AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN A CROSS-CULTURAL PRIESTLY CONTEXT: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION [IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY] FOR SERVICE ABROAD

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This dissertation examines the concept of cultural competence in a cross-cultural priestly context and its implications for priestly training for service abroad. The main purpose of this study is to contribute ideas to the development of a new curriculum for young clergy entering the priesthood, particularly in Nigeria, so as to be ready for service abroad. This research recognizes the fact that the issue in cultural competence is not in the paucity of information; rather, with so many important moving parts and components that foster an array and fluidity of interpretations, the challenge is in its focus, attention, implication and application. To this end, this dissertation (I) states the problem as a major issue with respect to the current trend in the global redistribution of priests; (II) reviews two basic Vatican documents on the training of priests, describes current interest in cultural competence by the church in view of the “The New Evangelization,” and offers definitions and theoretical perspectives on cultural competence in select fields; (III) unpacks the concept of understanding as an overarching concept in cultural competence discourse; (IV) discusses the components of cultural competence; (V) attempts to analyze the abilities or capacities associated with cultural competence; and finally (VI) addresses some implications of the study, draws conclusions based on the findings and points to
future research by fundamentally suggesting a holistic approach to cultural competence to include, but not limited to, *enculturation, acculturation, and inculturation*.

The hope is that this study will help in the development of a new curriculum for priestly training that emphasizes the central place of cultural competence. This is important so that young clergy entering the priesthood will be better prepared to minister efficiently and effectively in different cultures, among people of different affiliations and persuasions, and to further the need to be cognizant and respectful of the human condition that defines whole groups and individuals in and within those groups. In view of the changing face of the priesthood and evolving methods of evangelization, this study is not only timely and timeless; it is a necessity, not an option.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The importance of efficient, effective, beneficial and productive activity—whether in business, politics, diplomacy or priestly ministry cannot be overstated. This is the case whether one is working in one’s own culture or in a culture different from one’s own. Such activities call for what is generally known as competence; that is, the ability to do something successfully or efficiently. Thus, in the context of cross-cultural priestly ministry, competence in culture is necessary for a successful mission. To this end, the concept of cultural competence has implications for priestly formation in the twenty-first century and beyond, especially in light of the increasing movement of priests for service abroad.

Like a buzz-word, cultural competence is bandied about in academic institutions, business organizations, social settings, and lately in churches—especially the Catholic Church—in the context of mission with its attendant ministries. Denboba defines cultural competence as “a set of values, behaviors, attitudes, and practices within a system, organization, program, and among individuals which enables them to work effectively cross culturally.”¹ He further explains that this process to achieve cultural competence is a dynamic, ongoing, developmental process that requires a long-term commitment in all levels. It also requires a comprehensive and coordinated plan that includes intervention on levels of policy making; infrastructure building; program administration and evaluation; the delivery of services and enabling supports; and the individual.² Very importantly, at both the school and individual levels, this means organizing the
curriculum accordingly. This also means a personal effort to examine one’s own attitude and values, and the acquisition of the knowledge and skills that will allow an individual to work appropriately in cross-cultural situations.

Given the rapidly changing times in global mission, the church hierarchy as well as concerned others in the Church acknowledge that:

One of the most significant changes taking place in the world of catechesis and religious instruction over the last fifty years is the absolutely central role that competence in culture and intercultural relations plays in the world of catechesis. This is so because the Magisterium places catechesis squarely within the context of the Church’s identity and mission to evangelize, which in turn focuses our attention precisely on the engagement of Christian faith with cultures.³

The fact of the church—as the bearer of the Christian faith—entering into all cultures is not a novel idea; it is a missionary movement that spans over time and generations designated to proclaim the faith. As first used in the sixteenth century, “mission” is “frequently used to indicate the proclamation of the Gospel in foreign countries…Today the word is not confined to faraway countries.” ⁴ This theology of mission is articulated and echoed—directly or indirectly—by many church leaders even as it is written about and documented in various materials. Thus, in unpacking the theology of mission for the contemporary church, the Second Vatican Council’s Decree Ad Gentes: On the Mission Activity of the Church states, “Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them ‘a universal sacrament of salvation,’ the Church driven by the inner necessity of her own catholicity, and obeying the mandate of her Founder (cf. Mark
16:16), strives ever to proclaim the Gospel to all men,"⁵ both within native cultures and cross-culturally. This proclamation is done, cognizant of the changing times. Thus, “mission can be studied from the point of view of what the scriptures says, how the ideas develop in the history of Christianity and what the challenges for today are.”⁶ And not the least of which are cultural challenges.

According to Bhawuk and Brislin, “To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures.”⁷ Research studies in diverse areas such as overseas effectiveness, international management, international transfer of technology and information, and global distribution and redistribution of priests have identified cultural competence as central in increasing understanding and improving relations between local people and [people] across cultures. Hopefully, this project will serve, not just as another voice in the crowd, but as a voice with a difference in the analysis and application of the concept of cultural competence to priestly formation.

It is a matter of concern to observe that in addition to the paucity of direct information, much of what currently exists on priestly training emphasizes the four aspects of training and ongoing formation for priests to include, human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation.⁸ The arguable absence of what could be called cultural competence formation demonstrates what might be considered a “missing” element in the conversation on priestly formation. The situation is more worrisome in light of the fact that the knowledge of cultural competence and its influence is
“increasingly recognized as a major factor in the ways in which people learn and behave.”9 “Today, the importance of intercultural competence in both global and domestic contexts is well recognized”11 as an indispensable aspect of human development and balanced growth.

**Statement of the Problem**

Kilbourn writes that in a study, “Problems are usually constructed out of a complex interplay among one’s own thinking about an issue, one’s own experience, and one’s own understanding of the research literature.”12 Against this backdrop the statement of the problem, which explains the major issue in this dissertation, brings to the fore the following ideas that I am aware of, motivated by, interested in and thinking about.

First is the reality of priest shortages in the Euro-American Church; second is the historical tradition and recommended practice of the global distribution and redistribution of priests as tellingly articulated in Pope Paul XII’s April 29, 1957 encyclical, *Fidei Donum: On the Present Condition of the Catholic Missions, Especially in Africa;* third is the experience of international or foreign-born priests in America. The latter ends by asking the all-too common and recurring question about what is needed in order to achieve efficient, effective, hitch-free, beneficial, fulfilling and productive ministry when priests are flown in – say from Nigeria to America, as a case in point –or from other countries. One answer to this important question is the theoretical and practical knowledge of cultural competence.
Priest Shortages in the Global North—Euro-American Church

According to Hoge and Okure:

A shortage of priests can be defined in three ways. The first is the statistic showing the number of Catholics per priests…The second depends on the feelings of Catholics in one area or other that the priest shortage exists. For anyone to feel that there is a shortage, he or she would have had to experience a situation of more priests, either in the same nation at an earlier time or in another nation…The third definition of shortage is more abstract yet equally important. It defines shortage as not having enough priests to do what is needed.\textsuperscript{13}

The priest shortages in the Euro-American church speak more to the second and third definitions, which will drive the discourse in this section of the study. It is with this background information that we can begin to understand the arguments being made today for bringing in more international priests to the United States.

Emphasizing the reality of the demographic shift in Catholicism and the fact of priest shortages in Europe and the United States, John L. Allen Jr., a well-known \textit{National Catholic Reporter} and CNN contributor, makes the point unequivocally as he writes:

I’ve said this so often I probably ought to have it printed on T-shirts: The most important Catholic story of our time is the demographic shift from the global north to the south, with two-thirds of the Catholics in the world today living in the southern hemisphere, a share that will rise to three-quarters by the middle of the
century. As a result, Latin America, Africa and Asia will play a far greater role in setting the tone for the global church.\textsuperscript{14}

The role setting for the global church is witnessed more in vocation boom and the consequent number of priests being produced in the global south, as against the experience of priest shortages in the global north—Euro-America. This is a great transition that comes with “frightening pastoral implications.”\textsuperscript{15} It is a reality that the global north never saw coming. Confirming this fact, Reverend Robert J. Silva, President, The National Federation of Priests’ Councils, writes in a related context:

What the church was not prepared for was the phenomenon of fewer clergy here in the United States, challenging its ability to minister to well-established Catholic communities as well as to the new immigrant population. The traditional clergy of the United States have found themselves scrambling to meet the needs of the diverse faith communities.\textsuperscript{16}

In order to meet the challenge of the shortage of priests in the Euro-American Church, the language is familiar: reconstruct, reorganize, consolidate, merge, and close or layoff parishes. “Those words have been used to describe the current state of affairs in the area’s Roman Catholic Churches.”\textsuperscript{17} Previewing the change to come, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of the Albany Diocese, New York, notes that “about 20 percent of the 190 worship sites will close or be reorganized across the 14 counties that make up the Diocese of Albany… it is likely that urban parishes will suffer the most.”\textsuperscript{18} Capturing the experience in a wider spectrum, Welch reports that:
Parishioners are often fervently opposed to these closings. Years ago in San Francisco and locally, several sought to keep parishes open by taking their case to Rome. Detroit locals took their fight to the media when church leaders attributed the closure decisions to “white flight,” prompting a heated debate among black and Latino parishioners. Outside Boston, disgruntled parishioners have been holding what The New York Times referred to as a “quiet rebellion,” barricading themselves into churches slated to close.19

Because these closings can be like abandonment, the question is: “Does it have to be this way?”20 To many people in some parts of the globe, the experience of closing parishes is unimaginable. Of course, the experience was totally strange to me until I went to minister in the United States. Back in the early 1990s when I was in the seminary at St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene, in Nigeria training for the priesthood, there were roughly 500 seminarians on this one campus. I hadn’t the slightest sense that I was going to find myself in a place where there was such a small number of seminarians (from a diocese) and drastic shortages, or in some cases, no priests to minister in the parishes and related areas of apostolate.

As I currently work on this dissertation, my home diocese of Ogoja, Nigeria, is obviously struggling with the problem of where to assign the huge number of priests ordained every year. Unarguably, the diocese is producing more priests than could be placed. Seemingly, the only way out is the “daily” creating of more parishes from the existing ones to accommodate the number of priests. This is done regardless of the
economic burden on the already financially challenged parishioners. Overall, the situation creates a worry of sustainability.

Speaking of economic burden, it is also a fact that with the number of candidates for the priesthood increasing yearly, there are not sufficient funds to take care of all of them. Hence, many are turned back. This lamentable situation warrants the questions asked by Pope Pius XII, “Shall the young men who seem to be called by the providence of God to the priesthood at the present time, be admitted in smaller numbers because of insufficient funds? Is it right, as we hear has happened in a number of places, that the seminaries should be forced to exclude so many youths who aspire ardently to the priesthood and who give good hopes of persevering?”

In contrast, one of the greatest problems of the church in some parts of the Western world, particularly in North America and Europe, is the drastic and acute shortage of priests and women religious, in part because the “workforce” is rapidly aging. Clearly, there is an obvious vocation crisis in these places to the extent that no one can afford to deny the fact any longer. This is evident in the existence of “priestless” parishes; the daily merging, clustering and even closing of parishes, Catholic schools, and related church institutions.

Briefly reporting on this, in a radio broadcast aired on April 29, 2010, Mike Olszewski of WKSU (a service of Kent State University and Ohio public media) reports that, “The Cleveland Catholic Diocese has put the first batch of the churches it’s closed in the last year up for sale.” At the end of the day, when sold, the infrastructures of the parishes are:
used for charter schools, senior housing, low income housing, community centers, job training, after-school care, day care and youth programming…Convents and rectories are often suitable for one-bedroom apartments for seniors. School classrooms can be transformed into multiple bedroom apartments for working families. The income…is reinvested by the church to further other aims — spiritual or charitable.24

Welch thinks that these adaptations are classic examples of unlocking possibilities. Thus, “Some regional church authorities, such as the archdiocese of Philadelphia and Boston, have created non-profit organizations to develop former church properties. Other dioceses have found local non-profits to do the same work. The key is to create a systematic approach to dealing with the property inventory.”25

A related news item hit the airwaves on February 26, 2010, under the title, “Catholic parishes in Stark Country to close. The Youngstown Catholic Diocese is taking a hard look at consolidating plans for local parishes.”26 The explanation given for the development is the declining church attendance, which is, arguably, not unconnected with the reality of a lack of priests to encourage and motivate the faith of the people by readily attending to their pastoral needs.

Similarly, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of the Albany Diocese, New York, admits that his diocese faces a serious crisis of vocation. Thus, “Vocations to the ministerial priesthood and religious life have dwindled with great implications for both the configuration and staffing patterns of many of our parish communities.”27 However, he is
quick to observe that his diocese is not unique in this regard; it is the reality facing most dioceses in America and throughout the Western world.


Drawing upon its wealth of historical experience, the church is unrelenting in proffering solutions to the problem of priest shortages. One of these solutions is the practice of global distribution and redistribution of priests. This idea is behind the 1957 encyclical by Pope Pius the XII, *Fidei Donum: On the present condition of the Catholic missions, especially in Africa.*

Aware of the challenges the mission faces in some parts of the world due to priest shortages, especially in Africa, and today, in the West, Pope Pius XII “encouraged Bishops to offer some of their priests for temporary service in the churches of Africa, and gave his approval to projects already existing for that purpose.”28 It is interesting to note that decades later the relevance of the encyclical is unmistakable. Given current experiences, the message no longer applies only to those who are Africa-bound; rather, it “surmounts the territorial dimension of priestly service in order to direct it towards the entire Church. Today it is clear how effective and fruitful this experience has been. Indeed, *Fidei Donum* priests are a unique sign of the bond of communion existing among the Churches. They make a valuable contribution to the growth of needy ecclesial communities, while drawing from them freshness and liveliness of faith.”29 Corroborating this point, in unpacking the “unpleasant” cultural experience of international priests in America, it is observed that “On the positive side of the ledger, international priests also
often bring with them new spiritualities and new styles of preaching which may breathe new life into a parish.”

In agreement with the idea of distribution of priests, “In 1980 Pope John Paul II issued ‘Norms for the Distribution of Priests,’ which asks that affluent nations share their priests with poorer nations and with mission territories…Specifically, he encouraged bishops to offer some of their priests for temporary service in Africa” and around the world. Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, Pope Benedict XVI has not been found wanting in using his office—the Apostolic See—to keep alive the flame of Fidei Donum. Meeting with the superior council of the pontifical mission societies and the congress of fidei donum missionaries on May 5, 2007, he addressed those present with an appreciation of the foresight of his predecessor. Thus:

Fifty years have passed since this venerable Predecessor of mine, facing the evolution of the times and looking out onto the scene of history of new peoples and nations, realized with farsighted pastoral wisdom that unheard of and providential horizons and missionary openings for the proclamation of the Gospel in Africa were unfolding…He was intending to encourage another type of missionary cooperation – paralleled to the traditional forms – among the so-called “ancient” Christian Communities and those born lately or which are coming into being in recently-evangelized territories. He asked the “ancient” Churches to send several priests to help the “young” Churches, whose growth was promising, to collaborate with the local Ordinaries for a specific period.
In view of the present challenge of priest shortages in the Euro-American Church the message of Pope Pius XII remains as relevant as it was decades ago. Here, too, “there are great difficulties to be overcome,” requiring more presence and availability of priests and “a fresh growth of apostolic vigor.” In fact, it is more fitting at the present moment to direct attention to the Euro-American Church. In these continents, early missionaries strove to promote the cause of the Gospel. This is evidenced by great increase of ecclesiastical provinces, archdioceses, dioceses, parishes, Catholic Schools, Catholic Charities, and number of Catholics. But today, evidences of growth and increase in these areas seem to be portraying a bleaker picture. And the demographics of the “plentiful harvest of souls” is shifting to other continents in the countries within them, notably, Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

In order to reinvigorate the church in the West, “what still remains to be done demands an immense amount of work and countless workers”—especially priests and nuns. This is a serious difficulty hindering the spread of the Gospel in certain dioceses in the Western world. There is every reason, therefore, why we should be subject to no small anxiety with regard to the fortunes of Catholicism in the Euro-American church. “There is every reason to why all the Church’s children should clearly realize their serious obligations to give more effective assistance to the missionaries.”

