

Cross-Cultural Issues in Ministry to Students at Hokusei Gakuen Women's Junior College

キャンパス・ミニストリーにおける異文化問題：
リレーショナル・アプローチ

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要 約

世界観の相違及び文化の相互理解の不足が、これまでの北星学園女子短期大学のキャンパス・ミニストリーに少なからぬ影響を及ぼしている。だが、そもそもキリスト教は、そうした相互理解の不足、誤解、価値観や信仰の違いを明らかにすることにより、そのミニストリーの在り方を確立していこうとする。本稿は、その視点にたち、学生たちが聖書に対する正しい理解のもとでキリストへの応答（肯定的であれ否定的であれ）の機会をもっていくためには、ミニストリーに携わる者が、学生の感じているニーズを適格に探知することと文化同一者によるミニストリーの強化が必要不可欠であることを論じる試論である。

ABSTRACT

Differing worldviews and inadequate cultural awareness have inhibited effective cross-cultural communication of the Christian faith to students at Hokusei Gakuen Women's Junior College and continue to do so today. Identifying specific areas of unawareness, misperception, differing viewpoints, and varying faith commitments offers hope for a clearer presentation of the Christian message. Addressing students' felt needs and empowering cultural insiders to do ministry are primary means toward creating opportunities for students to respond to Christ (whether positively or negatively) on the basis of an accurate biblical understanding of him.

キーワード: *incarnational, supracultural, worldview, witness, ministry*

Introduction

Culture inevitably involves relationships. Although also influenced significantly by the inanimate physical world, people form cultures largely as ways to make life with each other more manageable and meaningful. With this in mind, I will take a relational approach in examining cross-cultural interactions between teachers and students, which constitute a

significant part of life at Hokusei Gakuen Women's Junior College. In line with this approach, I will write in the first person.

Numerous relationships--student-student, teacher-teacher, administration-faculty, male-female, Christian-non-Christian, school-community, and others--all involve cross-cultural issues and affect Christian ministry. However, space limitations make it necessary to narrow the scope of this study to probably the most central relationships in school life, those between teacher and student. I will proceed with the assumption that relationships with God overarch and touch on these and all relationships. Also, while there will be *no separate consideration of relationships with God*, it will be evident that I assume each of the others to take its meaning within the context of its connection with him.

Methodology

I conducted a series of interviews with nine Japanese and one foreigner, all of whom are personally familiar with both students and teachers at Hokusei Gakuen Women's Junior College. These informants will be referred to as Informant A through Informant J. Their proper names will be omitted, and the following descriptions have no particular correspondence with the A through J ordering.

Three informants have taught at this institution for over thirty-five years. One has served as English Department chairperson, one as Life Sciences Department chairperson, and one as school president. Several informants are former Hokusei students, and four are currently serving as teachers. Also among the informants are office staff persons responsible for managing day-to-day student affairs, who have consistent direct contact with both current and former students of a wide range of ages. Two informants are current students, one belonging to the Life Sciences Department and one to the English Department. Three informants have approximately ten years' experience or more living in the West. Six are female and four male. Approximately half are Christian and half non-Christian. In addition to these informants, many English Department students contributed their insights through written reports and comments in conversations.

Worldview Issues Impacting Cross-Cultural Ministry

Worldviews of Cross-Cultural Witnesses

Cross-cultural relations have played a major role throughout Hokusei's history. The first cross-cultural Christian witness at Hokusei Gakuen was Sarah C. Smith, the school system's founder. Throughout her time and even in the junior college's early days (beginning in 1951), American missionaries held top leadership positions. The school system's formally stated identity, official purposes, and mission, have, with the exception of a brief time during World War II, always been Christian in nature (Smith, c. 1887, p. 1).

However, the majority of students and teachers comprising Hokusei Gakuen have not

embraced Christian ideals as their own. Historical forces have radically narrowed the scope of Christian influence within the life of the school. These include the evaporation of the interest in religion which many Japanese felt soon after the Second World War, the failure of Japanese churches to grow at a rate which would provide enough qualified educational professionals to staff fully developed Christian educational institutions, and a decrease in the perception of the need to hire Christian staff members.

