of this study questions about missionary families over their career are answered. However, at the same time further questions are raised. Following are recommendations for future explorations of missionary families.

One question related to the stability of the analyses offered in this study. How

would a similar study conducted in five to ten years differ from this particular study? Ebaugh (1988) expanded her original study after a comparable amount of time to see if the process in becoming an ex had changed. Her primary conclusion was that the basic elements had remained viable during those years. A similar study is recommended for missionary families.

Another study of interest would be to compare missionary families with other families who live in international settings, such as diplomats or military families. Although these government related positions usually do not require living in an international setting for the length of time as missionaries, there would probably be similarities as well as differences.

A comparison of missionary families with families involving other religious vocations would offer likenesses and contrasts in family life. Although other religious personnel do not usually live in an international setting, the families do share the characteristic of being immersed in religious careers.

This study has talked with missionary family members who were in the United States during the interview process. This methodology has been expedient in completing the study both financially and in an appropriate time frame. A more comprehensive inquiry could investigate family life during their time on the mission field. Participant observation during the doing activity phase of missionary family life would add to the understanding of missionary family life.

While this study has been viewed the more global perspective of being a missionary family, a more specific study focusing on the first five years of the missionary family's experience would answer questions related to what happens when the family goes to language school and on to their first assignment. Is there a honeymoon period for the first few months or even lasting through the language study and on into the first assignment? How do missionaries handle disillusionment which often occurs after the orientation to a new career?

The persons interviewed in this study included retiring missionaries and ex-missionaries who have resigned from their international mission careers. There are other options for ways of terminating with this career. For instance, what about those persons who were terminated by the mission board? What do they offer in terms of their call to missions when the mission board has rejected their offer to serve? Another possibility for ending a missionary career is by death. What happens to spouses who have dedicated their lives to being missionaries only to have a spouse die during their tenure? How do they explain God's will at that point in life?

While specific questions have been raised about the first years and the final years of being a missionary family, what happens to each of these phases as cohorts change over time? For example, in the past the future missionary acquired the missionary perspective by participation in missionary education activities provided by many churches. In the past decade, Baptist churches have less formal mission education programs than they provided 20 years ago. Given this factor, how are

future missionaries acquiring perspectives, assuming they are participating in the same process but by different specific activities?

Some of the missionaries interviewed expressed emotions relating to Prus' idea of further studying emotionality in the symbolic interactionism tradition. The examination of emotionality in the missionary family experience would add to the understanding of missionary families. How do missionaries express their feelings in their interactions with family members, with other missionaries, and with the nationals with whom they work? What set of ideas do they use to guide the timing of expression as well as the selection of audience for expression?

A further view of the missionary family would be elucidated by comparing those families with multigenerations of missionaries as compared to a single generation of missionaries. Who does family life differ in these two groups? Assuming that such a long history of missionary family life would affect the interaction, how do interactions compare in these two groups?

Finally, it was noted in this study that missionaries deal with family crises such as death of family members back in the US differently than families with similar experiences in the US. The next question is how do these families interact during any or all of the crises experienced by the family? Is there a method of confronting or even perhaps avoiding the crises which is unique to the missionary family? All of these questions would be informed by further study of the missionary family.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Training for the field at the Missionary Learning Center: Get ready, get set—

By Eric Miller
Photos by Stanley Leary

Get ready, get set—

*How did we come here, you and I?
You from your world, me from mine.*

*Worlds once stable, organized, in line,
now hurtling in new directions—
Unsure and faltering in each new turn,
yet assured and certain of a call,
a distant beckoning.*

*Overflowing with gifts to be given,
love to be shown, unsure how to
offer ourselves to those unknown.*

Timid of an uncertain response.

*Diversity and individuality, blending
themselves together, in His symmetry.*

*Molded in oneness, pushed upon
the edge of desperation.*

*How did we come here, you and I?
You from your world, me from mine.*

*Donna Hastey
missionary to Paraguay*

Before they venture overseas to share the gospel, Southern Baptist missionaries undergo a metamorphosis.

They learn how to leave behind their American culture, family, friends and church and how to prepare for entry into a new culture.

They learn all this during seven weeks at the Missionary Learning Center, a \$9.1 million facility opened in April 1984 on a 244-acre site in Rockville, Va.

The complex sits among grassy hills, woods and a 15-acre lake near a pasture where cattle graze. Wildlife often is seen. Geese and ducks visit the lake.