Going into detail with regard to the problems, it is an arguable fact that in some parts of America, new parishes cannot be opened due to priest shortages. In places where there are a few number of priests, “not infrequently non-Catholic ministers are also
active; they therefore cannot possibly perform all the tasks they are called upon to undertake.”38 No true Catholic can fail to be concerned about this situation.

It follows then that, in accordance with the admonitions of the Apostolic See, fraternal assistance must be extended by all parts of the Church to meet the needs of Catholics anywhere…Just as in our mortal frame, all the members suffer in union with each other, and the healthy members come to the aid of the ailing ones, so in the Church the individual members do not live for themselves alone but also to assist the others and all render mutual aid to all, not only in comforting one another but also in contributing to the greater edification of the entire Body.39

The dearth of priests in Euro-America is a reversal of the former situation, now there is a kind of mutual exchange between continents. This mutual exchange is what is today referred to as global redistribution as against the old expression of global distribution of priests.

**Subtle Distinction between Global Distribution and Global Redistribution of Priests**

Historically, the church has always sent out her priests, first, to those parts of the world that had not received the Good News, especially Africa. This initial apostolic initiative has been referred to as global distribution of priests. It consisted of priests mainly from the Western World—Euro-America—being sent to other parts of the world; even as priests from European countries like Ireland were sent to America.

Today, however, the church is experiencing a new trend, wherein, priests from the once-receiving parts of the world, such as Africa, Latin America, and Asia, are now being sent to the once-sending parts of the world, especially Europe and America. For instance,
according to John L. Allen, Jr., “In the United States, one out of every six priests is now foreign-born, and we add 300 international priests every year. It’s a rare American diocese that doesn’t have at least a handful of priests from locales such as Nigeria or India.” This new trend, “which has sometime been labeled the ‘reverse mission,’” is referred to as global redistribution of priests. It implies “that territories that were once the object of missionary activity are now returning the favor, dispatching zealous young priests to revive the faith in the moribund regions of the West.”

Additionally, global redistribution of priests consists of redistributing priests from places enjoying a surplus to any part of the world that is experiencing a shortage. Thus, the phenomenon is not just one directional as it used to be, hence the name global distribution; it is now multidirectional or all directional, hence the name global redistribution. However, care must be taken that the relief of others does not become the burden of the reliever, “but that there should be equality.” This caveat makes more sense in light of the arguable fact pointed out by John L. Allen, Jr., who made the observation that:

Admittedly, the idea of priest shortages in the global south may be counterintuitive for Catholics in Europe and the United States. Looking around, it’s easy to get the impression of a surplus, given our growing reliance on priests from Africa, Asia and Latin America to plug holes here…That’s a compelling vision, but it hides a basic flaw: The math doesn’t work. Massive Catholic growth across the southern hemisphere in the late 20th century did generate a bumper crop of new vocations, but it also made priest shortages worse, not better, because the
church can baptize people much more rapidly than it can ordain them. In the United States and Europe, the priest-to-baptized Catholic ratio today is 1 in 1,300; in Africa, it’s almost 1 in 5,000; in Southeast Asia, it’s 1 in 5,300; and in Latin America, it’s a staggering 1 in 7,000.\textsuperscript{46}

Allen’s perspective, with its graphic statistical example on the possibility of priest shortages in the global south is a compelling one. However, given this reality, it is not out of place to think that in the Catholic Church of the future, “it’s likely there will be rising pressure from the global south to reconsider the global distribution of priests…out of imminent practical and pastoral concerns.”\textsuperscript{47}

The awareness of the difficulties experienced due to priest shortages, not to mention the consequent observation of closing, merging and consolidating parishes, calls for the humility to admit that, just as it was the case some time ago concerning Africa, the church in Europe and America, “as well as other parts of the mission field, needs missionaries…whether they be priests or religious men and women”\textsuperscript{48} divinely called to undertake the burdens of the missionary apostolate. This \textit{outsourcing} is the purpose of \textit{fidei donum}, which has a vision “of globally oriented church.”\textsuperscript{49} Restating this purpose as twofold, Pope Benedict XVI says that the intention is:

…on the one hand, to kindle a renewed missionary ‘flame’ in every member of the Christian people, and on the other, to encourage a more aware collaboration between the Diocese of ancient tradition and the regions of first evangelization. In the course of these five decades, Pius XII’s invitation has been reaffirmed on several occasions by all my Predecessors, and thanks to the impetus provided by
the Second Vatican Council, the number of fidei donum priests has continued to multiply. They depart with religious and lay volunteers, bound for mission in Africa and in other parts of the world, sometimes costing their Dioceses many sacrifices.\textsuperscript{50}

Undoubtedly, the realities in which the church is living today are calling for an in-depth analysis of that timely and timeless encyclical: \textit{Fidei Donum}. The change, shift, turning point, evolution—call it what you will—of Catholicism demands not so much “a theological response,”\textsuperscript{52} as it does a pastoral one.

If the course of action in obedience to the invitation in \textit{fidei donum} is taken with due preparation, especially in the area of cultural competence, very important advantages will accrue for the Catholic Church in present-day priestly service abroad, which already has its full measure of difficulties, challenges and hopes.\textsuperscript{53} The idea of cultural competence suggests a better way forward in reducing the complaints by the people of the host church in a different culture, even as it seems to indicate a better adjustment for the international or foreign-born priests, particularly in America. Among other things, cultural competence skills establishes \textit{understanding} as the foundation, the wall and the roof—in a manner of talking—of effective interaction in both secular and ecclesiastical spaces.

It is only fitting to end this section on the major issue of this dissertation by stating that some bishops across the globe are not only actively embracing, but are unrelenting in sending out their priests; and others are gladly receiving them in their dioceses to advance the good missionary cause of the global redistribution of priests. For
instance, as of 2010, a diocese in Eastern Nigeria, Orlu, has the following statistics that report the number of [its] priests serving abroad in different countries: U.S.A., 36; Italy, 7; Belgium, 3; Switzerland, 4; Canada, 15; Lagos, 1.54 It is also on record that “Since the Letter, [Fidei Donum] was published in 1957, an average of 1900 priests have been ‘donated’ by Italian diocese to the world…”55

Historically, “The Catholic Church in the United States has always had international priests serving in its parishes, and in most of its history it depended on them. Only in one short period, from about 1940 to 1960, did Americans produce enough homegrown priests. The rest of the time foreign priests were present in great numbers, and at times dominated the church.”56 During the time of great need, the American bishops looked to Europe for priests. They wrote their friends and confreres in Europe and sent recruiters to European seminaries to try to attract new priests to come to the United States.”57 In this effort, “They met with some success, since French and Irish seminaries had a surplus of graduates.”58 Hence, while “priests came from various European nations, including France, Germany, and Italy, the vast majority came from Ireland.”59

Observably, the long-term American past saw shortages of American seminarians with its consequence of priest shortages. But the effort to recruit foreign-born priests from Europe was no longer as successful. “Since the 1970s the shortage of priests has intensified.”60 This explains the statistical reporting that, generally, in today’s America, “Sixteen percent of the priests serving in the United States since 1985 are foreign-born and the number is rising.”61 The church in America is seeing “growing numbers of new
immigrant clergy taking positions in Catholic churches across the United States as pastors, associates, and extern clergy. Questions have arisen about the nature of this phenomenon. Are priests born in other countries here to serve their own immigrant people, as was the pattern of the European immigrant clergy? Are they here to evangelize and to be on mission to an American population in need of a new evangelization? Have they come in response to fewer priestly vocations in the United States? What is their effectiveness? How are they received? Is this a pastoral solution to the problem of fewer priests?62

One burning and recurring question is: What is the cultural experience of international or foreign-born priests in America? Unpacking the response in answering this question reveals many cultural misunderstandings. In any case, the answer to the question holds the explanation to the observation that “Not all of the immigrant priests in those earlier years were ministerial successes. For example, although many were inspiring contributors to church growth, others were simply troublemakers…they could not understand the American separation of church and state,”63. More directly, the answer to this question explains why one Father OkeChukwu-Nwosu “suggested that there is a reason why bringing in priests from other countries had received little attention in America until recently. It was because in the past the priests came from Europe, particularly Ireland, but now they are coming from the southern part of the globe, where the culture is much different.”64 And this cultural difference poses more challenges and presents overwhelming difficulties on both sides of the aisle.
Against the backdrop of some of the difficulties encountered by the international priests, an investigation was commissioned by the American bishops resulting in a book published in 1999, entitled, *Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States.*

The forty-six-page report discussed the most vexing problems and how they could be alleviated. It begins by reciting the “difficulties” in the process of bringing in priests at the time—selection of candidates, processing immigration papers, determining the terms of service, providing orientation, finding suitable jobs and housing, making educational arrangements, and so on. It makes three overall recommendations: (a) the international priest needs an orientation to America before leaving home; (b) he needs at least two to three months to adjust to American society and culture before beginning his ministry here; and (c) he needs to get a letter of agreement or contract with the receiving bishop, especially his position, salary, and benefits.65

**Experience of International or Foreign-born Priests (FBPs) in America**

International priests from the Philippines serving in New York and from Cameroon serving in Florida, state, respectively: “To be a priest in America is indeed a challenge.” “I see myself as bringing the gospel message to people other than mine.”66 Despite these statements which obviously point to some difficulties, the trend in the global redistribution of priests, as encouraged by *fidei donum,* has come to stay.

That it is an interesting conversation and a beautiful missionary activity to re-launch *fidei donum* cannot be disputed. But the obstacles of culture and language, which
often make missions abroad difficult must be recognized and dealt with.\textsuperscript{67} Interestingly, these obstacles and difficulties are not one-sided, that is, not only experienced on the part of the \textit{fidei donum} priests; rather, they are like two-way traffic. Thus, the people of the host church in the places of apostolate abroad also have their own share of the troubles and so have lots of complaints. More often than not, the experiences leave much to be desired on both sides, but more on the side of the \textit{fidei donum} priests, herein also referred to as international or foreign-born priests.

Speaking of international priests, at the moment,

About 20 percent of priests in active service in the United States were born in other countries—some 7,000 priests fall into the category of ‘international priests,’ the term now commonly used for these clergy. The largest numbers come from India, Nigeria, Mexico, Colombia, the Philippines, and Poland, but there are significant numbers from other countries. According to Rev. Aniedi Okure, OP, former coordinator of ethnic ministries for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, most are serving in the Pacific Northwest, the South, and the New York metropolitan area, but “they are all over the place. [They] come to the United States for a variety of reasons…About 10 percent are living in rectories and helping in parishes while they are pursuing studies at U.S. colleges and universities …Another group, notably the Vietnamese, come to the United States to be with their families who have settled here.\textsuperscript{68}

International priests in America come from different backgrounds—culturally, economically, socially, and politically. Also here in America, they have mixed
experiences—some are common while others are peculiar and unique, based on the territory, in this case, the diocese. Gathering these experiences has been the task of a 2006 book by Dean R. Hoge and Aniedi Okure, titled, *International Priests in America*. The book which chronicles mainly the challenges and opportunities of international priests in America also brings to the fore—sometimes unfiltered—the experiences of these priests and what the people of the host culture are thinking and saying about their interaction and experience of the foreign-born priests. 69

Without prejudice to the findings by Hoge and Okure in their timely book, the fact is that one of the common challenges that international priests have is how to navigate and deal with cultural differences—in all their facets and phases. This is the case on both sides of the table. Thus, the challenge posed by cultural experience affects both the priests and the people of the host culture. This is a fact regardless of many reports by international priests on “the congregation being welcoming, and they feel most at home celebrating liturgy with the community.” 70 Such reports that suggest a hitch-free experience are sometimes hard to believe because it is not difficult to see that moving from one’s own native culture to another is a real dislocation that brings with it many culture shocks. Alluding to this fact, observably:

…international priests, coming to the United States is a major dislocation. The priest who leaves home has really left home, leaving family and friends, his social capital is reduced to zero. He has to find his way around, figure out how to get a driver’s license (even though he may have had a car and a license in his home country); he needs to get acclimated on any number of levels. Even such a minor
activity as rooting for a sports team is a wrench: in most of the rest of the world, football—soccer—is something of a passion, but a priest new to the United States is apt to draw a blank if he tries to share that enthusiasm, and he is expected to learn at least something of the language about baseball and American football.”

Of all the challenges, the most difficult and somewhat frustrating experience is that of effective communication, which is generally defined as the ability to speak in such way as to be understood and to understand. On this note, many international priests in America report that “even for a priest who is fluent in English, accents can be troublesome. And some priests feel hurt because, having struggled to learn English as a second or third language, a project they feel proud to have accomplished, they are criticized because their American English is not perfect. Some feel as though they are relegated to the least important parish tasks, the least-attended Masses, the job no other parish priest wants to take on.”

As observed by Okure, “the question of English is not the only problem in communication; cultures differ in their styles of formal and informal speech. So when a parishioner says to a newly arrived priest, ‘Hey, we should do lunch,’ the parishioner may only be offering a friendly gesture or thinking of sharing lunch at some vague time in the future, while the priest may think he’s being invited to have lunch that day.”

Very familiar to many international priests is the experience of individualism in America. “American culture is more individualistic than cultures in many other lands where community is more important.” It is as if everyone is expected to be very independent, to take all initiative. The result here is you are on your own to either sink or
swim. Capturing the picture, a Polish priest in his forties discloses: “Nobody briefed us about the situation here or how to function. It was like, ‘Okay, we’ll send you and try to do the best you can. We’ll drop you in the water. Try to swim. If you swim, fine. If you don’t, you die.’ That’s their approach, and I think it’s wrong.”

This culture of individualism and keeping to oneself is the reason why many international priests “who are assigned to parishes and live in rectories with diocesan priests often report of great loneliness because they miss the community life to which they were accustomed.” In other cultures people might take you by the hand and walk you along the road, in a manner of speaking. Sometimes Americans do not realize that the priest has a culture behind him from being a priest in another culture, and would like to be treated as such. Incidentally, most of the international priests have not been exposed to many other cultures before coming to the United States. This experience further points to the already known fact that “There are simply differences among cultures which come to the fore when anybody moves from one culture to another.”

The equal collaboration between priests and lay people in the running of the church is another sore point. Some international priests come from a church background where the priest is the sole administrator of a parish and so he has the last word on any deliberation concerning the particular church. Coming to America, and experiencing the degree of lay participation in the running of parishes can be initially unsettling, particularly in cases where the priests has to “take orders” from the lay people. On this experience, Okure states that “Some priests are not used to taking orders from the lay
people, and so a few are particularly rattled if they find themselves in a situation where their boss is a woman.”  

Another important cultural difference is the sense or value of time. Many of the priests in question come from cultures where they stay for hours upon hours in church just for one Mass. It is always an initial shocking and somewhat disappointing experience in America for such priests. They “are not used to the American style of finishing Sunday Mass in time to clear the parking lot for the next congregation to come in, and can be distressed if people start obviously checking their watches at the forty-five minute mark…It’s a big adjustment.” It is in light of this experience that one can better appreciate the slogans “African time” and “American time.” In the United States, the former has a negative connotation in the appreciation and value of time; while the latter has the opposite. It connotes promptness and punctuality. 