Thus while the junior college has continued to incorporate cross-cultural ties into school life, secularization has become a prominent characteristic of these connections and the junior college in general. The percentage of Christians hired at the women's junior college has fallen drastically to the level of 10-20 percent of the full-time staff (Japanese and foreign combined), depending on how one may choose to categorize. It is something quite different from a Christ-centered worldview or a passion for Christian education which now drives many of the day-to-day affairs of the school. Altering the identity of the staff has transformed the medium through which Christian witness comes, and in so doing affected the message itself.

Among those who identify ourselves as Christian (both foreign and Japanese), there is also a wide variance in perceptions of what "the Christian message" is, some being theologically conservative and others on the liberal end of the spectrum. Despite these differences, however, there are some basic perceptions held widely enough to be considered typical of Christian staff members. Among them is the affirmation that an objective source of knowledge exists—not only of information but wisdom, as well. We live in not only a self-other universe (Kearney, 1984) but an I-Thou universe (Buber, 1937), the ultimate Thou being the God revealed in Scripture. Another worldview-related concept is that humans create cultures reflective of our values and perceptions, which are (as we ourselves are) fundamentally spiritual in nature.

Worldviews of Students

Worldviews of students, by and large non-Christian, also powerfully influence school life and find expression in situations such as classroom discussions, reflection reports, committee meetings, and casual conversations. What worldviews shape their lives?

Probably the simplest answer for most students would be secular humanism, though it would be misleading to equate Japanese versions of this viewpoint with those of westerners. "Secular" characterizes the view of many in the sense that they consider truth, reality, morals, and values as defined primarily by culture, by themselves, or some combination of these—not by a supracultural being such as the Christian God. Rather than consciously holding specific doctrines which conflict with scriptural teachings, most indicate that "being Japanese" in a more general sense directs their lives in a direction different than a Christian one. Traditional Buddhism, Shinto, or Confucianism would hold no special appeal for the

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typical Hokusei student. She would be "humanist" in finding the reliance on human effort (which traditional Japanese religions and philosophies have emphasized) more palatable than the Christian concept of total reliance on God. One student expressed her faith with the following words. (The grammar and spelling mistakes in this and following quotations from students will appear as they were originally written.) "I have not any religion I think 'SELF religion' is the best word for me." ("F" Class student, 1997, p. 2)

This is not to say that many students embrace specifically atheistic worldviews. It is common to hear stated the "different paths up Mt. Fuji" idea that all major religions have the same basic purposes and teachings. They thus consider Christianity a good thing and themselves open-minded toward it. The same student continued.

I have not any religion, but my mind or thinking type is nearly Christianity, I think.

However I want to gather the good points of every religion. . . . If there is collection of good points from every religion, I may believe the new religion. ("F" Class student, 1997, p. 3)

Theirs is a dualistic worldview which does not deny the existence of God or many gods (including deified ancestors), yet it does not consider the divine as vitally linked to the events and decisions of life in this world. Only a few say they hold more specifically theistic worldviews, which include those of new Japanese religions, mostly recently-founded Buddhist or Shinto sects (Student Affairs Committee, 1989-1995).

As students begin becoming independent from their home environment and seek a sound set of beliefs and a reliable source of power to help them make their way through life, many turn to "economism," looking to the results of Japan's post-war "economic miracle" for material prosperity which will supply security and happiness. Particularly those highly valuing education tend to consider scientific thought not only as a means of understanding and relating to the natural world but a way of viewing all of life.

Few if any speak of "economism" or "scientism" as functional religions in their lives, yet many treat these as approaches to life to which they have a deep-seated faith commitment, as objects of their deepest hopes or sources of their power for meeting life's challenges. To use the word "religion" brings to mind powerful negative images, including the millions who died in the name of the Japanese Emperor, the Aum Shinri Kyo cult members convicted of the 1995 poison gas attacks on the Tokyo subways, and a recent Kobe junior high school student whose personal devotional writings reveal that his religious beliefs led him to commit murders including the beheading of a neighbor boy (Allison, 1996, pp. 59-72).

Not surprisingly, then, most (if they think of religion at all) consider themselves *mushinronsha* ("non-religious people"). Many rarely consider the attitudes and outlooks on life which they embrace and which guide them as anything but "normal," certainly not as functional substitutes for religious worldviews. Though similar "cultural blindness" occurs in probably every nation and person, in this highly conformist society, choices made at the worldview level

about what is "normal" have enormous impact.