In this setting missionary families move through their metamorphosis.

"Missionaries are not just appointed—missionaries are made through a process" and the Missionary Learning Center (MLC) is a major thrust in that process says Mike Stroope, a former associate director there.

This process starts as an individual senses a call to the mission field and is nurtured by others as he or she responds to the call, suggests Tim Brendle, who directed

the Missionary Learning Department 1984-87.

"I think anybody who's appointed as a missionary realizes that they're not what they need to be and they're not what they're going to be, if they truly go and do what they're supposed to do overseas," Stroope adds.

MLC identifies points at which people need to change. It also helps people identify concerns in their lives as they leave the United States. And it prepares new missionaries to work with and under nationals.

The success of the MLC program is evident on the mission field says retired missionary Edgar Burks.

"Orientation has helped these new missionaries get a better glimpse of what is expected of them on the field—what they can expect of a new culture," says Burks, a 1987 retiree.

Burks had only a week-long orientation and "very little orientation when we got to the field," he recalls. "So you fumbled your way along and made a good many mistakes, and you really got into it the hard way."

An ideal career group session at MLC has 50 adults and 44 children. Four families stay in a small apartment building, all four sharing a single living room. Meals are taken together in a cafeteria. Adults study side by side in classes and in the library; they worship together.

"So for seven weeks they live as a large community," explains former MLC director Mell Plunk, a veteran mis-



Greg Jewel (l) missionary to South Brazil, and Calvin King, missionary to Sierra Leone, share class notes. Missionaries volunteer to give courses in areas such as gardening, cutting hair, auto repair, small machine repair, computers, preaching.

sionary. "Part of the purpose is to form that community to see how they interact, because that carries over to an overseas setting, in that the mission will become that kind of a community to those missionaries."

Those at orientation discover features about MLC that are different. These range from round tables in the cafeteria to relaxed classroom settings.

Each feature is tied directly with MLC philosophy. Round tables encourage everyone to talk; this leads to interpersonal relationships. Food trays are triangular to fit tables.

Sidewalks wind past buildings in uneven lines, creating a pastoral atmosphere, as opposed to an institutionalized one. That way, people talk and form relationships.

Classroom settings are informal enough to promote discussions and sharing of ideas. This avoids a lecture-type atmosphere where students "sit down at a desk, wait for the teacher to teach them, process it and then go out and use it," says Sam James, who was chosen to design the new MLC.

A missionary in another culture can't "sit down and wait" for someone to teach him about the culture, he adds.

He must become a "learner" who seeks knowledge from "knowers," Stroope agrees. "Every national you meet is a knower in that he or she has the language and culture within them to teach you."

Preparation for learner/knower learning is called "exit orientation," as opposed to "entry orientation." In exit orientation, missionaries prepare to leave their culture and "leave it well," James explains. In entry orientation, they look at the new culture to enter it well, he adds.

MLC has four main objectives for career missionaries:

1. Move them toward personal development.
2. Show them what it means to be a missionary and how missionaries relate to the Foreign Mission Board and the Southern Baptist Convention.
3. Guide them through societal cultural development; this includes anthropology and the process of learning a language.
4. Help them in theological development.

"We want missionaries to continue to grow in their understanding of missiology and theology," Brendle points out.

In looking at theology, he says, missionaries at MLC are to explore: "What is my understanding of the kingdom of God? How do I as a missionary relate to the local church, to the community of believers at large, to the Baptist conventions or unions?"

Missionaries go through seminars on church planting, dealing with stress, "barefoot" language learning, world religions and first aid, former MLC associate director Georgia Hill lists.

They have workshops on interpersonal relationship building and case studies on field realities. They discuss religion with Buddhists, Catholics and others who visit the center.

Something "pressed home" at MLC is that missionaries

overseas must live with people who are different, Stroope notes. The new missionaries, coming from towns across the United States, are "put into quads, into accountability groups, into personal development groups and into committee groups," Stroope relates.

This tells them, "Hey, I'm not as accepting as I thought I was.' Suddenly a pastor is not a pastor in a church—just one of the group."

Staff members work with missionaries as problems arise in relationships. Each career session is tailored to the incoming participants. The MLC staff defines and refines program content constantly to reflect the specific learning needs of the current participants.

One feature is the use of learning groups in which people create an individual learning contract. The learning contract is individually paced to the specific needs of the person. The learning group, along with a faculty adviser, is a sounding board for evaluating the learning process.