Finally, the touchy issue of sexuality in the context of a person’s sexual orientation is another cultural experience with which most international priests struggle. Many cultures never discuss sexual orientation in terms of being gay or straight. An international priest who speaks out strongly against gays and lesbians is apt to find himself in hot water, particularly if the parish priest is a sympathizer with people referred to as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT). He does not know that in America talks, conversations, and even sermons preached by priests in church on this touchy issue are carried out and done “with great care and diplomacy.” In fact, they are better avoided. It’s like saying: no comments or I’d rather not talk about it.
According to Hoge and Okure, when international priests were asked to recommend what would help them in their ministries in the United States, “By far the most common recommendation was that the church should provide them with acculturation training, including instruction in English.” Such a solution can only go so far in “fixing the problem.” A more foundational and all-embracing step is the holistic approach to the understanding of cultural competence. This is needed for a more promising ministerial effectiveness and missionary success in the trend of global redistribution of priests.

Contesting the practice of global distribution and redistribution of priests as witnessed in the presence of international priests in America who are brought to solve the problem of priest shortages, Christine Schenk of the “FutureChurch” writes:

Suggestions to redistribute priests from other countries won’t work either…In the U.S. I very much doubt that the priests themselves will go along with it. Plus, North America and Europe have the best priest to parishioner ratios in the world. For us to import priests from Africa or Latin America is just another way of exploiting the developing world. There are some authoritative documents that discourage the church of the first world from “importing” priests. They point to criteria for correct enculturation so that liturgical leaders understand and respect cultural differences. Priests from Africa and Latin America are working in a number of dioceses in the U.S. We hear from our members that they do not understand U.S. culture and cannot be understood when they preach and say Mass.
Schenk’s observation concerning the international priests’ cultural misunderstanding or lack of understanding of American culture and the linguistic hurdles or effective communication complaints of American parishioners couldn’t be more true. However, there is a way forward to make for a steady cultural transition in order to achieve a better understanding between the priests and the people of the host culture. Looking as much as possible through all the available options and related proposals available, this dissertation suggests that the holistic knowledge of cultural competence by priests is another plausible option that is worthy of serious consideration. Okure notes “that the international priests who prosper and minister most effectively in the United States are those who have the advantage of a comprehensive orientation program—perhaps offered by the diocese—a mentor, and a receiving pastor who takes the trouble ‘to learn something about where the priest comes from.’”83 However, instead of waiting until the priest arrives in his place of pastoral assignment abroad before the process of acculturation begins, this dissertation suggests an early starter. This entails a visible inclusion of the study of cultural competence in the curriculum for priestly training in seminaries during the years of priestly formation, even as the process remains ongoing through refresher courses and related programs.

**Motivation for the Study**

It is my reflection that as the church seeks ways of addressing the challenges of priest shortages; facing the trend in the global redistribution of priests; and answering the questions arising from the problems of cultural adjustment with all its attendant experiences, the idea of cultural competence offers a better way towards achieving the
much desired effective ministerial service abroad—in and within cultures other than one’s own.

In the online abstract of Samuel Escobar’s 192-page book, The New Global Mission: The Gospel from Everywhere to Everyone, there is this apt observation:

Christian mission is no longer a matter of missionaries from the West going to the rest of the world. Rather, the growth of Christianity in Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia is eclipsing that of the Western church. In the third millennium of the Christian era, Christian mission is truly global, with missionaries from all places going to all peoples. Veteran missiologist Samuel Escobar presents this introduction to Christian mission today. He explores the new realities of our globalized world and assesses the context of a changing mission field that is simultaneously secular and syncretistic. He also sets forth a thorough biblical theology of missions, considering how God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are at work around the world, with implications for how Christians are to go about the task of global mission.84

Escobar’s treatise is a testament to the changing reality of the concept of global distribution of priests to that of global redistribution of priests. It speaks to the reversal in mission lands and the phenomenon of surplus and shortage or lack thereof of priests in some parts of the world, particularly in the West. Hence, it is no longer news to hear that the Euro-American church is bringing in priests to serve its people. This experience is interesting even as it creates so many stories that call for attention.
Stories have been told of many foreign-born priests from Africa sent for service abroad who could not cope with the rapid cultural adjustments when suddenly exposed to different cultures, particularly the West—Euro-American culture. Experiences have been shared by missionaries, in this case, priests, who were overwhelmed by culture shock and could not handle its attendant experiences of transformative growth, in part due to insular mentality and closed-mindedness. Personally, I have witnessed foreign-born priests come and go or arrive and leave different cultural environments prematurely due to the lack of knowledge of cultural competence. This paves the way for cultural misunderstandings, and related interpolations (insertions), extrapolations (generalizations) or importations to a different culture of taken-for-granted, no-big-deal and “permitted” ways of life in one’s own native culture. All together, these realities lead to unintentional cultural missteps. In fact, the existential angst arising from awareness of culture wars due to the mixture of panic and sometimes, despair, generated by the dreaded experience of entering a different culture, makes this study necessary.

Far from being a how-to study that offers a panacea to all cultural problems, the study’s main focus is to fortify knowledge, create awareness, challenge attitudes or dispositions, and canvass for cultural competence skills. All this is to be realized in the development of a new curriculum for the training of priests in the twenty-first century who will not only work with their own native people at home and abroad, but who might eventually be sent for service abroad to work in an at-large community.

Kilbourn suggests that “Somewhere in a qualitative proposal, it is appropriate to comment on one’s own biography as it relates to the study because this, too, is an issue of
perspective—personal perspective.” Besides, such biography which speaks to one’s personal experience is not only exciting, it holds the potential of sustaining the researcher’s interest in the topic. To this end, I believe that my international exposure through cross-cultural experience and educational opportunity at Kent State University has made me relatively informed about the world in both the ecclesiastical (church) and secular (state) areas of human interaction. Particularly, living in America for more than ten years of pastoral or ministerial involvement, academic pursuit, and American experience of traveling widely, has given me a particular familiarity with the way people see others and make sense of the world. Indeed, the fact that America has a more cosmopolitan, diverse, and multicultural population than any country in the world, is an added advantage to the experience of cultural diversity. Besides, being a priest in the United States and keenly watching, attentively listening, and carefully analyzing unfolding events in context of the discussion, gives me the opportunity to bring years of experience to this project.

In my experience, I can say that some people tend to be more focused on the world as they see it right where they are, and are a little bit limited in trying to understand how others see that same world. Aware of all this limitation and perhaps, bigotry, I feel a sense of obligation and I am motivated to make a contribution to the understanding of living in the world in places and with people who are different, and who dare to see the world from multiple perspectives. This is a must for priests. Therefore, my experience is grounded in understanding how people see the world through the eyes of others; from where others stand in relation to where they stand.
For example, my late grandmother lived in a tiny village in Africa without electricity or running water. To get there, you have to travel along dirt roads, and when you are there, you see children and young people without any educational opportunities. In this setting, cultural competence is needed for effective interaction between the newcomer and the indigenous people. It is this kind of authentic experience, rooted in the real lives of real people, that helps inform my motivation for this research. I believe that with the demonstration of cultural competence, you can take them from where they are—with their cooperation—to where you want them to go for their own benefits and the mutual good of all. And in the final analysis, what a transformative and life-changing experience that would be, for both parties!

Coming from my Nigerian culture to the American cultural environment, both in the ecclesiastical and secular contexts, the pastoral experiences and academic training gathered through many years in these cultures are my calling card. These years have created unique opportunities that challenged my cultural and ecclesiastical perspectives and general worldview. For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated with culture and cultural issues. In retrospect, this fascination led quite naturally to the field of education and an interest in Cultural Foundations of Education as an interdisciplinary field of study that looks at educational issues and problems through a variety of lenses—sociology, history, philosophy, and culture, including religious studies. Altogether, in addition to my personal interest, I believe that I have developed the skills that qualitative inquiry requires to make this area of inquiry suit my abilities.86
Interest

Many reasons inform my interest in this research, even as they explain why the research is needed. First of all, as a Roman Catholic priest, I am highly interested in the success of every missionary work through the ministry of the priesthood, both in one’s native culture and especially in cultures other than one’s own. The latter is so dicey that care must be taken through adequate preparation to ease the tension and if possible, to achieve a hitch-free and successful apostolate. From the standpoint of personal experience, I believe that people do not have to wait to learn from personal experience; learning from the experiences of others through shared knowledge is a better way going forward, particularly to avoid making the same mistake or feeling the same discomfort. Unfortunately, some mistakes have no second chances; they are irreversible. And their irreversibility cannot only destroy a priest’s mission to a foreign land, but can cost him a lifetime effect of an unforgettable regrettable experience.

It is the bishops’ responsibility to send young men of suitable character, virtue and ability to special institutions, faculties or universities, [including secular] so that the various needs of the apostolate may be met by priests trained to a higher scientific standard in the sacred [and secular] sciences and in other appropriate subjects.87

In addition to my foundational interest in the success and successful service of priests sent abroad, this quotation solidifies the foundation or bedrock on which my interest in this research is built. It not only encourages the idea of ongoing formation through continuous education in advanced academic institutions, it also captures the need
to send priests to other parts of the world as part of their education through exposure to new environments to experience concrete cultural realities.

That being said, “the question of pre-departure instrumentation that predicts a reasonable potential for intercultural effectiveness”\textsuperscript{88} and academic performance still remains profound and poses some concerns. The uncertain nature of acculturation and adaptation by the candidate for later studies or overseas service in a different culture indicates a significant need and states the urgency of creating in every diocese or religious order an \textit{intercultural consultant board and trainers} to identify pre-departure preparation for potential expatriates and to identify other individuals who are in a more developed mode regarding intercultural effectiveness and skills.\textsuperscript{89} Experts in the field of international/intercultural education refer to such work of pre-training to develop intercultural effectiveness and skills as \textit{intercultural readiness assessment}. Unarguably, “to address pressing organizational needs for pre-departure assessment, an intercultural training, and development service industry has emerged with the goal of reducing high losses and improving performance.”\textsuperscript{90} This is quite an interesting development and it is one of those experiences that the church stands to gain by learning from the secular world through its university education and adapting the strategies, including curriculum revision and updating, in ways that help in the important project of priestly formation in the circumstances of the present day and in light of the fast-changing times.

However, far from promising a panacea to all forms of failures, such pre-departure readiness assessment through the theoretical knowledge of cultural competence holds the potential of and/or for reducing the failure risk, particularly in the contexts of
collapse of goals and assignments, and the eventual priests’ return rates experience, as well as shielding them from negative impacts. Herein again is my interest for this study.

Furthermore, in re-emphasizing the need for later studies and in furtherance of the evangelizing mission of the church, the very words of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council could not be more compelling in strengthening the argument to make the case for my interest in this study. Thusly, priestly training, especially in view of the circumstances of modern society, should be continued during the formative years of priests and perfected after the completion of the seminary course by creating an opportunity for service abroad.\(^9\)

Such allowance and provision of the opportunity for later or advanced studies with the attendant services in different cultures as a means for constant renewal and progress, might improve the whole life of priests particularly the apostolic activity in their spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral ways as they acquire and grow in cultural competence. Because, “Often, we can unknowingly ignore the impact of cultural differences and consequently misunderstand and miscommunicate with those of other cultures”\(^9\) the consequence of such can be a devastating experience. Hence, my interest is given more juice and momentum in the thinking, born of experience, that an unintentional misstep due to lack of cultural knowledge and related unawareness can destroy one’s mission to a foreign land. This study then is a necessary contribution to the existing literature.

Finally, this interest is upheld and strengthened by the paucity of literature, including an academic curriculum that directly addresses cultural competence in a cross-
cultural context, especially from the perspective of Catholic priests. Existing literature on cultural competence in the context of cross-cultural experience by priests is surprisingly scant. Most of what exists is in other specific fields, such as medicine and the military, wherein the focus is mainly on how to function and operate within the particular field. This focus is arguably, content-specific. And this specificity arouses an interest to also make a contribution to creating the same for priestly ministry, whether at home or abroad.

On the other hand, even though there is a fair amount of literature on preparing for Christian missions—long- and short-term—by protestant Christian authors, an independent Catholic minister’s voice that confronts the matter headlong is either scant or lacking, in spite of the phenomenon and growing experience of the global redistribution of priests and women religious. It is hoped that this dissertation study will be among the first to make a bold contribution to the theoretical knowledge of cultural competence specifically in the context of the holistic training of priests.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of a study informs the method of a study. Dewey defines method as “simply an effective treatment of material -- efficiency meaning such treatment as utilizes the material [puts it to a purpose] with a minimum of waste of time and energy.”

Based on the stated problem and main research question, this study finds answers to the question of method through a descriptive approach to the existing, relevant literature. It treats the literature with a descriptive analysis, which has been defined as offering a detailed description of a concept or phenomenon, and in the process giving the
reader some dominant impression, like a central idea, of the concept or phenomenon being described.  

This definition implies that in terms of data collection, this study selectively gathers ideas from the literature in some of the following areas: culture, cultural competence, enculturation, intercultural sensitivity, acculturation, cross-cultural missionary work, inculturation, religious syncretism, curriculum, evangelization, church documents on priestly training and the ministry and life of priests.

This method of data collection is in agreement with McClelland, who writes in her dissertation that methodological decisions relate to the multiple tasks of identification, selection, organization, and analysis of concepts, theories, and findings in a large body of literature from diverse sources, and a consideration of the implications of that literature for the purposes of the study, in this case, for the training of priests. Since the dissertation study is an analysis of available literature on the concept of cultural competence in a cross-cultural priestly or missionary context, this method seems adequate for answering the main question, as well as perhaps some of the sub-questions mentioned above. It is, thus, “appropriate to the problems at hand.”

In essence, a theoretical framework helps in conceptualizing what is going on in, about, and concerning a concept. It asks and addresses questions such as: “What do you think is going on with the issues, settings, or people you plan to study? What theories, beliefs, and prior research findings will guide or inform your research, and what literature, preliminary studies, and personal experiences will you draw on for
understanding the people or issues you are studying.” Considering these questions and concerns, Schram suggests that the following qualities inform conceptualization:

- Immersing yourself in naturally occurring complexity. Acknowledging the interactive and inter-subjective nature of your sense making.
- Proceeding with sensitivity to context.
- Attending to particulars.
- Employing an interpretive frame of reference.
- Attending some things but not others.

All of these qualities and considerations find expression through the process of conceptualizing and generating a quality study, as well as in the subsequent conduct of and presentation of the research.

Since conceptualization cannot stand on its own without a frame of reference, Schram goes further to emphasize the importance of personal knowledge through personal experience that informs the study. “Direct personal experience plays into nearly every facet of conceptualizing a qualitative study.” This implies that a researcher must exercise “a commitment to direct experiences with people, situations, and ideas as they naturally occur; and acknowledgment of the interactive and inter-subjective nature of constructing knowledge; the need to be sensitive to context as a means to understand the complexity of the phenomena; the value of attending to the particular, unpredictable, and complex nature of specific cases; the logic and necessity of an interpretive frame of reference; and the selective nature of qualitative research.” These considerations inform conceptualization or theoretical perspectives, even as they have significant and defining influence on the study.
Whether explicitly stated or not, the theoretical perspective is particularly important when it comes to interpreting the data in a qualitative study. A fundamental assumption for any academic research is that the phenomena (data or concepts) that we wish to understand are filtered through one or more lenses or theoretical perspectives that we have for “seeing; reality is not something that we find under a rock.”102 “The reason that the theoretical perspective is important then, is that it is yet another way in which a researcher makes his or her findings intelligible to an academic audience and open to scrutiny.”103

Based on this understanding, the theoretical framework for this study is the analytical framework. This framework is applied to a conceptual analysis of the concept of cultural competence. Hence, to the degree that the study is a conceptual analysis, it can also be called conceptual research. Citing Bruaner, McClelland writes:

The term conceptual research is both ambiguous and vague…It is panoramic rather than detailed; it looks for patterns of relationship among concepts rather than focusing on concepts in isolation; and it injects a speculative cast of mind into many areas of narrow scholarship in the hope that the expansion thus forced will cause separate areas to merge without bursting the extreme limits of the definition of scholarship, in which case there would be merely a release of hot air. It sets up a controlled intellectual reactor for the production of new, but not undisciplined thought. In that larger sense [it] seeks to be scholarly by being both factual and speculative.104
As distinct from other kinds of frameworks in research, analytical frameworks offer multiple examples of effective modeling approaches for capturing and presenting complex information on a concept. To that end, the preferred modeling approach to this study is thick description.