Spending two years in this environment, far more students graduate and enter adult society having made choices--more consciously and firmly than before--to keep secular, dualistic, humanistic worldviews than those students who begin a life of faith in Christ. In this sense Hokusei Gakuen Women's Junior College, even though a mission school, serves as a secularizing force in Japanese society.

Image of the Ideal Student

Teachers' Ideals

A number of culture-related assumptions frequently feed into the interaction between students and teachers. Informant J notes that one assumption involves the image in the minds of teachers of the model student--the type of person who, if all could somehow go smoothly over the course of her two years, would go out into society as a Hokusei graduate (Informant J, 1997).

These ideals affect the educational process of students profoundly both before and after they enter Hokusei. One area of impact appears in the high cultural value placed on group harmony (that is, the idea that whereas an individual can accomplish little if anything of lasting significance, unity and cooperation have great power). The typical Japanese educational process does not encourage individual creativity or aspiring to greatness which does not involve others in the group. Rather, it instills the importance of smooth relations with and keen awareness of the members of one's group. Students arriving at Hokusei's doors have not been taught to reach for great challenges in their own lives nearly so much as to peacefully cooperate with others, to move ahead by getting along with others. Their educators' efforts result in "bonsai trees," pruned severely while young so that they can grow--not as high as possible but to into maturity so that they will live in beautiful harmony with the world around them (Feiler, 1991, 237).

When they arrive at Hokusei, a much more complex set of expectations awaits them. The spirit and abilities their teachers seek to develop in them vary tremendously. Some Japanese teachers seek to instill so-called Western values such as independence and creativity more than others. Some foreign teachers give expression to, allow to develop, and utilize students' culturally acquired skills (such as at team work) more than others. Western-thinking teachers they encounter in junior college much more often tend to encourage individualistic perspectives and goals in students. As a result, for a Christian cross-cultural communicator such as an English teacher to approach the students unaware of the differing and conflicting hopes their various teachers have for them invites problems going far deeper than language.

Expecting students in large classes to participate in free discussion requiring individuals to speak out (and thus be different from the group), for example, most often meets with silence and ends in failure. A student who becomes the outspoken, straightforward person who would be loved and respected in the West, may have a price to pay for readily accepting the values which come along with non-typical Japanese teaching. This type student may not, for instance, give the

impression a prospective employer is looking for (available jobs often consist largely of answering the telephone or making copies and serving tea).

Even deeper than the difficulties in human relationships which arise from teachers' varying ideals is the matter of God's ideals for the students. Japanese values which teachers impart not only equip students more fully for life in Japanese society than Western ones do, they also are arguably much closer to biblical ideals, Scripture clearly describing Christian faith as one to be lived out in community, taking its definition and shape inside human relationships.

Another area in which teachers' cultural ideals impact the process of Christian education relates to internationalism. The strong Japanese national consciousness is well-known, reflecting educational ideals which have aimed at equipping students to relate with people inside their own ethnic group. In this largely homogeneous society, however, many students never have direct contact with anyone from the world beyond Japan and thus may acquire few skills for relating internationally.

This represents no special problem in the minds of some teachers, while others see a need to instill a more global perspective in students, for example through exposure to teachers from overseas. Many at Hokusei have traditionally emphasized the latter viewpoint. Some of the non-Japanese Christian teachers, while embracing these goals, seek to achieve them through linking true internationalization to a redeeming relationship with Christ, whose death and resurrection provided a way for all the world's people to be united.

In summary, educators' developmental goals themselves, as well as the means of achieving them, vary tremendously from teacher to teacher. The need presents itself, therefore, for cross-cultural witnesses to recognize these differences and expect that they will be reflected in the students' attitudes and directions of development. The situation also suggests the need for Christian witnesses from abroad to (a) define internationalization clearly for ourselves, (b) decide where the dividing line lies between heightening students' global awareness and peddling our cultural values under the guise of teaching internationalization, and (c) distinguish between a gospel which Japanese can live out within their own cultural context and one which requires them first to adapt to the world community's values.