The individual learning process is encouraged and expedited by the rich resources of the MLC library. The library has an extensive audiovisual collection, books and periodicals related to host countries, cultures, religions and language. When participants arrive at MLC, each has a study carrel laden with a broad sampling of resources relevant to their assignment.

Another aspect of orientation is stress. Each missionary reaches MLC with the stress of being separated from relatives, a job and a church, Plunk says. Decisions must be made about packing and shipping belongings overseas. Car and house sales must be finalized.

The pace is "pretty stressful," he adds. "They are kept on the go. Their children are having to readjust to a new school and having to make new friends. History will repeat itself when they arrive on the field."

"Our purpose here is not screening and seeing what kind of junk we can throw at people to see if they're going to make it overseas," Stroope says. MLC encourages "change in thought and helps people work through discomfort."

Discomfort occurs with journeymen and International Service Corps, too. This is due to a sense of urgency, because the journeyman term is only two years, and they want to make the most of that time, says John Leggett, a former associate director over journeyman training and Baptist Student Union orientation. (Journeymen share missionary duties that can be accomplished in English. This frees missionaries to carry out more crucial assignments.)

Like missionaries in orientation, journeymen have learning groups and visit a Buddhist temple and other churches in Richmond and Washington, D.C. Journeymen also carry out individual study about their destination countries.

MK Education

When missionary orientation was carried out at Callaway Gardens, in Georgia, MKs (missionary "kids") entered the public school system. About the time they became adjusted, it was time to leave.

Today MLC has its own school for MKs. The main objective is to provide a smooth transition from a U.S. environment to an overseas setting, explains Corella Ricketson, an associate director overseeing the MK school.

The school's three main purposes: (1) to provide quality education; (2) to increase the child's awareness and understanding of his/her mission field and how that fits into the total mission effort Southern Baptists have; (3) to lead the child into an understanding of what it will be like as an MK overseas.

The school uses an entire building containing classrooms, a library, individual study area with carrels, nursery and small teaching kitchens where students prepare a weekly international meal.

With a few exceptions to a board policy, most MKs are 12 or under at the time of their parents' appointment. This is because problems have occurred when children become MKs during teen-age years.

"Red flags" among adolescent MKs are sometimes spotted by Ricketson and MK teachers Tress Miles, Cathy Wood and Pam Simmons and Cinderalla Wyatt, a teacher's aide. One arose when MKs were asked to draw a picture representing their MK journey. One skillfully drew a tricycle entering a volcano. He told classmates, "This tricycle is me in an uphill struggle, headed into the pit of a volcano."

To help resolve this conflict, the parents and MK were counseled by MLC staff and Truman Smith, Family Ministry Section director.

Many MKs have positive feelings about the mission field. In a writing exercise, an 11-year-old student wrote, "I was very happy when my sister came to tell me we were going to Brazil. I was so excited and sad because I didn't want to leave my friends, but I did want to go and meet different people.

"I'm glad the Lord called my mom and dad to the field," she wrote. "I sort of miss my friends. Everybody says that I'm 'so fortunate to be going to the field.'"



MKs cook on Fridays, maybe a meal typical of Africa or South America. They do research and create a menu. If it's 'Africa Week' in MK school, they'll read folk tales, play games and sing folk songs—all representative of Africa.

APPENDIX B

On Becoming a Missionary Parent

by Carole Randolph

Kevin was moving to Denver! Just out of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, our middle son and his new wife, Susan, answered the call of Woodglenn Baptist Mission to come as pastor. Now, at least one of our children would live near us again.

What fun we had helping them move, first into an apartment, then into an older brick cottage near their church. Memories of that first Thanksgiving are vivid: We packed up the turkey leftovers from our home, took them to Woodglenn and painted the entire upstairs of their small house. When too exhausted to paint anymore, we ate the turkey and a pumpkin pie while sitting on the kitchen floor.

Later we were involved as they put a garden in their back yard and worked on their basement. We helped them landscape. They helped us in many ways, including gathering wood from the forest for our fireplace. Picnics, outings, lunches, long telephone conversations were weekly affairs.

Two separate summers I helped in their Vacation Bible School. Wayne (my husband), director of missions for Baptists in Colorado, preached a revival for Woodglenn. We teamed up on special witnessing efforts. Susan and I baked Easter cookies, canned jellies and made cherry pies together.