Overall, through this theoretical framework of analysis in the form of thick description, guided by the understanding of contextualization—an idea that emphasizes the importance of the context in a particular study—the research question is generated with the primary goal of analyzing the concept of cultural competence with its implications for the training of priests. Much reading is done of works that address the general and specific understanding of the concept, tailored toward and applied to the specific area of inquiry. The proof of this is seen in the pages that follow.

**Analysis**

Generally, to analyze means to break into parts and examine the components. In literature and the other humanities, it means to break a subject or concept into its constituent parts and then interpret the parts, step by step for meaning. The endeavor takes information that has been gathered, looks at what it shows such as trends, and makes meaning of the literature through interpretation, explanation and examples that can make the point more explicit. In this way, the understanding of the concept under examination is broadened and deepened.

As the framework for interpreting the data to be uncovered in this research, analysis can also be described as a detailed examination of the elements or structure of a concept as a basis for discussion and interpretation. It speaks to the process of separating
or breaking down a concept into its constituent parts for examination. It also suggests the availability of relevant information about a concept wherein a selection must be made as the best course of action from various alternatives.\textsuperscript{107} Hence, “To analyze something is to ask what that something means. It is to ask why something does what it does or why it is as it is.”\textsuperscript{108} It is also to inquire about what is really going on about a concept and what are the various perspectives. The inquiry may take any of the various types of analysis, such as narrative, descriptive, historical, socio-historical, comparative, statistical, critique, sociological.\textsuperscript{109}

From the foregoing, it is clear that analysis does not just drive a research for clarity; it is the backbone and meaning-making path of all qualitative research. Thus, when a researcher conducts interviews or observes a phenomenon, the goal is to understand how the subjects or participants experience or conceptualize a given experience. The “method” or way by which the researcher tries to discover the subjects’ conceptions is a form of analysis. Its interest is in uncovering reality, both the reality presumed to naturally exist, and the realities that are socially constructed.\textsuperscript{110} In both of these cases, there is a systematic search for meaning. To this end, “analysis means organizing and integrating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories.”\textsuperscript{111}

Finally, this research relies heavily on analyzing documents in widely cited books and essays on or that relate to the concept, as well as on church literature that helps to unpack cultural competence in the context of priestly training. Historical influences on
the key essays are traced through their references and/or bibliographies. Google scholar is substantively used to locate and identify subsequent publications by interlocutors responding to the key essays and documents.

**Conceptual Analysis**

Concepts are “the building blocks of theory.” They constitute the building blocks of scientific knowledge or theoretical frameworks for any discipline. For Paley, they are “niches” within theory. The strength of the theories that guide a discipline is depended on the quality of the concept analysis which speculatively establishes ideological connections that are yet to be tested or confirmed with intervention research or descriptive studies. Hence, “Conceptual analyses are often built around a review of the research literature related to the concept under consideration.” This enables either the furtherance or refuting of the theory in question, such as the theory about benefits of cultural competence for the training of priests.

It is against the backdrop of concepts as ideas in process, that is, as still in need of examination through analysis, that the definition of conceptual analysis by Petocz and Newbery sheds more light. Thus:

Conceptual analysis is analysis of concepts, terms, variables, constructs, definitions, assertions, hypotheses, and theories. It involves examining these for clarity and coherence, critically scrutinizing their logical relations, and identifying assumptions and implications. Sometimes called *theoretical research*, and closely related to *critical thinking*, conceptual analysis is not merely a matter of language or language use (cf. Bennett & Hacker, 2003); it is also a matter of the *content* of
our linguistic expressions, that is, what we claim to be thinking and talking

about.\textsuperscript{115}

This definition couldn’t be clearer in describing the job of conceptual analysis as “clarifying concepts, exposing conceptual problems in models, revealing unacknowledged assumptions and steps in arguments, evaluating the consistency of theoretical accounts”\textsuperscript{116} and applying concepts from one field to another. Having said this, in relation to this study, conceptual analysis enables and continues the ongoing examination of the concept of cultural competence with respect to how the understanding of the concept might help in the training of priests in the twenty-first century, especially priests serving or who might serve in mission territories.

The idea of conceptual analysis as relating to critical thinking explains why it is “associated with the research design of philosophical and critical inquiry.”\textsuperscript{117} Either of these two inquiries would require the researcher to engage in deep thinking and solid arguments to make the point that contributes to establishing a theory. This dissertation tilts toward philosophical inquiry since “The purpose of philosophical inquiry is to perform research using intellectual analysis to clarify the meaning of concepts.”\textsuperscript{118}

It has been observed that the character of a concept is a longstanding issue, both in philosophy and culture. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that concept analysis has an ambivalence and mixed reputation in fields of scholarship and in the larger educational context. For example, in his article, “How not to clarify concepts in nursing,” Paley states that such an endeavor is “an arbitrary and vacuous exercise”\textsuperscript{119} because – more often than not – analysis is based on personal whim—interest and agenda.
Philosophical questions about concept analysis are both ontological and epistemological. Even though textbooks have stated that concept analysis is necessary for theory development, many commentators have found concept analysis troublesome. According to commentators, the fundamental problem with published concept analyses is that there is a weak relation between the evidence and the result. This raises epistemological questions such as, “What is the evidence for a concept analysis? What is its validity and reliability? In short, “how should concept analysis be justified?” Thus, one of the outstanding questions in this discourse is on the relationship between concepts and theories.

Published concept analyses often suggest that concepts can be fruitfully developed prior to any significant theorizing. This means a commitment to the view of concepts as ideas established prior to theories. However, conceptual analysts all agree that the contributions of concept analysis to philosophy and educational research cannot be denied, particularly in terms of expanding knowledge through entertaining other perspectives. For instance, according to David Bridges of the University of East Anglia:

In the 1970s conceptual analysis was certainly offered as a method for addressing educational issues and not merely a preliminary to their investigation using other theoretical or methodological tools. Ivan Snook, for example…introduced his Concepts of Indoctrination (Snook, 1972) by describing how the philosophy of education was taking on a new personality of its own shaped by the interest which ‘analytical’ philosophers were taking in educational concepts. He went on to write of analysis as ‘a philosophical method’…which, when applied to educational
concepts, ‘has opened up a new and stimulating route into the perennial problems of education.124

One of the challenges of conceptual analysis is to choose an appropriate concept for study “To avoid ambiguities, the analyst should choose a domain that promises to be coherent and yield an informative set of attributes.”125 This challenge is, arguably, a part of this study because the concept under investigation is ambiguous. However, with a sense of alertness, discipline, and curiosity in the researcher, this study promises coherency and hopes to yield a rich informative resource, thanks to the possibility of drawing from a broad range of disciplines to make a more holistic analysis. That is why, in adopting a concept analysis to analyze the concept of cultural competence, the study strives to make clear its meaning by making explicit both the theoretical role of the concept and its relation to observation and practice. Thus, this study analytically looks into how cultural competence is defined, described and used in different fields, and whether it is used in the same way with the same meaning, or in different ways with different meanings. Arguably, this is a step in the right direction since concepts do take on new meanings in different fields because the animating concerns of the discipline or field of application is different. So, in the context of this dissertation, cultural competence might have a particular function in an educational context and a slightly different purpose or set of purposes in pastoral setting.

These inquiries are explored with the understanding that an explicit formulation of the analysis of the concept as well as a thick description of what is going on will make
clearer the concept’s theoretical contribution and application to practice in practical situations—particularly those of priestly ministry *in situ*.

**Thick Description**

Thick description refers to the approach to or strategy of a study. It is well-known that theoretical arguments can be made using a variety of strategies or approaches. “In a scientific context, it is common to explain the approach you will use to make your points before beginning to make them. The thoughtfulness of the approach has an important bearing on the credibility of the conclusions that result from the analysis.” In light of this observation, the preferred research approach that suits the purpose of this study is descriptive approach. The findings through this approach are communicated in a thick description as opposed to thin description.

In qualitative research thick description is also called thick analysis. Historically, the concept of thick and thin originates from Geertz who argues that when we describe an event, we have at least two choices: offer a fuller elaboration; or cover its bare details. In thick description, a lot of data is unpacked and the descriptions give us a chance to see the subjects’ surroundings in great detail; possibly learn about their likes and dislikes; learn about their tendencies; including their thoughts and feelings. Thick description affords the researcher the opportunity not only to analyze what is going on concerning the phenomenon, but also to make suggestions or recommendations on the next step. It also encourages, creates and allows room for thinking and rethinking, imagining and reimagining what could be, not necessarily against what is, but in addition to what is. It is this understanding of thick description that this study leans on and draws upon.
“In anthropology and other fields, a thick description of human behavior is one that explains not just the behavior, but its context as well, such that the behavior becomes meaningful to an outsider.”¹²⁸ This definition which highlights the importance of context in thick description is central to the analysis of concepts, especially a concept that enjoys a free usage and limitless array of application, such as cultural competence. The need to explain conceptual analysis as an approach that emphasizes the importance of context in examining a concept is vital in this dissertation because it attempts to situate the concept of cultural competence in general in its relevant contexts: priestly ministry, pastoral care, and church community settings. Other contexts are cultural contexts, linguistic contexts, national identity, and so on.

In addition, according to Levinson, “Another important thing about contextual analysis is that it situates particular concepts in their intellectual context, that is, by tracing the history of the term – when it emerged and why; to what set of problems it was responding.”¹²⁹ In addressing these questions, a detailed analysis of the concept, through what is called thick description, is appropriate.

Thick description is a methodological term taken from the anthropologist Geertz who used it to describe his ethnographic research techniques. Thick description provides a rich context, adding meaning and details, and considers each experience as part of an on-going and broader process. Furthermore, in his essay, “Microhistory and the History of Psychology,” Michael Sokal, a historian of science who works on the history of psychological tests and who has written extensively on the life and career of James
McKeen Cattell, emphasizes the importance of thick description to illuminate the “fine texture of the past.”

Although in the history of research methods, thick description has been used mainly on phenomenological case studies, especially of individuals, I argue that since the term means an intense focus on every detail of a research topic, it can find a fitting place in concept analysis that is concerned with keen focusing on a concept. It is in light of this understanding that I believe the term can be applied to this study. This is all the more so because the concept of cultural competence is an all-too common and “familiar” concept, so it can and should be more thoroughly illuminated by a careful and invested examination of its components, facets, phases and contextual application. This approach is necessary to confirm, refute, or add to the existing literature on the development of the theory about cultural competence and its theoretical relevance and practical importance.

Contextual Analysis

Contextual analysis emphasizes the importance of the context in a particular question. “It seeks to situate or locate the inquiry historically, geographically, culturally and intellectually—where and why the concept emerges, what its primary intellectual influences are.”

Contextual analysis has also been described as “a collection of views in philosophy which emphasizes the context in which an action, utterance, or expression occurs, and argues that, in some important respect, the action, utterance, or expression can only be understood relative to that context.” To that end, undeterred by or unafraid of the criticism of moral relativism or situation ethics, contextualist views hold that
philosophically controversial concepts such as *culture* and *cultural competence* only have meanings relative to a specific context, the investigation of which helps us understand why they occur.

A method that was common among the so-called “ordinary language philosophers” in the mid-twentieth century held that philosophical problems were often the result of skepticism due to linguistic muddles. “Therefore, prior to answering the deep questions about, say, freedom or moral responsibility, philosophers should get clear about the contextual meaning of words like, ‘free’ or ‘responsibility.’” This implies a careful analysis of how words are commonly used. Such thinking underscores two presuppositions. First, conceptual content is closely associated with, related to (if not identical to) word meaning. Second, “the meaning of a word is its use in the language.” It follows from these presuppositions or assumptions that clarity about concepts requires attending closely to the contextual use of words. On his part, Ziff believes that the meaning of a word is the difference it makes to the use of a sentence. To state the meaning of a word, then, is to articulate the difference in a context—be it place, environment, situation or discourse—where we are inclined to use the word and those [contexts] where we are inclined to refrain. This discourse makes the case for the importance of identifying attributes and explaining or elucidating them before the discussion of cases in every to-be published work on concept analysis. And there should be literature to support the particular attributes because knowledge attributions are context-sensitive.
In this research, the key words—as previously itemized—are words that are naturally and commonly used in unpacking educational discourses and related conversations on the concept of cultural competence. To arrive at the contextual meaning, this study relies on a broad and comprehensive review of sources: dictionaries, thesauri, colleagues, and available relevant literature—including those beyond strictly cultural literature. However, it must be pointed out that, as the researcher, I made choices for the meaning of the words within the context of the inquiry with particular attention to the question(s). By so doing, I am not unaware that this might be a limitation that stands in the way of the reliability of each key word.

However, my choice of meaning in this analysis is justified by the pattern of usage as the work can attest. That is why there is a commitment to context because I believe that cultural concepts are contextual in just the same way as scientific, philosophical and even ordinary language concepts. And they must be articulated accordingly. For example, according to Risjord, to articulate the meaning of a scientific term, “one needs to look to the difference it makes to the theory: the pattern of inferences, observations, and practical interventions that the term enables.”¹³⁸ Thus, both in the scientific case and in all other cases, the justification for a concept analysis is a pattern of use, and a particular analysis is justified if it accounts for that pattern.

The focus of this dissertation is to contextualize the concept of cultural competence in a cross-cultural priestly context. This way of contextualization adds to our understanding of the concept as a practice in situ. Thus, concepts are not developed in a vacuum and
they cannot be unpacked or explained without a context—a site. This understanding emphasizes the importance of contextual analysis in this research.

The idea of contextual analysis is often expressed with Carl Hempel’s image of concept as knots in the net of scientific theory.139 “As knots cannot exist without the cord, concepts cannot exist without the context.” Duncan, Cloutier, and Bailey argue that contextual analysis requires a relativist, context-bound ontology. Hence, they state that “Once the relationship of contextualism to the epistemology of the concept has been made clear, this ontological dispute can be resolved.” However, the resolving or dissolving [of a concept] is not always the case, especially if the term is [being] contested. This dissertation does not aim at resolving or dissolving the concept of cultural competence, which is an insurmountable task due the fluidity of the concept. On the whole, many discussions of concepts and their analyses have held strong and been committed to the idea that concepts are contextual.142 Based on the foregoing, from an African perspective, concepts could be likened to a pot that sits on a three-legged charcoal fire-stand. Without such stand—which acts as a supporting base—the pot cannot steady itself on the fire. And that stand is context. Whatever the preferred metaphor, the underlying idea is that concepts, which can be regarded as contents, get their base and support from context, not to mention being made relevant by context, which determines word meaning, interpretation, understanding, and application.