Students' Ideals

How do students' images of an ideal student compare with those which staff members have? Teachers hope to realize our own ideals largely through the students' active, diligent, enthusiastic participation in the school programs which we ourselves have authorized if not actively structured. Students (and the society in general), on the other hand, often see simple leisure and enjoyment as at least as necessary for growth into well-rounded people as participation in school programs. Part of this is due to the fact that the years-long ordeal of passing entrance tests ("examination hell") which they have just recently finished combines with the strong hesitancy (by Western standards) on the part of teachers to fail a student once she has been admitted to the

school.

These factors lead students to expect their college years to be a joyous reprieve from the intense pressure society exerts on them both before and after this part of life. Informant H explains that when class work requires more than they expected of their time and energy, their hope of fun days as college students shatters, and they become disappointed, disillusioned, and demotivated (Informant H, 1997).

Foreign teachers may tend to judge the students as we would women college students in our own countries--who do their most rigorous study *after* high school and often find satisfying career opportunities as reward for their efforts--and expect Japanese to do the same. To the extent that we do so, a gap in expectations is likely to appear. Among junior colleges in this area, Hokusei has a reputation of being demanding academically. It also employs more foreign and foreign-educated teachers than most. These factors no doubt are interrelated and contribute to the perception differences regarding the ideal student. Though not an issue limited to *Christian* cross-cultural communication, these value differences can produce significant, daily obstacles between students and teachers and thus adversely affect the relationships on which the successful communication of the Christian message depends.

Another issue affecting student-teacher relationships involves the rapid social change now occurring in Japan and the type of lives young people are choosing to live. Modern youth have come to be called *shinjinrui* ("new breed"). Attitudes associated with this term include (a) a greater concern with individual freedom and pleasure (as opposed to a keen awareness of duty to the group) and (b) less compulsion to show deep respect for or follow the guidance of authority figures.

Such independence and individualism are widely seen in Japan as reflecting the influence of cultural openness toward the West. This raises the questions of how welcome these changes are and if they will in the long run actually benefit students as Japanese. Some at Hokusei welcome these trends as progress; others decry the loss of traditional values, fearing that youth are adopting the worst parts of Western culture. Acting on Western cultural values may lead teachers to encourage as much individual freedom and independence as possible. However, cross-cultural witnesses seeking to base our ministry on biblical teachings may find ourselves advocating not Christ but our cultures if we do not at minimum view these changes with caution. The evidence is far from conclusive that the cultural upheaval underway in Japan is moving the nation any closer to the unity, cooperation, and faithful obedience which the Bible describes God as desiring.

Image of the Ideal Teacher

Just as differing ideals regarding students help create perception and expectation gaps in the process of Christian witness and other communication, varying images of what constitutes an "admirable" teacher also influence student-teacher relationships in numerous ways.

The Process of Forming Images of Teachers

Informant G notes that students' perceptions of foreign teachers gradually transform during their two years at Hokusei. In the first stage, students respond to teachers' appearance, interested in how different from Japanese we look. This phase often passes relatively quickly, in many cases by the first semester's end.

In the second stage, students respond to difficulties in communication with the foreign teachers, trying to determine whether the teacher's and/or their own language skills will allow more than a superficial relationship. This phase has a longer-lasting influence on relationships than the first. It often continues roughly through the end of the second semester. Students have to examine in more depth to determine the language capabilities of each teacher and of them selves.

This will strongly influence the development of the third stage, in which students respond more to *what* the teacher says and does rather than to *how* he/she does it or how the teacher looks. A gap widens between students in their responses to teachers. Those who have become familiar and established firm communication links with teachers continue to grow in relationship as the remainder of the two years progresses. Those who have not, often give up and do not seek meaningful communication. The variation in student responses continues increasing until graduation (Informant G, 1997).

This progression suggests there is a window of opportunity for establishing relationships with students, one which can close rather quickly. Teachers wishing to take an incarnational approach to *ministry, proclaiming the gospel through modeling the change it brings about in our lives and relationships*, need to be faithful stewards of each opportunity to meet and get to know students. Effectiveness hinges to a certain degree on doing so in a relatively short period of time.