Then one day as I was looking for an eraser in Kevin's desk, I spotted a partially completed Foreign Mission Board application. I knew Susan had served as a student summer missionary in Indonesia. Likewise, Kevin had a missionary heart. He was raised on missions. He and our other boys helped us start churches and do other mission work throughout Colorado.

Why then was I shocked and hurt by my discovery? Why did I suddenly feel depressed? Was it because Wayne and I had a burden for Colorado and saw how desperately good young pastors and wives were needed?

Or was I being selfish? Had I taught missions, lived missions, been active in Woman's Missionary Union as a hypocrite? Could I really let my children go to a foreign mission field?

I told Wayne what I had found. But since Kevin and Susan said nothing as weeks rolled by, we pushed our fears aside. Kevin purchased heavy oak shelves to store books on and built an entertainment center. These cannot be shipped overseas without taking too much weight al-

lowance and space, I thought happily. Then he and Susan purchased a small camping trailer; another good sign for me.

Kevin put in another garden, and Susan continued canning and filling their freezer. It seemed our children had wrestled with the call and decided God did not intend for them to move. When they went to Foreign Missions Week at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center, I was convinced they went only to take their youth group.

Not long afterward, Wayne and I began to notice a restlessness in Kevin and Susan. When plans for a camping trip ended with their trailer in our back yard instead of a campground, we sensed something was up.

After several false starts, Kevin began, "We have made application to the Foreign Mission Board to go to Indonesia. Interviews are scheduled, and it's just a matter of time and the necessary approval.

"Mom, Dad, this has been the hardest decision I have ever made, because we hate to leave you. But we have prayed continually about this and are sure this is what we are to do. We even agreed on where we should go. Haven't you suspected our being called this way?"

I had faced this moment in my imagination and expected to dissolve in tears. But with our eyes moist, we managed to promise our blessing and support, and to help in any way we could.

Our first task was delightful. We kept three grandchildren from Texas for a week so Kevin's older brother and wife could go to Glorieta with Kevin and Susan. Of course, we had fears they might be called too!

After Kevin and Susan underwent interviews at Foreign Mission Board offices in Richmond, Va., we helped them dispose of things they didn't want to take. We bought those oak shelves and the entertainment center, their old car, the trailer and their television set. We helped them begin packing. We stuffed tea bags in drinking glasses, towels around paintings and china and all kinds of mixes in the nooks and crannies of every appliance and box. The constant decision-making—what to take, what to store, what to sell, what to throw away—was frustrating. Many items they couldn't decide about are "stored" in our closets and outdoor shed.

We checked out library books on Indonesia

and read the letters the kids began receiving from missionaries already there. There was no time for us to be sad; besides, we didn't want to ruin the time we still shared. After all, they were to go to the Missionary Learning Center in Virginia for the session that would end in the spring; it was only November.

We met the grief process head on when we took part in the commissioning service at Woodglenn church. During morning worship, I could not keep tears from streaming down my face as Kevin preached. I bit my lip, wiped my cheeks and tried not to let anyone see my face by keeping my eyes looking straight ahead. I could not swallow the lump in my throat.

Wayne and I each had a part in the afternoon program. As a precaution, I wrote out most of what I wanted to say. Choked with pent-up grief as we stood to speak, my voice squeaked with emotion. We had been promised a copy of the video they were taping. We've never received it, probably because those kind people don't want me to see what I looked or sounded like.

Before missionary orientation in January, Kevin and Susan visited family members in Texas, Mississippi and Virginia. After orientation, they returned to our house "temporarily" until their Indonesian visas were approved. Visa delays could arise; many veteran missionaries were leaving Indonesia because visas were not being renewed after 10 years of service. Would the five new couples be approved? It was a waiting game. Susan was now pregnant.

After two weeks in our guest room, they moved into a church member's furnished apartment. Kevin paid his way to go as a pharmacist on a medical mission to Honduras. He also preached 11 times in four weeks at pastorless Colorado churches. Then they received a temporary assignment at an English-language church ministering to military people in Misawa, Japan. The family had new cotton clothes and sandals for Indonesia, but Misawa is on the damp, cold northernmost tip of Honshu. Fortunately, their winter clothing was stored in our closets. Since they first were to attend mission meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia, they needed summer and winter clothing. Sorting and packing resumed.