Now, if the content of a concept, which implies its meaning and value, depends on the context of use, then, it follows that when the context changes, the meaning must change too. This is called ‘moderate realism,’’ which is what Hupcey and Penrod express
when they talk about “Concept Analysis.” Concepts, therefore, are characterized by fluidity and even vagueness due to context. This idea of fluidity, vagueness, and changeableness is the cornerstone of Rodger’s “evolutionary method.” While Rodgers emphasized the way in which concepts and theories change together over historical time due to being overturned by future evidence and so assuming a new meaning, the point also applies to different contexts at the same historical time period.

Contextual analysis played an important role in the development of the “Models of Intercultural Sensitivity” by Bennett and Hammer, and it is still as important in analyzing the concept of cultural competence in this study that examines the concept in a cross-cultural priestly context. By virtue of this contextualization, the research argues that the questions of meaning, evidence, and justification of concept analysis can best be answered by reaffirming the idea that concepts must be related to contexts, like culture, cross-cultural, race, ethnicity, communities, status, organizations, institutions, including theories and discourses. Concepts are therefore assigned meaning through placement within the context of theory. They are “relative” and should not be treated like “absolute truths.” That said, the boundary-crossing nature or multiple contexts of the concept paves the way for the concept of cultural competence to be put on a more robust ontological and epistemological footing in a cross-cultural priestly context, as herein discussed.

The implication here is that the discussion of cultural competence in a cross-cultural priestly setting makes the pattern of use of the concept more explicit—in context. An instance of this explicitness can be seen in the conversation on the different stages of
cultural competence as reasoned and articulated by Janet M. Bennett & Milton J. Bennett in the Developmental Models of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Such contextualized discourse from a grounded theory approach is done in awareness of the fact that the ideas discovered and uncovered in each of the stages of development of intercultural sensitivity are not “absolute truths” and can be entertained depending on the context of the experience by individuals. This is so in the same way that—in an ethnographic, phenomenological, and grounded theory research—there are sub-groups within a population that might have different ways of thinking about a phenomenon.

Therefore, the “analyst has to be alert for contested concepts, where sub-groups have a stake in the way something is represented,” and in the meaning that is claimed, because individuals in the groups have a stake in the meaning to be generated or that’s already generated. They might take issues with context—calling the generated and disseminated meaning as out of context. Such refutation is thanks to the assertion by epistemic contextualists who “maintain that the truth conditions of knowledge ascriptions and denials change according to the context of utterance.” And herein is the basic idea of contextualization as stated by contextualists to the effect that:

…the content or truth conditions of knowledge assertions of the kind ‘S knows that p’ vary according to context of the speaker. Certain features of the speaker’s context determine how good an epistemic position S must be in with regard to p in order to know that p. Thus, according to the theory it is perfectly consistent for a speaker to affirm that S has knowledge that p in one context, perhaps where the standards for knowledge are quite low, and deny that the same subject possessing
the same amount of evidence knows $p$ in another context that demands greater epistemic strength with respect to $p$.\textsuperscript{149}

At this point of the discussion of contextualization, it is pertinent to make the point that concept analysis, whether theoretical or colloquial (that is, interviewing people), articulates concepts that already have a home in some domain: in cultural theories, or among people in a community, or in scientific theories. This domain is the context. Conceptual analysis therefore must respect the given context as it “makes existing concepts explicit objects of reflection, and this is especially important where theories are being borrowed and modified,”\textsuperscript{150} as in the case of the analysis of cultural competence.

Against the backdrop of the strong views on contextualization and the compelling arguments made in favor of the idea, perhaps, a voice of advocacy would not be out of place. Thus, in speaking generally regarding context or contextualization, perhaps, it is high time scholars developed a serious field of study on systematic semantics as an academic discipline that dwells on discussions of commonplace knowledge and familiar ideas, so as to decipher contextual meanings of words and concepts, as well as preferred, enabling, aiding and favorable conditions of understanding and meaning-making in the learning process. The discipline could be called “contextualism,”\textsuperscript{151} “contextualization,”\textsuperscript{152} “situated learning,”\textsuperscript{153} “situated cognition [SitCog],”\textsuperscript{154} “distributed learning,”\textsuperscript{155} or “distributed intelligence.”\textsuperscript{156} All together, these various names for the discipline speak to the context of what people are doing: where, how, and when they are doing it, including the authority or qualification of the person saying what—
whatever it is. In other words, the nomenclatures or synonyms refer to situations in which
learning and thinking, understanding and meaning-making are most likely to be
influenced by the cultural, physical and social contexts in which people are *immersed*.

These concepts also hold that thought and experience are inextricably intertwined
with the context in which they occur. Small wonder there is an increasing stress by
social and cognitive theorists on how human skill, activity and thought, develops in the
context of specific historical and cultural activities of the community.

To further the advocacy, Heusonkveld explicitly states that “Given that language
and culture are so closely interwoven, we should be able to design language lessons with
culture built into them. In like fashion, we should seek cultural lessons that enhance
language learning,” in concrete situations and familiar environments, especially when
attempting to make meaning of abstract concepts such as individualism, wealth, peace,
happiness, rationality, progress, justice, freedom, development, and even poverty.

However, according to Levinson, these concepts or words are still needed in their
abstractness to “provide terms for a crucial normative vision to which we aspire. What
we need to do instead is reattach these terms to the concrete contexts from which they
emerge and which they sought to describe, elevate or transform.”

The aforementioned vocabularies, which have a history, marginalize a lot of
contexts that are essential in understanding their nature and meaning. And so, to rely on
words that seem to be context independent and free of any background not only runs the
risk of misinterpretation and misunderstanding, but also of being taken out of context.

True as this might be, Levinson makes the educational point that rather than take aim
with the abstraction, it must be recognized that “these seemingly abstract concepts still serve an important communicative function. Instead of dismissing the terms for being abstract, [it is advisable to] focus on the need to come to grips with what they mean, or more precisely, what people mean when they use these terms or concepts.”162 Such focusing still calls for background knowledge, which some academics also lack, and without which the meaning of some words such as tradition, football, democracy, politics, and conservative, to mention a few, become context-free metaphors that can be reframed and reconstructed without any form of accountability other than what please, what benefits, and what fits into the interest of people and groups seeking to impose their agenda on others.

Thus, as a case in point, the argument for the academic discipline [being advocated that emphasizes context] is reinforced and further strengthened by the definition, description, and understanding of the word poverty in today’s world, which is better understood within cultural contexts. By this is meant, for instance, that the understanding of “poverty” in America is different from that in Africa. That is why Geertz’s idea of “thick description” is relevant to ensuring that the use of words and even metaphors should be based on analogs that take into account not only people’s current situations of living, but also their background as much as possible. This includes, but is not limited to: culture, history, memory, class, affiliation, social status, gender, age, race, disposition and related universal human conditions and individual experiences. All this makes up the context and constitutes what is meant by contextualization of concepts in conceptual analysis.
Curriculum Development in the Preparation of Missionary Priests

Used in many different ways, the term “curriculum” can be thought of as the program of studies in a school, as the content in a particular course, as planned learning experiences, as a structured series of intended learning outcomes, as a written plan for action, and as all of the experiences “had” in a school.¹⁶³

In this study, the term “curriculum” refers “not only to the official list of courses offered by the school…but also the purposes, content, activities, and organization of the educational program actually created in schools by teachers, students, and administrators.”¹⁶⁴ This definition underscores a democratic dimension of curriculum work as it incorporates the active participation of school administrators, teachers, students, and other stakeholders. It is a collaborative approach akin to what Henderson and Gornik call “the curriculum wisdom paradigm.”¹⁶⁵ Explaining this paradigm in curriculum work, these authors opine that “Though teaching for subject matter understanding is a necessary feature of curriculum judgment we encourage, it does not go far enough. We want educators to take one further step; we want them to integrate the subject matter learning to into democratic self and social learning.”¹⁶⁶

With such an approach, the development of a curriculum can benefit from the intellection of a bigger audience with various perspectives, drawn upon common human experiences and individual analysis of those experiences. Herein lies the dividends of wisdom — which no one has a monopoly of — defined as “the capacity of judging rightly in matters relating to life and conduct; soundness of judgment in the choice of means and ends; sometimes, less strictly, sound sense, especially practical affairs.”¹⁶⁷
Admittedly “curriculum work can be a source of frustration”\textsuperscript{168} particularly when there is conflict among stakeholders engaged in a deliberative process that is rooted in a democratic canvassing of opinions and ideas. Nevertheless, there comes a time when what needs to be done must be done. And the time has come in the development and renewal of the curriculum for the training of missionary priests, such as those in Nigeria and elsewhere who are often sent to serve in other parts of the world. And one important element of such a revised curriculum would include instruction and practice in the idea of cultural competence.

This idea is important if the training, preparation, and formation of young clergy are to meet the needs of changing times and respond to evolving circumstances, both in secular affairs and in the strictly missionary context. Encouraging the idea of curriculum renewal, “Decree on the Training of Priests” (\textit{Optatam totius}), coming out from the Second Vatican Council of 1965 states:

The Council is fully aware that the desired renewal of the whole Church must affirm the critical importance of priestly training. It lays down certain fundamental principles, wherein regulations already tested by the experience of centuries are reaffirmed, and new regulations are introduced, in harmony with the constitution and decrees of the sacred Council and the changed conditions of our time.\textsuperscript{169}

Aware of the uniqueness of every culture and nation, \textit{Optatam totius} goes farther to encourage, exhort, urge and affirm the development of curriculum according to national boundaries and cultural differences. The Council Fathers write:
…each nation or rite should have its own Program of Priestly Training…In every such program, the general regulations will be adapted to circumstances of time and place, so that priestly training will always answer the pastoral requirements of the particular area in which the ministry is to be exercised.”

Young clergy as missionaries must be adequately prepared carry out the mission contained in the missionary mandate by Jesus Christ [as stated] both in their own native cultures and in different cultures of the world. This is what it means by mission. It fundamentally concerns proclaiming the gospel message to those who “know not Christ” and reinforcing the knowledge and belief in those who “know him.” Missionaries are required and expected to do this by witness of their life and their words. Hence, they must “endeavor to establish sincere dialogue with those whom they hope to evangelize.” In context, such dialogue centers around what is today called cultural dialogue, which requires a significant degree of cultural competence if the dialogue is to be smooth, accommodating, respectful, and mutually beneficial. This calls for real time preparation and ongoing updating of related knowledge.

Underscoring the need for cultural competence for an effective missionary dialogue and fruitful mission, in Canon 787 of the Code of Canon Law, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council further emphasize that:

If this dialogue is to be fruitful, it must be done in great sensitivity and respect for the culture and temperament of those to whom they are sent, mindful that in many cases there is already a very ancient and rich culture. There must always be respect for the great religions of the world and also for the values of the
traditional religions, which have remained in their original socio-cultural
environment."

In the work of missioning and evangelizing in a globalized world, to achieve
mutual understanding and respect for the religious cultures of both the missionary and the
people whom he is serving, there must be a path to follow and a way of going about it
that will result in an effective achievement of the goals of the mission. Although the
concept of cultural competence has a broader definition than simply the ability to
understand multiple religious allegiances, beliefs, and values, it appears to be a concept
that is the clear path [to follow] and so is clearly applicable to the training of missionary
priests.

How such a concept is integrated into curriculum for the training of young
missionary priests, is a curriculum question. As Null rightly puts it: “What should be
taught, to whom, under what circumstances, how, and with what end in mind. Put more
concretely, what should be taught to these students [future priests and priests]…at this
time, how, and to what end?”

These are curriculum questions and they must be answered both through
thoughtful inquiry and in context. To that end, for a more constructive and promising way
of grappling with the challenges that come with priests serving abroad, a foundational
approach is needed. This approach calls for curriculum reform that includes an interest in
and focus on addressing the roots of the main issue, which is culture — a reality that
often creates difficulties and challenges, even as it promises good results to problems and
handling of crises for many an international priest. The question is where and how do we
proceed? This practical question poses the challenge of where, [that is, which aspect of the curriculum should be focused on] and how new ideas are to be placed in the task of curriculum development. It does not mean completely reinventing the whole curriculum. Rather, it calls for renewing and updating the existing curriculum.

It is no small task to provide an answer to the question of where and how that would be acceptable by all peoples. However, in answer to the question of where, among the different answers or options out there, this study suggests the route or path of inculturation as the better way forward. This entails developing a curriculum for the training of priests with more emphasis on how to translate the theoretical knowledge of cultural competence to practical situations through inculturation.

As an ecclesiastical concept that affirms the existence of Christianity and other cultures:

Inculturation is the process of incarnating the good news in a particular cultural context. Most specifically it is the process by which people of a particular culture become able to live, express, celebrate, formulate and communicate their Christian faith and their experience of the Paschal Mystery in terms (linguistics, symbolic, social) that make the most sense and best convey life and truth in their social and cultural environment.174

Being a process in which the Christian message and a local culture interact and both become changed, Crollius describes inculturation as the integration of the Christian experience of a local culture into the culture of its people, in such a way that this experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture, but also becomes a force that animates, orients and renews this culture, creating a new unity and communion.
These unity and communion are not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal.”175 Other terms with meanings which overlap this concept are religious syncretism, “missionary adaptation or accommodation…contextualization, indigenization, incarnation.”176

Inculturation, then, essentially means adapting the message of the Gospel so that it “fits” with the culture it is being presented to. This adaptation implies teaching and presenting the message to non-Christian cultures in manners that are sensitive to and respect the indigenous cultures as well as in ways that are easily understood by the indigenous people. Doing so answers the question of how to proceed in curriculum development. Hence, like a two-way street, inculturation takes into consideration the influence of those cultures on the evolution of the teachings of Christianity.

Lending its voice in support of inculturation, the church states that “The establishment of the local churches should be accompanied by suitable inculturation of the expression of the faith and its practice. Vatican II and various subsequent documents have called for this process. Through inculturation, the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community.”177 Based on inculturation, it goes without saying that young clergy and other missionaries will need not only knowledge and understanding of their own culture—enculturation, but also knowledge and understanding of the host culture—acculturation, and discernment as to how to integrate the gospel message within it. That this process requires an investment in a deliberative, well-thought-out and deeply
reflected curriculum to address the challenges that international priests must face makes the task necessary, as it is useful.

In a sense, the achievement of inculturation takes for granted that the missionary as a clergy has attained the highest level or final stage of cultural competence, which is integration, as itemized by Bennett and Hammer’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Consequently, he or she has established a cultural identity that is bicultural or multicultural. According to Landis et al., at this final stage of integration, the developmental emphasis is entirely around cultural identity, with identity here meaning “the maintenance of a metalevel that provides a sense of coherence to one’s experience. People dealing with integration issues are generally already bicultural or multicultural in their worldview.” To put it in perspective, this final stage of integration is cultural inculturation at its optimum. “The possibility of such inculturation will vary from culture to culture but certain areas are specifically referred to in conciliar or subsequent [church] documents: theology or at least expounding faith, church life and structures, the liturgy, consecrated life, marriage and the family.” These examples of specific areas in which inculturation can take place further strengthens the aim of this study that suggests a revision or renewal of the curriculum. In this revision, more attention is called to practical cases-studies that show ways on how some specific ideas and practices (within the aforementioned examples) could and should be made to benefit from real inculturation, however, without compromising the goal of the mission. Achieving this goal depends on the knowledge of cultural competence, even as the credit goes to such skills.
The more specific areas of examples that can benefit from inculturation through curriculum development [as the last chapter of this dissertation expounds under the subheading of inculturation], are as follows: communication, liturgy, sacraments, and syncretism. Finally, in view of the analysis of the concept of cultural competence in this study, particularly the rationales for cultural competence, [as discussed immediately following], it would belabor the obvious to state that incorporating all the elements of the concept in the curriculum would bring about a transformative and enriching experience. This would be an added value to the life of priests, the universal church and humanity as a whole. Besides, more exploration and increased understanding of the impact of culture in priestly ministry will assist the endeavor in curriculum planning for the training of priests. This involves thinking critically about the adequacy of current educational packaging to meet the needs of effective pastoral ministry in diverse cultures in a fast-shrinking world.