Qualities of an Ideal Teacher in the Minds of Students

One factor which helps shape many students' image of the ideal instructor relates to the comparatively high status of teachers in Japanese society. Students, and staff members who regularly communicate with them, point to differences in the air of authority which Japanese and foreign teachers have. Most expect that Japanese teachers will speak more as superiors to subordinates, while foreign teachers may not be as conscious of status. Informant I echoed opinions commonly expressed by many when she said,

My Japanese teachers speak as if they are doing me a favor by teaching us. It feels like they are looking down on us. But foreign teachers say thank you at the end of class, and I wonder, "Why do they do that?" It seems incongruous to me. (Informant I, 1997, translation mine)

Without trying to judge one style better than the other, it would be safe to say that students are more familiar with a somewhat authoritarian manner and that some students prefer it, while others do not. Especially in light of students' expectations that foreigners will teach differently

from Japanese, whichever approach a teacher takes will likely make him/her appear confusing or unpredictable (traits generally not respected in this culture) and thus less than ideal in the eyes of some students. This can impact the process of developing relationships of trust, undermining the incarnational expression of Christ's teachings through a Christian's life.

Another point of difference in the perception of the ideal teacher lies in the assumption many students have that all or nearly all Americans are Christian. Many are often surprised to hear otherwise. Informant D, who has daily personal contact with a wide variety of students, notes a specific danger involved in students' images of the ideal foreign teacher.

Students assume that, as Christians, foreign teachers will not become angry, no matter what happens, that they will forgive nearly anything. Students may be shocked if they find out this is not the case. If they see the human weaknesses of Christian teachers, they may swing from one extreme to the other, seeing Christians as complete hypocrites. I think you Christians have a hard job. (Informant D, 1997, translation mine)

Though certainly not an issue confined to cross-cultural witness, it is particularly pronounced in this mission setting, with students' perceptions of foreign Christians channeled through relatively few personal relationships. Thus there may be a particularly high price to pay for failing to walk humbly, rely on grace, and avoid self-promotion.

Classes

For many students, virtually the only interaction with teachers happens in classroom situations. It is also here that cross-cultural witnesses have the most freedom to determine how we will present Christian faith. If clear communication is to be achieved, then, it is imperative that in this classroom context we introduce Christ in ways which reflect cross-cultural awareness and implement the insights of anthropology along with the principles of Scripture.

Introduction to Christianity classes (required in the first year for all students and taught by the Japanese religious affairs director), daily worship services, and many other occasions for Japanese-to-Japanese ministry affect cross-cultural communication of faith indirectly yet powerfully. They help students perceive Christian teachings not just as strange foreign ideas but as connected with, informing, and growing out of conditions within Japan.

Non-Japanese usually present the Christian faith most directly through English Bible courses. Teachers have chosen student-centered learning as an educational goal on which to concentrate. Assuming our understanding of the Bible and our students would always be limited or culturally biased or both, we attempt to begin with the needs and interests which not only *we* but the *students* perceive they have and move from there to introduce what God says to them about these matters. We are hoping to help them do their own theology, as Song says, "not simply as a variation of the traditional Western theology but as something that speaks out of the depths of the Asian world and thus earns the right to speak to it" (1979, p. 10).

Approaches to teaching include a variety of stories, often about ex-Hokusei students or other

Japanese people, hopefully with whom our classes' students can identify. This represents an attempt to, in one sense, rely on nationals to "interpret" the message of Christ through their lives and experiences to other cultural insiders. Another means of doing this is including in reading lists Japanese writers (such as the Hokkaido resident Miura Ayako and Hoshino Tomihiro, the handicapped painter and poet).

Some co-authoring with Japanese colleagues has also been possible already, and consulting students has yielded useful ideas to include in paper-writing and class preparation. Doing more of this can not only provide greater insight for readers but also deepen teachers' own understanding of the students' culture, which will in turn enable us to teach more effectively. Utilizing students not only as resources for but as the actual subjects of research also holds many possibilities for giving them a clearer voice with which to speak.

In addition to a student-centered approach to course work, instructors are exploring ways to incorporate experiential learning into classes. Bible teachers are currently experimenting with a program in which a first year student meets directly with a local church member and interviews that person about (1) how she/he came to believe in Christ, (2) what Christ now means to him or her, and (3) any other questions or comments the student may have. Almost interviewees are women. I chose them in order to avoid as fully as possible the gender-related cultural barriers against which many of us foreign teachers struggle. One hope for this project is that some students will not only complete an assignment but establish "cultural insider friendships" with church members.