Business had to be tended: open a bank account with my signature; arrange power of attorney. There were decisions on other things, such as which long-distance telephone service to use and how to distribute newsletters from the field.

July 7, the day we had dreaded for almost a

year, came all too quickly. But God graciously had given us two extra months. He knew we needed them.

Our church has been very supportive. Kevin and Susan are on the weekly prayer list. We took three weeks at the end of November 1988 to fly to Japan and see our new granddaughter. We were in the Calvary Baptist Church in Misawa at Lottie Moon Christmas Offering time. We visited in Japanese homes where English classes using the Bible were being taught. We witnessed the missionary spirit of many young married couples stationed in Misawa and saw the ministry of a military church on foreign soil firsthand.

Being a missionary parent carries definite compensations. We have an increased appreciation for the Foreign Mission Board. We had the exciting opportunity of seeing Japan from a missionary's point of view.

And we are proud of our kids and their faith that challenges us as they have moved on to language school in Indonesia and a future doing what God has called them to do.

Now it's not so hard to say, "Thank you, Lord, for choosing our children."



Adapted from *The Commission* magazine,
July 1990

FMB 400 9/96 P2188D

HELPS FOR PARENTS OF MISSIONARIES

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

No matter what else you do, the foundation of your preparation to be a Missionary Parent is deeply spiritual.

If you have not already given your heart and life to Jesus Christ, you must begin here. You can never understand your child's missionary call if you have not taken the first step of surrendering your will, your all to the One who has called your child to "go into all the world."

There is a step beyond surrendering your life to the Savior. That is to give up your expectations and ambitions for your child and honestly be willing for him or her to be anything God wants him to be; to go anywhere God wants him to go. I personally made this surrender before my child felt God's missionary call, so it made that realization easier. If you haven't already done this, you should examine your life and motives now—it won't get easier, only harder if you don't do this.

This doesn't lessen the pain, but it heightens the joy. Nehemiah 8:10 says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." I know this to be true. That awesome day when we first said goodbye, my heart was pierced by unutterable pain, but was matched with unspeakable joy. As the tears flowed, joy flooded my heart—to think, that I had a son and a daughter-in-law who loved God so much that they would leave all to follow Him.

The Apostle John said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." (3 John 4) Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Praise God, they are walking in Him! If you stay centered in Christ, God will bring healing to your pain. He will help you in many practical ways to bring this healing about. Unless you have walked this deeply spiritual pathway, other practical suggestions will only mask your pain. There is no substitute for your being willing to give your son or daughter to do God's will, not yours.

Time alone with God in Bible study and prayer is necessary for growth in your Christian life in general. But committing a segment of this time to pray about your child's calling, preparation, and separation, is another aspect of your spiritual preparation for being a missionary parent.

The following are some suggestions of study for you to follow. Ask God to speak to your heart through His Word in the following areas:

(1) **The Missionary Imperative:**

The Great Commission—Matthew 28:18-20
 Laborers for the harvest—Matthew 9:36-38
 Different gifts in the body—Ephesians 4:11,12
 Sent forth by the Holy Spirit—Acts 13:1-5

(2) **Jesus' Provision for Loved Ones of the Missionary:**

Jesus' own mother—John 19:26,27
 Honor father and mother—Mark 7:8-13

(3) Full Surrender:

Lose your life for Jesus' sake and the gospel's—Mark 8:34-37; John 12:25
 Take up your cross and follow Jesus—Matthew 10:37-39; Luke 14:25-27

(4) Peace for Your Troubled Soul:

Don't worry, but pray—Philippians 4:4-7
 Think on the good—Philippians 4:8,9
 Learn to praise the Lord—Psalm 63:3-7
 Praise at all times—Psalm 34:1-4
 Help for depression—Psalm 42:5
 Peace for your children—Isaiah 54:11-13
 Victory over fear—Psalm 112:7,8

(5) Strength for Your Weakness:

The Lord, your strength and high tower—Psalm 18:1-3
 How to leap over the wall of your weakness—Psalm 18:29
 How to climb on high places—Psalm 18:30-33
 Victory for your battle—Psalm 18:34-39
 Joy comes in the morning—Psalm 30:5
 Strength for your heart—Psalm 31:24

(6) Guidance for Your Future:

The meek (Teachable) will be guides—Psalm 25:9
 Waiting on God—Psalm 25:3-5
 The secret of the Lord—Psalm 25:1
 Acknowledge Him in all your ways—Proverbs 3:5,6

This time alone with God in behalf of your child and his or her family should begin with the first knowledge of his missionary call. It should continue and be developed according to new levels of preparation, and then finally when he or she is actually ministering on the mission field.