Cognizant of the evolution of ideas in response to realities of the moments that define every age, people, and generation, it would be overly presumptuous to think that this study would lead to the production of a universal curriculum for the training of priests for service abroad. However, the hope is that it makes a useful contribution and significant addition to working through a very complex cultural cum pastoral problem facing the universal church today. Particularly, it is hoped that the academic curriculum for the formation of priests in Nigeria would benefit from this endeavor.
The Importance of Cultural Competence

The importance of incorporating education for cultural competence into the curriculum for missionary priests, wherever they are being prepared for international service, is attested to by a variety of businesses and other organizations that deal with problems arising from those engaging in cross-cultural experiences and are unprepared for such cultural contact.

For example, the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) identifies six compelling rationales for cultural competence in the furtherance of effective health care:

1. To respond to current and projected demographic changes taking place the world over, especially in the U.S.;
2. To eliminate long-standing disparities in the health status of people of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as social status;
3. To improve the quality of services and health outcomes;
4. To meet legislative, regulatory and accreditation mandates;
5. To gain a competitive edge in the market place; and
6. To decrease the likelihood of liability/malpractice claims.¹⁸⁰

Further, another important rationale in the field of multiculturalism or multicultural education is:

7. To be cognizant of differential-learning, understanding and application of educational material.

In addition, this study will suggest three other reasons to include the idea of cultural competence in new curricula:
(8) To check culture-clash and ameliorate culture wars;

(9) To reduce the ideological tensions in religious beliefs and practices; and

(10) To achieve effective ministry by priests who are on service abroad.

Emphasizing the importance of cultural competence, the NCCC further impresses the idea, which can be applied to many contexts, that:

Higher education and health professional education programs need to consider the impact of the following issues as they relate to providing culturally competent services to underserved communities: Historical issues in the way services have been provided to underserved communities; the increasing need for student and work force diversity; lack of faculty awareness and knowledge of cultural competence; and content related to cultural and linguistic competence is not consistently in curricula and teaching modalities. 

Explanation of the Rationales for Cultural Competence in Health Care and Other Areas

(1) To Respond to Current and Projected Demographic Changes Taking Place the World Over, Especially in the U.S.

Using America as a case in point, being a nation of immigrants, it is hard to deny the fact that the make-up of the American population is constantly changing as a result of immigration patterns and significant increases among racially, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse populations already residing in the United States. Therefore, not only health care organizations and programs, but also academic institutions, religious organizations and federal, state, and local governments must implement systemic change in order to meet the needs of this service population.
Currently, the U.S. foreign-born population comprises a larger segment than at any time in the past five decades. This trend is expected to continue.\textsuperscript{183} In demonstrating the rapid demographic changes with statistical information about some races or ethnic groups, the NCCC reports that, “The Children Defense Fund predicts that early in the first decade following the year 2000, there will be 5.5 million more Latino children, 2.6 million more African-American children, 1.5 million more children of other races and 6.2 million fewer white, non-Latino children in the United States.”\textsuperscript{184} This demographic information establishes the compelling need for cultural competence if members of a given population must have a sense of belonging by feeling and knowing they belong to the whole, and so have their needs addressed with a sense of equality, even as they receive all the services deserving of them.

(2) To Eliminate Long-standing Disparities in the Health Status of People of Diverse Racial, Ethnic and Cultural Backgrounds, as well as Social Status

Racial, ethnic and cultural disparities exist in all aspects of society, but nowhere are they more clearly documented than in health care. People of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural heritage suffer disproportionately from cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and every form of cancer. In addition, their infant mortality rates are generally higher, and their childhood immunization rates are lower.\textsuperscript{185}

It is important to point out that although disproportionate poverty and lack of health insurance by the poor contribute greatly to the disparities, health care organizations and individual medical practices are also responsible for the situation of poor health in that they often fail to provide culturally competent health care.
The divisions of race, ethnicity, culture and even social status are more sharply drawn in the health of the people in the United States. For instance, despite recent progress in the overall national health, there are continuing disparities in the incidence of illness and death among African-Americans, Latino/Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Alaskan Natives, Pacific Islanders and people of low social status due to their economic situations as compared with the U.S. population as a whole. It is in recognition of this disparity that the president of the United States has targeted six areas of health status and committed resources—human and financial—to aggressively address cancer, cardiovascular disease, infant mortality, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and child and adult immunization. The hope is that this commitment will eliminate the long-standing disparities in the health of people of all racial, ethnic, cultural backgrounds as well as social status by having the health issues commonly associated with each group looked into and properly addressed, not to mention making access to health for all a possibility.

(3) To Improve the Quality of Services and Health Outcomes

The ways in which medical professionals and laymen conceptualize health and illness, remedies and their relationships with each other are bound tightly to culture. For example, Houston and Venkatesh found that differences in factors like time orientation (arising out of cultural value systems) have significant implications for health scheduling and utilization of services. The literature regarding the need for cultural competency and the ways in which it might be measured in the health care professions is extensive. Because of the wide variety of ways in which distinct cultures affect patients’ ways of
thinking and perceptions on health care and health behaviors, cultural competence is seen as a “necessary set of skills for physicians who wish to deliver high-quality care to all patients.”

The unarguable fact is that despite real and presumed similarities, fundamental differences among people arise from nationality, ethnicity and culture, as well as from family background and individual experiences. These differences affect the health beliefs and behaviors of patients. In light of this consideration,

…it is important for health care providers to remember that each individual has a unique personal history, belief system, communication style and health-related risk factors and behaviors. What may be true about some or most individuals from a particular culture may not be true of all individuals from that culture.

Thus, the delivery of high-quality primary health care that is accessible, efficient, cost effective, and empathic requires health care practitioners to have a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural background of patients, their families and the environments in which they now live and where they came from. This understanding lays the foundation and facilitates the clinical encounters with more favorable outcomes between primary health service providers and patients. It also enhances the potential for a more rewarding interpersonal experience and increases the satisfaction of the individual receiving health care services.

Health care providers must understand the beliefs that shape a person’s approach to health and illness. This is because knowledge of customs and healing are indispensable to the design of treatment and interventions. From the foregoing, it is safe to affirm that
cultural competence is inextricably linked to the definition of specific health outcomes and to an ongoing system of accountability that is committed to reducing the current health disparities among racial, ethnic, cultural, as well as socially stratified populations.

(4) To Meet Legislative, Regulatory and Accreditation Mandates

Not just as an enforcer of civil rights law, but also as a major purchaser of health care services, the Federal Government has a pivotal role in ensuring culturally competent health care services. It is against this backdrop that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 mandates that “no person in the United States shall, on ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Organizations and programs have multiple, competing responsibilities to comply with federal, state and local regulations for the effective delivery of health services. For instance, in its policy information, The Bureau of Primary Health Care acknowledges that:

Health centers serve culturally and linguistically diverse communities and many serve multiple cultures within one center. Although race and ethnicity are often thought to be dominant elements of culture, health centers should embrace a broader definition to include language, gender, socioeconomic status, housing status and regional differences. Organizational behavior, practices, attitudes and policies across all health center functions must respect and respond to the cultural diversities of communities and clients served. Health centers should develop
systems that ensure participation of the diverse cultures in their community, including participation of persons with limited English-speaking ability, in programs offered by the health center. Health centers should also hire culturally and linguistically appropriate staff.\footnote{192}

Furthermore, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, through its effort related to state accountability and Healthy People Year 2000/2010 and the National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives include an emphasis on cultural competency as an integral component of health service delivery and nutrition services.\footnote{193}

\footnote{5} \textit{To Gain a Competitive Edge in the Market Place}

In economics, a field traditionally thought of as uninterested in cultural dimensions, the economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen wrote an influential piece titled “How Does Culture Matter?” In it he refers to a previous book that explores whether culture matters in the market place and he indicates that they missed the point. In his words,

The issue is not \textit{whether} culture matters …it must be, given the pervasive influence of culture in human life. The real issue, rather, is \textit{how} – not \textit{whether} – culture matters. What are the different ways in which culture may influence development? How can the influence be better understood, and how might they modify or alter the development of policies that seem appropriate? The interest lies in the nature and forms of the connections and on the implications for action and policy, not merely in the general—and hardly deniable—belief that culture does matter.\footnote{194}
In his piece, Sen makes a list of numerous examples of the ways in which culture must be taken into consideration when involved with development and development policies. For example, he recognizes that “cultural influences can make a major difference to work ethics, responsible conduct, spirited motivation, dynamic management, entrepreneurial initiatives, willingness to take risks, and a variety of other aspects of human behavior which can be critical to economic success” and market competition.

Compellingly emphasizing the need for diversity skills in gaining a competitive edge in the marketplace, Diversity Training University International (DTUI) underscores the point more than anyone else. Thus, cultural competence is part of a multibillion dollar soft-skills training industry resulting from recent demographic shifts, globalization, and the anti-workplace discrimination laws. Until recently, few programs existed for training in this area. And in such a relatively short time of the concept coming on board, experience witnesses and attests that “Diversity expertise is considered a valuable resource for meeting the challenges of promoting inclusion and capitalizing on the promise of diversity for gaining a complete edge in a global marketplace.”

(6) To Decrease the Likelihood of Liability/Malpractice Claims

Just as an unintentional cultural misstep can destroy one’s mission to a foreign land, in this same way, a lack of awareness about cultural differences may result in liability under tort law and principle in several ways. For example, health care providers may discover that they are liable for damages as a result of treatment in the absence of informed consent. Also, health care organizations and programs face potential claims that
their failure to understand health beliefs, practices and behavior on the part of providers or patients breaches professional standards of care. In fact, in some states, failure to follow medical instructions because they conflict with values and beliefs may raise presumption of negligence on the part of the provider.

Essentially, the ability to communicate effectively with patients has been shown to be successful in reducing the likelihood of malpractice claims. On this note:

A 1994 study appearing in the journal of the American Medical Association indicates that the patients of physicians who are frequently sued had the most complaints about communication. Physicians who had never been sued were likely to be described as concerned, accessible and willing to communicate. When physicians treat patients with respect, listen to them, give them information and keep communication lines open, therapeutic relationships are enhanced and medical personnel reduce their risk of being sued for malpractice.197

Indeed, effective communication between providers and patients may be even more challenging when there are cultural and linguistic barriers. That is why it is very important that health care organizations and programs address linguistic competence as well as cultural competence to ensure accurate communication of information in languages other than English.

Not only health care providers, but also educators who are working with children and adults in a variety of settings, must be aware of and, hopefully, culturally competent in order to achieve effective service delivery.
(7) To be Cognizant of Differential-learning, Understanding and Application of Educational Material.

Concerning this rationale, Rogers reports of an interview with a student, Carrie:

First of all, culture can influence your expectations of yourself as a learner, and then your expectations of the teacher; those are the most basic ways that culture influences learning. And your learning style as well. How do you perceive of learning? How do I conceive of learning? What do you expect, and watch? What is your goal as a learner, and what is worth learning?¹⁹⁸

These comments point to both differentiated instruction and differential learning.

To attend to the demands of differential-learning which tends to lead to understanding and better implementation, cultural competence is not an option; rather, it’s a necessity for instructors. Of course, this is a daunting task and it doesn’t get easier with the realities of seeing new faces “everyday” in classes of students from different backgrounds. This reality increases the necessity for what Ogbu calls “Understanding cultural diversity and learning.” Explaining this he writes:

Cultural diversity has become a household phrase in education, especially minority education. I suspect, however, that there is some misunderstanding about what it means and its relevance to minority education. As an anthropologist, I am sensitive to the use of the phrase cultural diversity; as a student of minority education, I am concerned about its application or misapplication with respect to the school adjustment and performance of minority students.¹⁹⁹
Arguably, Ogbu’s concern stems from lack of cultural competence by the school as exhibited by the teachers. Hence, he further observes that:

…the ability of a core curriculum to increase the school performance of some minority groups will be limited because it does not address the nature of minority cultural diversity. Past experience with contemporary education and other remedial programs suggest that it is not enough to simply announce higher academic standards and expectations (Passow, 1984). What goes on inside the schools, including the kind of curriculum taught, is very important for minority students (Edmonds, 1986; Ogbu, 1974), but more is involved. What the children bring to school—their communities’ cultural models or understanding of “social realities” and the educational strategies that they, their families, and their communities use or do not use in seeking education are as important as within-school factors (Ogbu, 1988).²⁰⁰

From an historical point of view, Ogbu tries to trace the history of the movement called *multicultural education*, which was in response to the changing school environment, particularly in the classroom. Thus:

The current movement, led largely by minorities, emerged primarily in the 1960s, initially in response to cultural deprivation theory. Before then, minorities, such as Black Americans, protested against a differential and inferior curriculum; they wanted the same curriculum that was available to Whites (Bullock, 1970, Ogbu, 1978). Today, however, multicultural education is linked to cultural diversity
(Yee, 1991). Moreover, the current demand for multicultural education is for both minorities who are doing relatively well in school and those who are not.\textsuperscript{201}

Ogbu continues: “Thus, a third reason for the inadequacy of the multicultural education solution is that it fails to separate minority groups that are able to cross cultural and language boundaries and learn successfully, in spite of initial cultural barriers, from those that are not able to do so.”\textsuperscript{202}

In any case, in spite of the difficulty of separating those who can move easily across cultural barriers from those who cannot, the question of who needs multicultural education to do well in school and who does not becomes more important when one looks at the increasing diversity in U.S. schools and classrooms. School administrators, instructors and other stakeholders must properly address this question of cultural competence.

Through cultural competence, educators can see a clearer and bigger picture of students’ backgrounds, such as readiness levels, learning profiles, needs, and interests. With this picture, foreign teachers in particular would be more apt to rethink what they personally experienced during their school days in their own native cultures and so work to apply educational materials in the new context with a striving “to customize the complexity of instruction so all students experience learning success.”\textsuperscript{203}

Through the work of this study, three additional reasons will be suggested for the importance of including education for cultural competence in the curricula for the preparation of missionary priests.

(8) \textit{To Check Culture-clash and Ameliorate Culture Wars}
The web-based *Urban Dictionary* describes culture clash as “When one or more cultures are integrated into one environment, causing disruption and challenging contemporary traditions.” This often occurs in multicultural societies. Such situations speak to disagreement about beliefs and ways of life, either due to misunderstanding or struggle for superiority and supremacy. Culture clash can be hazardous.

Although not a panacea, cultural competence is needed to act as a system of checks and balances in any tumultuous situation. Because such knowledge, for the most part, does not take sides, but is open to dialogue, members who make up the factions can be brought together for a mature conversation in view of moving forward. And the result could be, syncretistic, that is, a little to the left and a little to the right. With such win-win situation, continuous peaceful co-existence of different cultures is assured.

A typical situation that exemplifies culture clash comes from Nigeria. The clash brings to the fore the ancient traditions among the people of Eastern Nigeria (the Igbos) and the Christian religion in the aspect of burial rites: when burial is or should be held; how long it is or should be conducted, and who does or should do what. Reporting on the clash is a thick description article by Geoffrey Anyanwu, titled, “Awka community, Catholic Church fight over dust-to-dust funeral rite.” It reads in full:

The Catholic Diocese of Awka and its host community, Awka, are now at loggerheads over the performance of the “dust-to-dust burial rite” as the community has threatened to stop the Church from performing the rite during burials of their natives.

For a long time, the issue has been causing problems during burials of
Catholic members in Awka as the community views the dust-to-dust rite as a taboo in their land, saying that it must be stopped.