Almost exactly half the first year students selected this type of learning experience this year. Although only one semester's results are in, they are encouraging, both from the church members who took the opportunity to tell about themselves and from the students who encountered (many for the first time) not only the concepts and stories they learn in the classroom but a living, breathing, fellow-Japanese Christian who has experienced genuine faith. Many students wrote comments similar to these:

. . . I had thought that I want to see a Japanese Christian and talk about Christ for a long time. I'm interested in the Christian's mind. . . . It was very interesting, and her lecture moved me. I want to hear her speech again. . . .

But I've never seen Japanese Christian and I do not know their mind. So I did the interview reports.

I had thought that Christian have to live in hard situation. For example, they may have hard rule, or, they may have big ceremony to be the Christian, and so on. . . . In the end, I found that my expectation was not true. . . .

. . . I felt at easy. This interview reports gave me a broad view of things.

It was a precious experience for me. ("B" Class student, 1997, pp. 14)

Second year students have the option of exchanging e-mail letters with a Christian, the content being the same as the face-to-face interview the first year students do. As in the case of the

first year students, most of those interviewed are women; however, most of the second year students' partners are native English speakers who live in America. This project also has completed only its first trial semester, making evaluation difficult; nevertheless, the students' responses give indication that they are actively engaged in the process of encountering the gospel and freely forming their own responses to it. It is not clear that this type of report succeeds in achieving clear cross-cultural communication of Christian faith as well as the face-to-face interviews with Japanese, however.

In addition to required English Bible classes, I am now teaching an unofficial English Bible class for night students. The group is small enough to allow for free interaction in discussing Bible teachings. Meeting at school appears to avoid the aversion many Japanese have, not to Christ himself but to going to church.

Common Classroom Issues in Student-Teacher Relationship Building

In these classes and all requiring cross-cultural communication, teachers and students encounter problems, many of which are not isolated occurrences but surface frequently. For instance, students, whose assumptions often include the one that teachers are not people to whom one may complain directly, tend to remain silent when problems occur in class (such as when students want to work more in a large group rather than pairs)--silent, that is, until asked specifically to write about problems on a course evaluation form after the term finishes (Informant E, 1997). Many Western teachers tend to assume that an absence of complaints means we are doing a good job and may even feel betrayed when evaluation surveys show the students felt otherwise.

Another issue hinges on concepts regarding use of space. Most Japanese teachers during class remain in the center of the slightly raised platform at the front of the classroom. Western teachers, however, more often move from place to place, walking among students to check their work or taking a position in the back of the room while videos play. Student surveys indicate that this contributes to a feeling of familiarity with the teacher and improves students' attitudes toward study (Takasugi and Uematsu, 1996, pp. 10-14). In this way, the level of trust between student and teacher also deepens, enriching the relationships through which they can come to experience the grace of God.

Clubs and Club-Related Activities

Club life at Hokusei consists far more of student-to-student than of teacher-to-student relationships (with almost all funding and management of clubs left to students). However, as cross-cultural issues enter the picture more in the area of teacher-student relationships, we will consider clubs and club-related groups in this context. Numbers of students participating in club activities at Hokusei (as nationwide) have declined sharply in recent years. As students increasingly desire leisure time and work part-time to finance their social lives, clubs are taking a back seat or playing no role at all in many cases.

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However, in the last two years, the North Star Bible Club has enjoyed considerable growth, both in the quantity and quality of Christian cross-cultural communication. Much of this appears to be due to an increase in students' active participation in planning and running group activities. Before this time, I had been planning activities myself (basically guessing what would be helpful) after asking members the general types of things they would like to do over the course of a year. Three part-time teachers and I have since last year been providing a variety of activities and letting students choose the ones in which they will join. One group does English activities for fun (discussion, videos, games), with only a little Bible study. Another is forming a gospel music choir. One more studies the Bible in English. English activities with a little language and Bible study is the focus of another, and the last group meets for Bible study in Japanese. Students move freely from one group to another, and no one is expected to attend all the meetings.