You should verbally make it known that you want to be on your child's missionary team; and that you are supportive and vitally interested in his or her work. Ask for specific prayer requests; and communicate that you are actively praying for him on the mission field. Remember "Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20)

The following are suggestions for you to use as you PRAY for your missionary son or daughter:

- 1 - To recognize his or her inadequacy and need for total dependence on the Lord (John 15:5)
- 2 - To recognize his or her adequacy in Christ (Philippians 4:13)
- 3 - To be daily filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)
- 4 - To have a daily quiet time with the Lord
- 5 - To stand strong against the wiles of the evil one (Ephesians 6:12-20)

HELPS FOR PARENTS OF MISSIONARIES

EMOTIONAL PREPARATION

To deny the potential pain of separation is to invite great emotional trauma. Separation from loved ones can deeply hurt. In a meeting of missionary parents one mother asked through her tears, "Will the pain ever go away?"

You too may be feeling such pain and asking the same kind of question. Yes, the sharpness of the pain will go away. The "how soon" depends on you and your circumstances.

Each person is different with differing temperaments. People handle emotions in different ways. Men and women will deal with their emotions from a different perspective. Make efforts to be understanding of one another. Men, allow your wife to express her grief. Women, your husband may hurt inside but not be expressing his feelings. Ask God for strength and healing of any pain.

Circumstances vary greatly, and will influence your emotional reactions. One missionary mom's husband died six months before her daughter left for a far-away land. She saw no prospect for a visit and it would be difficult to call. Another mom was saying goodbye to her only grandchild when her son's family left for overseas. These missionary parents needed extra support, care, and prayer.

Whatever your personality or circumstances, let the natural emotions of separation remind you to walk with God each day. Tell God exactly how you feel. God understands your heartache. Ask God to comfort you and heal any distress.

Your emotions are connected to your spiritual life. Read the sheet on "Spiritual Preparation" with special attention to the need to surrender your expectations and ambitions for your son or daughter, allowing God to lead freely in his or her life.

Even if you are willing to give up your child to God to follow His calling, there will still be pain along the way. First, it will be connected with the thought of his or her going; then, the actual departure; and finally, the years of separation. Although there is an initial surrender on your part for God to use your child, you will need to daily work out this surrender. God won't "zap" the pain overnight. However, God will graciously work in your life.

You can make preparation in prayer for each level of your child's leaving. It will be much like cutting the "apron strings" when your child was growing up. You must begin early to cut the emotional apron strings. If you missed doing it at first, and have lived with some denial, it may take more time and more prayer at this stage. But whatever stage, begin now.

Begin by thanking God and rejoicing for your child's missionary call—even if you don't feel thankful. Thank God in faith. Remember the words of the apostle Paul, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). Thank God for using your son or daughter to bring the good news of Christ to a people of this world in need.

As you give thanks to God and accept your child's obedience to God's call, you will find more strength to walk through the grief process. It may help to read some good material on grief. Also, be willing to ask for and accept support for yourself from family and friends. Allow the body of Christ to be a source of strength as you emotionally prepare for your child's career as a missionary.

As you PRAY for your missionary son/daughter, remember the importance of the emotional life, both your child's and yours:

- 1 - Pray for protection against loneliness, depression, and discouragement. (See Psalm 107:28-31)
- 2 - Pray for contentment with circumstances and provisions. (See Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6-8)
- 3 - Pray your thanksgiving to God every day. (See Psalm 34:1)

HELPS FOR PARENTS OF MISSIONARIES

PRACTICAL PREPARATION

There are practical ways to help your child get ready to go to the mission field. Here are some hints that will not only help your child, but they will help you get in on their ministry, and help ease the trauma of their leaving.