But the Catholic Church has stood its grounds that the rite was not being forced on anyone, but only on Catholic adherents that requested the Church to bury them, insisting that it cannot comprehend how it becomes a problem for the Awka natives….Speaking to Daily Sun on the issue, the Chairman of Awka Renaissance, Mr. Anayo Obiakor who is resident in the United Kingdom said they were concerned about the crisis in the community and had to make it open before it gets out of hand and leads to loss of lives and property.

His words: “The crisis is all about the burial rites in Awka community which the Catholic Church is interfering in and this interference had led to many crisis between the Church and the community and the town has made their point clear that the customs of the town must not be tampered with and the awkward situation is that the Catholic Church is trying to let the female, our wives to perform some rites; pour sand into the grave which is not acceptable to the society. That’s the true situation.

In Awka culture, a man is not allowed to pour sand into the wife’s grave in the case of death and the wife is not allowed to pour sand into the man’s grave in the case of the man’s death, but the Catholic Church is bringing it in, doing otherwise, trying to turn around the custom of the people which is now leading to crisis and several fights between the community and the Church in some burial locations.
The latest situation is that there was a burial in Nwakor’s family in Umudioka and the Catholic Priest, Rev. Fr. Chukwuma came there and insisted that the woman should perform the dust-to-dust rite for the late husband which is an abomination in Awka community. So, the community refused that and after some arguments, the Church left and the villagers buried their brother...

So, this is why we want to make this known to the people, so that the Catholic Church will allow the community to perform their burial rites the way they do it and not by enforcing people to do what is not acceptable to them and even to the best of my knowledge, I know that there is nowhere in the Bible that says that the woman should pour sand into the husband’s grave and that is not what religion is all about. The religion is all about salvation, the way you’ll make eternity.

As the chairman of Awka Renaissance and as a concerned Awka group, we do not want the church to interfere with the community. Let the church exists the way the church is existing and let the community exist the way they are existing. If the church wants to perform burial rites the way they want to do it, let them go and get their cemetery, let them go and buy a parcel of land where they’ll have the right to bury whoever wants to be buried there, but if the church is going to bury somebody in the community, it should be according to the community’s rites."
Culture clash may logically lead to culture wars, which are generally described as a struggle between conflicting cultural values. It is related to the theory of cultural hegemony.

In American usage, the term culture war is used to claim that there is a conflict between those values considered traditionalist of conservative and those considered progressive of liberal. It originated in the 1920s when urban and rural Americans came into clear conflict. This followed several decades of immigration to the cities by people considered alien to earlier immigrants…However, the culture war in the United States of America was redefined by James Hunter’s 1991 book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America.*

To demonstrate culture wars, Hunter uses the ideology behind the concepts of *orthodoxy* and *progressives.* These terms may be familiar to many. They have a particular meaning depending on the contexts. Consequently, Hunter offers some elaboration:

The words, *orthodoxy* and *progressive,* can describe specific doctrinal creeds or particular religious practices. Take orthodoxy: Within Judaism, orthodoxy is defined mainly by commitment to Torah and the community that upholds it; within Catholicism, orthodoxy is defined largely by loyalty to church teachings – the Roman Magisterium; and within Protestantism, orthodoxy principally means devotion to the complete and final authority of the Scripture [*sola scriptura*]. Substantively, then, these labels can mean vastly different things within different religious traditions."

In this explanation of the terms orthodoxy and progressive, because of the
centrality of context, the knowledge of cultural competence is further highlighted. Such knowledge is needed in order for scholars to situate within the proper context the meaning of the same term and how members of a particular group understand and apply it. Arguably, this can ameliorate potential and actual culture wars.

(9) To Reduce the Ideological Tensions in Religious Beliefs and Practices

When one considers the basic tenets and teachings of the world’s “major” religions, it is not hard to see that concerning man’s relationship with God and man’s relationship with fellow man, more often than not, the message is fundamentally the same, with a common teleology. For instance, in his book, The Message That Comes From Everywhere: Exploring the Common Core of the World’s Religions and Modern Science, Gary L. Beckwith shares what he calls “The Ten Teachings Shared by All Religions.” He lists them as follows: 1) One God; 2) God is everywhere; 3) The existence of the soul; 4) God is inside of us; 5) Spiritual knowledge is accessible to everyone; 6) God’s name: “I AM”; 7) Compassion and respect for everyone; 8) Morals: don’t kill, lie, steal, covet; 9) All of humanity is united; and 10) Peace and nonviolence. In largely non-theological terms, this simple but powerful book demonstrates how the world’s religions agree on the most important core teachings. Rather than listing the theories and opinions, the scriptures of each religion are quoted often. Modern science is also shown to validate the message that the religions share. The subject is particularly relevant to the world today, as understanding of other religions is playing a key role in finding a solution [to the ideological tensions and related divisions].
In spite of the truism in this idea of agreement on commonality, there still exist tensions, rivalries, and even wars between religions, within religions—sects, and among members. And there is no end in sight. This is another reason for the importance of cultural competence. Indeed, culturally competent members of given religious groups would be more able to understand and bridge interpretations of the same belief, even as a common practice is needed for the sake of protecting and preserving the human race and upholding the contextual noble philosophy of live and let live.

(10) To Achieve Effective Ministry by Priests on Service Abroad

Like every call to the unknown, the call to the priesthood with its attendant priestly ministry is so unpredictable that care must be taken to prepare for it. This reality becomes even more telling in light of the present-day trend in the global redistribution of priests to cultures that are foreign to one’s own. Because priestly ministry is needed and expected, it matters not where a priest is exercising his ministry; what is importance is that he is effective and accomplishing the mission for which he is sent out.

Making good on her many centuries of ministerial experience, the church is not silent on this matter of effective ministry. The “Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests” (Presbyterorum Ordinis), promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on Dec. 7, 1965, unequivocally states:

The excellence of the order of priests in the Church has always been recalled to the minds of all by this sacred synod. Since, however, in the renewal of Christ’s Church tasks of the greatest importance and of ever increasing difficulty are being given to this order, it was deemed most useful to treat the subject of priests at
greater length and with more depth. What is said here applies to all priests, especially those devoted to the care of souls, with suitable adaptations being made for priests who are religious. Priests by sacred ordination and mission which they receive from the bishops are promoted to the service of Christ the Teacher, Priest and King. They share in his ministry, a ministry whereby the Church here on earth is unceasingly built up into the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in order that their ministry be carried on more effectively and their lives be better provided for, in pastoral and human circumstances which very often change so profoundly, this sacred synod declares and decrees as follows.  

Chapter I of the Decree talks about “The Priesthood in the Ministry of the Church.” It reiterates the fact that “Priests, who are taken from among men and ordained for men in the things that belong to God in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins, nevertheless live on earth with other men as brothers.”

Chapter II of the Decree, “The Ministry of Priest,” claims that “The people of God are joined together primarily by the word of the living God. And rightfully they expect this from their priests…To all men, therefore, priests are debtors that the truth of the Gospel which they have may be given to others.” In some cases, the preaching demands entering into profitable dialogue that is respectful of the other, even as it requires active listening. With cultural competence, such task might not be as impossible as it is sometimes made to sound. In any case:
whether by entering into profitable dialogue... whether by openly preaching... or
whether in the light of Christ they treat contemporary problems, they are relying
not on their own wisdom for it is the word of Christ they teach, and it is to
conversion and holiness that they exhort all men. But priestly preaching is often
very difficult in the circumstances of the modern world. In order that it might
more effectively move men’s minds, the word of God ought not to be explained in
a general and abstract way, but rather by applying the lasting truth of the Gospel
to the particular circumstance of life.”

In “Section 2” of Chapter II of Presbyterorum Ordinis, attention shifts to “Priests’
Relationships with Others.” While treating as important the communion between priests
and their bishops, and urging all called to the ministerial priesthood to promote the good
cause in a spirit of priestly collegiality, there is much that is required of priests. Thus,
besides working across cultures, but also as people who are placed in the midst of the
laity, “It is their task, therefore, to reconcile differences of mentality in such a way that
no one need feel himself a stranger in the community of the faithful.”

“Section 3” turns to “The Distribution of Priests, and Vocations to the Priesthood.” The difficulty in the
exercise of cultural competence in a foreign land can stand in the way of effective
ministry. Aware of this challenge and knowing that it can be overwhelming, even as it
can be a very lonely place to be, the Decree recommends that:

Priests should not be sent singly to a new field of labor, especially to one where
they are not completely familiar with the language and customs; rather, after the
example of the disciples of Christ, they should be sent two or three together so that they might be mutually helpful to one another.\textsuperscript{215}

Chapter III turns to “The Vocation of Priests to the Life of Perfection.” Like a path that is rarely traveled, or an idea not fully explored, the focus on cultural competence for effective ministry, arguably, has a connection with pursuing the life of perfection by priests. With such a well-rounded personality, skilled in cultural appreciation, contextualization and adaptation, a culturally competent priest is more likely to flourish by feeling renewed, fulfilled, satisfied, happier, and so attain “perfection,” unlike one that is culturally myopic, ethnocentric, and insular. In order to pursue a life of perfection, therefore:

this holy council, to fulfill its pastoral desires of an internal renewal of the Church, of the spread of the Gospel in every land and of a dialogue with the world of today, strongly urges all priests that they strive always for that growing holiness by which they will become consistently better instruments in the service of the whole People of God, using for this purpose those means which the Church has approved.\textsuperscript{216}

To this exhortation must be added that priests who perform their duties sincerely and indefatigably in the Spirit of Christ, who during his ministry on earth exercised the highest level of cultural competence, arrive more easily at “perfection” in the form of holiness. Without intellectual and cultural competence, however, it can be argued that holiness makes a priest a cultural misfit — that is, a person that is socially irresponsible and insensitive to the needs of even the very people to whom he is ministering.
To reemphasize the full benefit that comes from the components of cultural competence, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* makes the salient point that:

Since human culture and also sacred science has progressed in our times, priests are urged to suitably and without interruption perfect their knowledge of divine things and human affairs and so prepare themselves to enter more opportunely into conversation with their contemporaries. 

Life in the world presents many challenges and living life in this world but in a different culture, for the most part, does not make the human condition easier. In some cases, finding oneself in a strange land, especially as a priest, where you have to work directly with the people, can be difficult. This difficulty can impede the cultivation of cultural competence, talk more of exercising it. To reduce the stress that comes with such difficulty, particularly on economic necessities, the Council Fathers in “Section Three” of the Decree choose to address an important aspect of the life of priests, properly calling it “Aids to the Life of Priests.” Thus, in addition to tapping into all the spiritual means for the strength to carry out their priestly duties, in order that, in all conditions of life, they may be encouraged in their service in all ways and grow in union with Christ, priests, besides the exercise of their conscious ministry, should enjoy the support and aid of the people of whom they are sent to work with and among. This, the Church recommends, and sometimes commands. 

Thus:

As those dedicated to the service of God and the fulfillment of the office entrusted to them, priests deserve to receive an equitable remuneration, because ‘the laborer is worthy of his hire,’ (Lk. 10:7) and ‘the Lord directed that those who preach the
Gospel should have their living from the Gospel’ (I Cor. 9:14). Wherever, insofar as an equitable remuneration of the priests would not be provided otherwise, the faithful themselves—that is, those in whose behalf the priests labor—are truly obliged to see to it that they can provide what help is necessary for the honorable and worthy life of the priests.\textsuperscript{219}

Finally, if the rationale for cultural competence in the context of effective priestly service must be taken seriously, the exhortation by the Synod Fathers as articulated in the Pastoral Letter under consideration,\textit{ Presbyterorum Ordinis}, is appropriate. From a profound insight and prophetic foresight it is written:

\begin{quote}
Having before our eyes the joys of the priestly life, this holy synod cannot at the same time overlook the difficulties which priests experience in the circumstances of contemporary life. For we know how much economic and social conditions [as well as cultural environments and related milieus] are transformed, and even more how much the customs of men are changed, how much the scale of values is changed in the estimation of men. As a result, the ministers of the Church and sometimes the faithful themselves feel like strangers in this world, anxiously looking for the ways and words with which to communicate with it. For there are new obstacles which have arisen to the faith, [culturally, socially, demographically, politically, and so on].\textsuperscript{220}

It is in light of these changing times with all the intra-dynamics as reasons for cultural competence that the new evangelization needs urgently to find a form for the exercise of the priestly ministry that is really consonant with contemporary conditions so
as to render it effective and relevant to all peoples, both in different cultures and from different cultures—living and walking together.

**Why Is There A Compelling Need For Cultural Competence?**

From a more general concern for better human interaction and to improve relationships, both in the work place and in the society at large, the question, “Why is there a compelling need for cultural competence?” has been addressed by many people. This dissertation chooses to briefly feature the answer to the question as contained in a document published by the New Hampshire Governor’s Office of Energy and Community Service, titled, “Ethnic Community Profiles.” Recognizing that a lot can be learned and understood about people by learning and knowing their backgrounds, the [said] document gathers of information that is considered to be a supplement to cultural competency training and understanding based on knowing people’s cultural backgrounds. It compiles “selected underserved ethnic community profiles that are intended to provide example approaches taken by various health and human service organizations in an effort to better understand the diverse needs of their constituents.”

Very informatively, as is the case with the holistic picture of cultural competence, the document draws attention to the recognition that differences in language, age, culture, socioeconomic status, political and religious beliefs, sexual orientation, and life experience add challenging dimensions to the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions.

The ethnic communities featured include the following: Bosnian, Cambodian, Cuban, Ethiopian & Eritrean, Roma, Haitian, Hispanic, Iraqi, Kosovar, Kurds, Laotian, Liberian, Nigerian, Somali, Sudanese, and Vietnamese.
Before unpacking the history of migration to the United States of each of the listed countries, the document reiterates the six salient rationales identified by The National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC), which explain the reasons to incorporate cultural competence into organizational policy. Choosing herein Nigeria as a case in point, the document highlights some ideas about the country and its people in hopes that such knowledge by the public would help in understanding where Nigerians in the United States are coming from: culturally, religiously, socially, politically and so on. The following subheadings fall within the purview of the brief examination of “Nigerian Refugees and Immigrants”: 222

*Nigerian Refugees in New Hampshire*: Nigerian refugees were resettled in 1996 and then again in 1998 and 1999. The majority were settled in Manchester.

*Background on Country of Origin*: Nigeria is the most populous black nation in Africa with an estimated 112 [to 170] million people. The country is located along the West Coast of Africa. In 1960 Nigeria achieved independence from British rule. The country has large oil reserves. Although ruled for a long time by a repressive military regime, it is now ruled by a democratically elected president.

*The People*: Nigeria is a complex cultural, linguistic and social mosaic with more than 250 ethnic groups speaking many different languages and dialects. Members of each ethnic group are typically concentrated in one area; many have migrated to urban areas, thus producing modern cities composed of mixed ethnic groups.

*Major ethnic groups*: Some of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria are Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Ibo, Edo, Ijo, Ibibio, Kanuri, Jukun, and Nupes.
History of Migration: Being one of the African countries with a relatively better economy, immigrants to Nigeria are drawn from neighboring nations by economic opportunity. On their part, Nigerians have immigrated in large numbers to Europe and North America. In the 1970s, a few Nigerian came to Western countries as political refugees, Some of these refugees experienced extreme repression in Nigeria.

Culture and Social Relations: Allegiance to family and kinship systems, as well as village is strong. The extended family system and the community are an important support of all who belong to the group, especially parents. There are early marriages, mostly due to economic reasons. Polygamy is legal, but there are decreasing numbers of polygamous relationships. Men are dominant among Muslims, Christians and those who practice traditional religions. Observably, significant numbers of people do not have better education. This forces most young people into living questionable lives that adversely affect the peace, safety, and economy of the country.