Sharing the responsibility for leadership appears to enhance the members' willingness to participate. Students are bringing their friends, contributing their ideas, and apparently enjoying the club much more than they were before. They are also becoming involved in performing service and cross-cultural ministry on their own through bringing old clothes to box and send to acquaintances in Liberia. Opportunities for leadership training are becoming apparent, though this area still needs much attention. I am referring more questions to the club leaders, and they are taking on responsibilities without being asked to do so, such as advising the younger students on how to form the choir. This deepens my learning, as well, and allows them to gain practical ministry experience, forming one sort of teamwork between cultural outsiders and insiders. Two members have decided to follow Christ (partly through experiences in the Bible club), two other new Christian club members are receiving discipleship training, and several more have considered faith seriously and decided they do not now choose to follow Christ. To the extent that "successful" Christian ministry consists in presenting the gospel of Christ in culturally relevant, understandable ways and leaving the results to the guidance of God's Spirit, each of these student responses represents a different type of success.

Practically the only other part of club life involving cross-cultural Christian witness is my work on the Student Affairs Committee and the Christian Education Committee. The former includes various club activities which provide opportunities for me to get to know students informally. This in turn benefits our communication when the time comes for group worship, classroom study, or personal discussions of spiritual matters.

As a Christian Education Committee member, I serve as one of the three faculty sponsors of a club-like student group, the Smith Committee. Members help lead in school wide functions such as freshman camp (leading group discussions), Christmas worship (singing in the choir, presenting a pageant, and introducing speakers), and volunteer community service activities (such as recycling stamps). Each of these activities constitutes an opportunity for students to encounter Christ, whether through overtly religious experiences or through seeking to experience the spirit of Christian service which students learn about in worship and class.

Smith Committee faculty sponsors are avoiding giving many specific instructions, instead leading primarily by providing introductions to people, assistance in setting schedules, and information which students can use as they themselves set and reach their own goals. Particularly given the well-known highly structured nature of the Japanese cultural environment in general, attempting to give their lives still more organization in the form of teacher-designed activities, would appear counterproductive. Rather, we are taking the Christian ministry goal of using what power we have in order to authorize, formalize, sanction, and guide through channels (help with committee or office approval, for instance) plans for service and personal development which originate with students.

Making future strides toward deep structure mission work (Shaw, 1988, pp. 193-204) will involve relying on students to work through their own system of interpersonal relationships. Traditional Japanese *sempai-kohai* ("senior-junior") relationships within groups such as classes or clubs provide culturally-familiar links between members. Though perhaps not as deep and demanding as they once were, it is still through these relationships which encouragement, advice, warnings, and other communication vital to group life circulate. As teachers support the forming of such bonds, students can grow to depend not so much on a teacher as on each other. *Sempai-kohai* relationships create fertile ground for students to introduce the gospel to each other in natural settings. Thus they provide avenues for ministry which often prove more effective than anything a cultural outsider says or does.

Ministry through club life in the future will also depend largely on development of student leaders, whose leadership styles will differ from Western ones. For example, a somewhat authoritarian manner may command respect in Japan, whereas many westerners would resent it. Also, assertive consensus-builders may prove more effective than powerful individuals. Though some students now resist being called harmonious, the traditionally high value on cooperation continues to hold power. Leaders who leave room for varying opinions, yet affirm group harmony when it exists, may succeed in winning the trust necessary for student-to-student Christian witness to take place in a natural environment.

Counseling

Personal conflicts which Hokusei students bring to non-Japanese instructors raise some crucial issues in cross-cultural witness. Past examples of counseling needs which students have brought to foreign teachers (including myself) include the student who had the night before prayed at church to receive Christ but was wavering and confused when her friends reacted suspiciously to her news. Other students have made commitments to Christ while studying in America but upon returning reacted negatively to the atmosphere in Japanese churches and hesitated to become integrated into local church life.

Still other students struggle with loneliness, alienation, or other individual-versus-group issues. Many Hokusei students are physically present with many people their age every day and have

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formal membership in more than one group, yet experienced little or no apparent community. Many, especially those having recently left home for the first time and entered junior college, when asked, reply that they have very few (if any) school friends to whom they could talk openly if they had a personal problem. Commonly, students graduate from school not knowing even the names of many people in their own class of fifty, unwilling or unequipped to venture outside a small circle of acquaintances.

Genuine human community, which (from a Christian perspective) begins with Christ's unconditional acceptance of all people and extends to our acceptance of each other, constitutes the gift Christians have to offer Hokusei students which meets perhaps their greatest perceived need. It will no doubt in the long run benefit troubled people more than many of the well-known therapy techniques, which are commonly foreign, secular, or both. The nature of these approaches to counseling renders them to some degree cut off either from the culture-related issues with which people grapple and/or from Christ, the source of spiritual power which Christians consider necessary for successfully coping with life's problems.