- (1) Help them in shopping for items that need to be purchased stateside.
These will vary greatly depending on your child's chosen field, marital and family status.
- (2) Be a "sounding board." Listen to them, give wise and positive counsel.
- (3) Consider what your special going-away gift(s) could be (something nice and practical according to your "pocket book"). For example:
 - Luggage
 - Sewing machine
 - Heavy duty mixer with dough hook
 - Wheat berry grinder (make their own whole wheat bread)
 - Juicer
 - Supply of vitamins
 - Camcorder or camera
 - Computer and printer
 - Dual system TV
- (4) Give a special symbolic gift that will say, "We love and support you; we're proud of you; we're praying for you." Examples: Special book or books, locket with parents picture and inscription, small chest with specially chosen scripture verse on the inside or on a brass plate on the outside.
- (5) Wrap up a gift of love (perhaps in a heart shaped box) with slips of paper that give "promise love gifts." Examples: Good for one letter a week, one phone call every two weeks or once a month, one video tape showing Christmas at home, etc.
- (6) If you live in the same town as your child, give a "Blessing Party" for friends and relatives who are potential prayer partners.
 - Set up a special display "telling the story" of your child's (and family's) missionary journey. (Pictures, globe, curios from country, etc.)
 - Have your child (and partner) share their vision for their mission field and enlist prayer support from those present.
 - Give out prayer Reminder Cards with their picture, country to which they are going, etc.
 - You or your spouse lead a time of giving "blessings" for your child (and partner) and close with a spontaneous prayer time for them.
 - On the invitation ask the friends and family to bring a "written blessing" on a 3 x 5 card. This can be in the form of a verse of scripture or a "spiritual good wish" or prayer. Some may wish to give their blessing vocally, others can hand their blessings to them to read later.
 - Have each person bring a snapshot of themselves to go in a small prayer partner album.

- (7) Depending on age of grandchildren—have a special MK (Missionary Kid) going away party with some friends.
- Have children bring a small appropriate gift to show love.
 - Plan a short program related to the child's age. Show country where the MK is going on a map or globe.
 - Ask children who are guests to become prayer partners for the MK. Give a prayer reminder bookmark with the MK's picture, etc.
- (8) Give your son or daughter up-to-date family pictures put into an album or framed nicely.
- (9) Prepare an address, birthday, anniversary book of family and close relatives.
- (10) Show concern for the country and people where your children are going by doing some of the following:
- Learn about the area your child is going.
 - Buy a map and book about the country. Begin to learn about their culture and customs.
 - Learn some of the language.
 - Become more concerned about missions in general. Become a "world Christian."
 - Order *The Commission Magazine*, published by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.
 - Read some missionary biographies, especially some concerning his or her country.
 - Purchase the book *OPERATION WORLD*, which tells about the spiritual needs of each country of the world and use it as an aid to pray.
- (11) Prepare cards, special travel items, small games, etc. to give to the family to open, read and use during the flight and first few days on the field.

Remember to include practical issues as you PRAY for your missionary son/daughter. Here are some things you may want to include as you pray:

- The right environment in which to live ... Location of dependable facilities, bank, doctor, grocery store, etc.
- Friends with whom they can share ... Ability to relate to new neighbors and acquaintances.
- A good grasp of the language ... Appreciation of the culture in which they live.
- Adjustment for the children ... For new friends and good schooling situation.
- Wise strategies for ministering to and reaching the lost and unchurched ...
- Boldness to witness for Christ.

Experiencing Grief??

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Seeing a loved one move to another part of the world can involve significant grief. Grief is an emotional and physical reaction to a significant personal loss. Usually we think of grief in relation to the death of a loved one, since this is the most painful kind of grief. No one is immune to grief. Grief comes to all of us at various times in our life, and it is experienced in different ways.

If you are grieving as your family member moves overseas in Christian ministry, perhaps this material will help you understand what is happening to you. Because your grief is unique, do not take this as a final word about grief, but as an encouragement to understand your specific situation better. You probably know more about grief right now than you realize. The following may help you understand it more fully.

There are some commonalities to all types of grief. All grief is painful, dynamic, personal, and brings mixed feelings.

Grief is painful. It hurts. You may feel a persistent headache. Your muscles may not move as you want them to. You may feel listless or hungry but with no desire to eat. You may experience shortness of breath, as if you need to breathe deeply, to sigh. All of these responses are normal. If you are grieving, you probably feel some of these.

You have experienced a personal loss. This loss can be overwhelming at times for some. Other family members, familiar daily tasks, jobs may not seem as important as they once did. Feelings of meaninglessness or lostness can suddenly intrude on your life. This is natural. Try to keep in mind that grief moves slowly and that meaning returns slowly.

It is often helpful to express your grief. You may need to cry and release your feelings – sharing them with an understanding person. Often people in grief find such expression of feeling a release, allowing much of their physical pain to fade away. Be careful of advice to “Don’t cry, don’t worry, you’ll be all right.” God will take of you. But one way God does this is to allow our grief to be eased by crying, sharing with others and getting feelings out so that they can be dealt with.

Grief is directional. It moves through stages. Grief will naturally move you forward to a point where you accept your loss and begin to feel and act like your former self. If you are feeling intense pangs of grief now, it is important to remember that grief is part of a healthy healing process.

Grief is personal. No one feels grief exactly as you feel it. Your feelings and your circumstances are unique. The circumstances of your loved ones move overseas will cause you to experience grief differently. Circumstances such as the depth of your relationship with the person, family situations, children involved, where they are going, plans for the future, health issues, etc. all effect the impact of the grief experience.

Only you know what it means to say good-bye to a loved one as they follow their missions calling. However, be careful not to let this uniqueness betray you. The fact that your feelings and circumstances are unique should not allow you to isolate yourself from others. Although they may not be grieving now, your pastor and many of your friends have experienced grief. They can help you if you will let them.

Grief includes mixed feelings. The pain and hurt of grief are the most common feelings. Most of us accept these as normal. However, grief is more than simple sadness. Grief can include others feelings, such as guilt and hostility, which are not always accepted as normal. ³¹⁷

A typical aspect of grief is the experience of some guilt. This is usually caused when a grieving person realizes how self-centered he or she is. You feel like shouting, "I hurt - don't they understand that!" Or, "Why can't others understand what I have lost." You hurt. You are rightly self-centered in being concerned about taking care of your emotional wounds. You must be concerned about your emotional survival. This is normal. Expect to feel some regret and to have second thoughts about your relationship. There is no need to feel guilty.

Hostility is sometimes a problem for people in grief. Hostility is usually seen in the question, "Why did this have to happen to me?" Under the best of circumstances, assuming a new and demanding role is difficult. You have experienced a loss. Some hostility may be part of your grief experience because new demands have been pushed upon you.

Grief is good. Grief is not easy or painless. However, grief can be good because it is a natural and healthy response to a significant personal loss. Grief calls your attention to the need to readjust your life – grief calls your attention to the need to be healed.

The Christian faith affirms grief as a part of life. Human life involves loss. However, God's grace is available to help us through the pain and grief. God's grace sets us free to accept our personal loss and insecurities.

Christian fellowship can help you in times of grief such as this. Your church and fellowship with other Christians can bring new life out of grief. Your church can say to you: "We stand with you in believing that God is the source of life. We comfort you in your grief. We provide a caring and supportive fellowship. We acknowledge your value as a person. Let's talk and pray and worship together as you walk through your grief."

Grief finds hope in God. During grief, hope is found in relationship with God. God loves you. This may not be clear to you; however, in your grief. Neither was it clear to Jesus as he faced death on the cross. He cried, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" (Matt.27:46) Such a leap of faith is not easy; such a leap assumes that there is hope in the face of grief. Hope and grief are both natural. Hope remains; however, after grief is gone. "Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." (I Thess. 4:13)

Neither death nor grief can separate us from God's love. In our inseparable relationship with God, there is hope – hope which requires a leap of faith, despite the hurt of grief.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution... No, in all these things we are more than conquers through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor thins present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. In this there is hope, even in the face of loss and grief. Be hopeful... have faith in God.

The above has been adapted from Facing Grief with Faith by Francis Martin (Sunday School Board, Nashville, TN 1976) in order to address concerns of missionary parents.

Rick Bates, Family Ministries Section, FMB - 1994

APPENDIX C

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

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Date: 07-08-97

IRB#: AS-97-071

Proposal Title: BEING A MISSIONARY FAMILY OVER TIME: RITUAL AND INTERACTION IN
THE PRODUCTION OF MEANING

Principal Investigator(s): C. Edgley, Lana Bolhouse

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

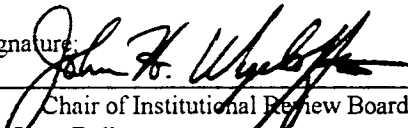
ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT
NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE
APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:



Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Lana Bolhouse

Date: August 8, 1997

VITA

Lana Jo Gomez Bolhouse *L*

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: **BEING A MISSIONARY FAMILY OVER TIME: RITUAL AND INTERACTION IN THE PRODUCTION OF MEANING**

Major Field: Sociology

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