In light of the lack of community, it would seem that a possibility for growth lies in discovering and inventing ways to build togetherness. Potential for culturally relevant ministry lies in inviting students to join activities and introducing them personally to Christ not only individually but in groups of friends (or families, as is sometimes possible).

The need for more authentic relationships, along with the relatively strong communal orientation of Japanese society, suggests that various forms of group counseling offer stronger possibilities than individual forms, which often take the counselee out of her/his natural environment. The cases of students who have dropped out of our school indicate that more effective means of help in forming friendships could prevent the need for much counseling, thus serving as an irreplaceable means of communicating the sustaining and healing power of the gospel relationally. When counseling does become necessary, cross-cultural witnesses could serve Hokusei students more effectively by having a greater number of reliable Japanese counselors (especially women) to whom to refer students. This could improve ministry to students when our linguistic abilities, cultural understanding, or counseling expertise are lacking (or when students simply feel more comfortable talking with someone more like them).

School Worship

One of the five weekly fifteen-minute worship services (six of which students are required to attend each year) is held in English, led usually by a foreign teacher. Slightly less frequently, a foreign teacher leads in Japanese. Language and cultural barriers serve to distort, sometimes minimally and sometimes greatly, the messages which worship leaders give.

Foreign worship leaders have attempted to move into the students' cultural frame of reference by such means as speaking in English about stories which students have already learned in Japanese. Also, first year Smith Committee students (only one out of twenty-eight of whom is a

Christian) recently agreed to serve as worship leaders. They have functioned efficiently, playing roles such as introducing speakers. Though most struggle with nervousness, they appear to grow in confidence through the experience. Bible Club students occasionally lead in worship by singing gospel songs. A singing group from Africa, in proclaiming the gospel through a largely African musical style, introduced God as not merely Western but supracultural in nature. Hopefully, these various efforts are reducing the perceptual distance between those who present the Christian message and those who receive it.

Other Cross-Cultural Ministry Opportunities

In addition to relationships in the contexts of classes, clubs, counseling, and school worship, ministry also takes forms such as committee work. This includes visiting local employers in order to recruit them to hire our students. Each "home room" teacher also has responsibility for personally doing placement counseling of each of his/her class's students. In addition, teachers serve as trip sponsors, going with students to America or England as they study and travel for approximately one month over the winter holidays. Lastly, we give guidance counseling to students wishing to transfer after graduation. Each of these responsibilities also provides a context for ministry.

These tasks are often open-ended and time-consuming, at times calling for quite detailed knowledge and skills requiring considerable experience. Students sometimes go for employment advice to Japanese teachers, believing (whether accurately or not) that foreign teachers cannot help them adequately.

Despite the difficulties such situations pose for teacher-student relationships, these tasks also represent a means of making the gospel a "person message," not just an institution message, word message, or academic discipline message (Kraft, 1994, pp. 858-859). Employment guidance sessions sometimes lead into counseling ministry, and home stay programs often involve students in more direct cross-cultural communication with Christian host families than Hokusei teachers can provide in two entire years. New believers have emerged from semester overseas study programs, as well as from students' continuing their education at Christian schools after graduation. Not only increased cultural awareness or religious orientation but actual worldview change is occurring in the lives of students through these various relationships and experiences.

A View to the Future

In this age of a decreasing nationwide student population, the survival of many private schools such as ours is very much in question. An institution following current trends would very possibly become co-educational, be absorbed into a four-year institution, or close permanently. These possibilities present obvious threats to the very existence of opportunities for cross-cultural witness.

Success in meeting these challenges will be closely tied to how well teachers and students

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understand each other and seek to cooperate, including in cross-cultural situations. We who are foreigners play especially central roles in bridging the culture gap. From a Christian perspective, the building of these bridges of genuine understanding can come about only through constant reliance on the Holy Spirit's leading, a part of which will no doubt involve continual research in order to better understand the hearts and minds of the students to whom we believe God has sent us. This insight will enable us to focus more fully on playing our roles as effective communicators of the message which we came here to teach.

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