Communications: Although English is the official language, there are more than 250 different languages spoken in Nigeria. Among immigrants and when interacting with Westerners, Nigerians usually are soft spoken so they can be understood, even though they naturally speak fast.

Religion: There is no state religion. There are two main religions, Christianity and Islam. 50% of Nigerians are Muslims and 40% are Christians, mostly living in north and south, respectively.

Health Care Practices and Beliefs: Although Nigerians embrace Western medicine and access modern health-care facilities, traditional healers and spirit causation
remain a significant part of the traditional medical system. Due to the latter, the presence of diseases or illness may be seen as a warning sign that there is an imbalance with either the natural or the spiritual world. In addition, traditional healers are thought by some Nigerians to belong to a special species of human beings with mystical powers and attributes, including the ability to commune with the spirit world and see through walls. There also is a widespread use of medicinal plants to treat illnesses such as peptic ulcers, diabetes, asthma, pain, etc. Female circumcision is a practice common with most ethnic groups in Nigeria. Although the practice is decreasing due to the condemnation of it, as championed by the Western world, the natives still argue that there is nothing wrong with that. Home or traditional Nigerian diets are rich in fats and more traditionally minded persons view obesity as positive.

This kind of document, used in the service of educating those who will be working with people of different cultural backgrounds, is only a brief sample of the kind of material that all missionary priests could use to make their service in other countries both more effective and more helpful

**Research Question**

Research questions set the research goals, drive the research process, and point to the direction of areas in which the researcher would seek literature as materials or resources on which to build the study. For Schram, this section of a study points to the heart of the eventual research proposal. It is “the section in which you bring the focus and logic of your inquiry into clearest definition,” particularly situating it within a context. This not only establishes the focus of the research, it also helps to guide the parameters of the
Kilbourn offers an insight on this subject that is worthy of knowledge. He writes: Most, but not all, qualitative proposals contain a set of questions to be answered that are more specific than the general problem statement. These questions should be seen to be logically linked to the overall problem and should be as precise and clear as possible, within the bounds of the overall approach to the inquiry. There are several reasons for having specific questions. The substance, terms, and tone of the questions are all indicative of the way which the general problem will be addressed. The questions begin to put flesh on the bones of the problem. At the proposal stage, the way the questions are stated betrays how a researcher is thinking about the problem and usually is an indicator of the adequacy of the framing and feasibility of the inquiry.²²⁴

In designing qualitative research, Maxwell states that the research questions must address the following concerns:

What, specifically, you want to understand by doing this study. What you do not know about the phenomena that you want to learn. What questions your research attempts to answer, and how the questions relate to one another.²²⁵

Not to be taken lightly, “the work of forming research questions contributes to your research procedures section, providing the focus that enables you to establish the appropriateness of a particular research approach.”²²⁶
Upon deeply reflecting and seriously thinking about what this study seeks to accomplish, especially as articulated in the problem section, I conclude that only one main worthwhile research question is necessary:

*How might the concept of cultural competence inform the formation or training of Nigerian priests [in the twenty-first century] for service abroad?*

In the course of the work, however, other possible questions should be expected as offshoots of the main question. This expectation agrees with the nature of conceptual analysis in qualitative research, in regard to which Schram writes: “In many cases, especially early on, your ‘tacking’ may lead you to the decision that your inquiry is best served not by one but by several research questions…[Hence], Creswell, for example, recommends that researchers ask one or two central questions followed by no more than five to seven subquestions.”\(^{227}\) To this end, the following are some more “implicit” research questions which “build on each other in a linear or logical fashion”\(^{228}\):

a) Is there a shortage of priests in the Euro-American Church?

b) What is global distribution and redistribution of priests?

c) What is the cultural experience of international or foreign-born priests in America?

d) “…should the Catholic Church in the United States bring in more international priests in future years?”\(^{229}\)

e) “…with the assumption that for better or worse some will be brought in, how should this be done in a way that furthers the ministry of the priests and advances the mission of the church?”\(^{230}\)
f) Should cultural competence be included in the academic curriculum for the training of priests?

g) What are some of the implications and recommendations of the study?

To answer the main research question and consider budding ones, numerous sources of information are reviewed.

In the main research question lies the importance of this study and to answer it and consider budding ones, numerous sources of information are reviewed and analyzed.

It is hoped that at the end of the day, not only should the study contribute to the extant literature on the concept of cultural competence, but that it applies the understanding of the concept to a completely new field: the formation or training of priests in the twenty-first century for service abroad. The Catholic Church not only needs to be aware of cultural differences; over and above this awareness, it needs a better understanding of the implications of cultural competence, which makes for an efficient, effective, beneficial and productive apostolate. Such knowledge [of cultural competence] makes an impact where [area] to concentrate in the formation of future priests; how the Gospel is spread; how the evangelized receives the missionary work; and above all, how the priests must adjust or should adapt or “alter” their practices to ensure they are making a positive contribution in the lives of others. This calls for understanding and “This cultural understanding is needed for both ethical and quality reasons,” as well as pastoral effectiveness and missionary success.
Contributions of this Research

Although the fields of culture and multiculturalism have been around for a long time, the concentration on the concept of cultural competence is relatively young.

The concept appeared first in social work literature (Gallegos, 1982, Green, 1982) as well as in counseling psychology literature (Pedersen & Marsell, 1982, Sue, Bernier, Durran, Feinberg, Perdesen, Smith, & Vasquez-Nuttall, 1982). A decade later a number of articles calling for cultural competence in nursing and education were published, and, most recently, similar articles appeared in medical education literature (Sue, 2004; Bigby, 2003).

Ever since this appearance, today’s discussions on cultural competence seem to know no boundaries. And the conversation has just started in many fields of human services. Hence, against the backdrop of this critical time of a fast-shrinking world that brings about mixed cultural neighborhoods and marriages of and between cultures, this research holds much potential for making a significant contribution. It is also possible that such a thorough analysis of the concept might be an additional contribution to the history and historical evolution and development of the idea of cultural competence. This is even more so at a time when the translation of the concept from idea to practice is so sorely needed, not to mention the on-going examination, re-examination, and reconceptualization of the concept in different fields by professionals and researchers.

It is in recognition of the foregoing that this research contributes to further intellectual progress in the conversation on cultural competence. As an all-important idea that is increasingly gaining momentum in educational discourse, this study of cultural
competence presents a more holistic view of the concept, to include knowledge in the areas of enculturation, acculturation and inculturation. It also acknowledges common struggles by people who encounter different cultures and raises important encouraging points regarding cultural appreciation and respect.

The work significantly contributes to theory development in works within the fields of cultural ethnography, anthropology, sociology, multiculturalism, and even in philosophy of education—as broadly conceived. As an analysis that focuses on concept exploration and theory development, the study adds substance to the analysis of the concept by making more explicit the content of the existing uses of the concept. In doing so, the study clarifies conceptual materials that educators can use to work or even rework their research for clarity, for better understanding, and for meeting the demands of reaching a larger audience with the timely and important message of cultural competence.

By way of application of the meaning of cultural competence, it must be observed that the seductiveness of the concept with its fluid nature and fuzzy edges makes it ambiguous and leaves it with an elastic interpretation, broad meaning and an understanding that is somewhat too favorable. This enables ideas in and of the concept to also comfortably belong in the church as against being held hostage in specific fields. This transferability of knowledge from one educational field to another ensures that people do not miss the advantages in the implementation of a concept in a specific field simply because the said field or new field does not belong to the thinking or purview of the original thinkers who first thought of the concept. Hence, if the concept of cultural competence is useful in other walks of life that also deal with diversity, it can also be
useful in the church, especially in the ways the church treats cultures with the people therein. That being said, in applying the ideas of the concept to many fields, this dissertation calls attention to the importance of cultural competence on so many fronts of human existence and endeavors, particularly in the training of priests for service abroad. Herein, as a seminal work, it hopes to influence deliberations concerning renewal or updating of the academic curriculum.

Another contribution of this research is that it makes the experience of cultural competence a journey that is best completed in going full circle, which is herein understood as “a series of developments that lead back to the original source, position, or situation.” Thus, cultural competence is not just about acquiring knowledge through cross-cultural contact and experience; rather, it is better appreciated in what one does with the knowledge as a result of that cross-cultural experience. This study makes the case that the full circle journey in cultural competence consists of the important step taken by a culturally competent person to improve cultural conditions, beginning from his or her own cultural place of birth—native culture. This entails a return back to that native culture to make a contribution that might improve conditions. This is the main idea captured in chapter five of this dissertation. Therefore, cultural competence can be likened to the journeys in biblical history of people that is best described as home, homeless, and homecoming.

Confident that this study brings a lot to the table in the discussions, conversations, deliberations and related planning in preparation for priestly service abroad, the following thoughts are worthy of an applicative reflection as stated in the online abstract to the

The rewards of a short-term mission trip can be inestimable, but they are not automatically. Good planning and thorough research can make all the difference in having a successful trip. Drawing on his experience from over thirty short-term mission trips, Dr. Greene gives a detailed look at the challenges and blessings faced by those who are considering such an endeavor. This one-step guide helps make the most of this opportunity by outlining the steps to take from start to finish.²³⁵


Nope. Mission trips aren’t all fun and games. In fact, they can be pretty trying. Heat. Bugs. No bathrooms. Bad water. No pizza for hundreds of miles. But if you want it to, a mission trip could change your life. And that’s the case whether you’re seriously praying about becoming a missionary—or you just want a taste of what it means to serve God outside your comfort zone. One changed life—yours! So are you headed to inner city America? Appalachia? A border shantytown? Overseas? Wherever your destination, this journal pretty much says it all: Mission Trip Prep: A Student Journal for Capturing the Experience. It contains all you need to understand what you’re learning on your trip, to digest and incorporate your experiences so they become part of you…In this pages, you’ll receive reflective questions (and other important ideas---mine) that get
you thinking about the trip ahead of you…and, of course, journaling
opportunities for expressing yourself during, and after the trip.236

Like a clarion call and a matter of urgency, enough cannot be said about cross-cultural missionary experience. Hence, rising to the occasion to increase the challenge, Tim Dearborn’s book, *Short-Term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists to Global Citizens* has the following online abstract:

Going on a short-term missions [sic] trip can be a life and faith-transforming experience. It can enrich the way you view the world. It can cause you to rely on God more fully. It is an opportunity to develop good relationships with your team and the people you serve. A short-term missions experience can also involve weeks of physical and spiritual distress. An unprepared team can wreak havoc on each other and the people they intend to serve. To get the most out of such a missions [sic] trip, you need to go prepared. Whether you are going on your own or with a team, the keys to preparation are in Tim Dearborn’s workbook. It includes concise summary of cross-cultural principles; Help in facing spiritual warfare; Tips on avoiding a tourist mentality; Spiritual preparation through individual or group Bible study 8 week course for teams to do together; You’ll get a biblical perspective on the world, gain cross-cultural understanding and even prepare for reentry when you return. If you are planning to go on a short-term missions trip, don’t leave home without working through this book!237
Implications of the Study

The purpose of this section is to draw implications for further research, policy, and practice in the bit to a full understanding of cultural competence as an educational issue. This endeavor is better served as a continuum and not as having the last word. Therefore, the implications discussed herein should be considered as reflections and ways of speculating for further research and study.

To the extent that a holistic approach to the analysis of the concept of cultural competence is suggested; and in as much as a contextual understanding of the phenomenon is treated in a way that is never known or done before, this study has ramifications for understanding of the significance of cultural competence in many spheres of human interaction, not only within the cultural realm, as some might think. The expanded areas that the concept might be useful are such fields of study as philosophy, theology [religion], sociology, psychology, anthropology, demographics, evolutionary biology, cultural studies, sociobiology, and medicine, to mention a few.

Central to the study of the concept is the importance of acknowledging the possibility that several different cultures, rather than one mainstream or national culture, can coexist peacefully and equitably in a single space, say a country. This is the doctrine of multiculturalism. Describing it in detail, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy states that:

Multiculturalism is a body of thought in political philosophy about the proper way to respond to cultural and religious diversity. Mere toleration of group differences is said to fall short of treating members of minority groups as equal citizens;
recognition and positive accommodation of group differences are required through “group-differentiated rights,” a term coined by Will Kymlicka (1995). Typically, a group-differentiated right is a right of a minority group (or a member of such a group) to act or not to act in a certain way in accordance with their religious obligations and/or cultural commitments...While multiculturalism has been used as an umbrella term to characterize the moral and political claims of a wide range of disadvantaged groups, including African Americans, women, gays and lesbians, and the disable, most theories of multiculturalism tend to focus their arguments on immigrants who are ethnic and religious minorities...^238

Without over-packing the agenda, for instance, suffice it to point out that, explicitly or implicitly, the concept of cultural competence can help encourage recognition and respect, promote accommodation and acceptance, and increase understanding and appreciation between people from and of different cultures. This effort stands to benefit from further research.

Furthermore, before now, those who study cultural competence have not only taken a narrow perspective, but also have not always begun the examination of the concept from a foundational approach. Not beginning from the foundation or root of the issue constitutes some problems in understanding the full or expanded meaning of the phenomenon. Taking a foundational approach, therefore, to expand the analysis of the concept, the research’s implications are captured in the different headings that make up the layout of the chapters. Particularly noteworthy are the chapters on the six facets of understanding; components of cultural competence; the Developmental Models of
Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS); and associated abilities, capabilities or capacities of cultural competence. Ongoing research in these areas is an educational endeavor that might uncover a lot of the unknown and taken-for granted realities.

Given the circumstances of our present day and related changing dynamics, as experienced in the trend of the global redistribution of priests, this study helps to reinforce the development of a curriculum for the training of priest for effective ministry, even as more investigation is encouraged as needed. For instance, it cannot be said enough that, from available literature, the treatment and application of inculturation theology leaves so much to be desired. What exists in that body of knowledge leaves many dissatisfied and longing to hear more? The dissatisfaction is more obvious in the analysis of the definition and description of inculturation theology. In his thesis, Richard A. Pruitt simply described inculturation theology as a two-fold process in which the Christian message and the local culture meet and affect each other in culturally particular and Christian experiences.²³⁹

Further implications can be drawn against the backdrop of the ongoing conversation on “The New Evangelization,” wherein discussions strongly opine that the knowledge of cultural competence would be a boost to the vanguards of the mission. Therefore, priests going into different cultures to evangelize and re-evangelize would be better prepared—thanks to their training—as to how to unpack and operationalize the contents of the mission in a sensitive, respectful and collaborative manner. This optimism is held in light of the meaning of “The New Evangelization” (TNE) as described by Mark Silk in his online “Blogs: Spiritual Politics” on March 22, 2013. Thus:
The stated purpose of the TNE, outlined in Benedict’s apostolic letter *Ubicumque et Semper*, is to re-evangelize the people of historically Christian countries so that they can mount a missionary effort to turn back the tide of secularism in today’s world. The core of the project is doctrinal-promotion of the Church’s catechism “as an essential and complete formulation of the content of the faith for the people of our time.”

Finally, experience tell us that due to cultural differences, all those who cross cultural boundaries and live in a different culture must experience what is popularly known as *culture shock*. Arguably, cultural competence could instill the shock absorbing valves in the human psyche to cushion culture shock. Although it enjoys various definitions, culture shock has as its basic facts the elements of being “the feelings one experiences after leaving their familiar, home culture to live in another culture or social environment…Even the most open-minded and culturally sensitive among us are not immune to culture shock.” In other cases, further research is needed to confirm the reality of culture shock, in terms of degree, the speed of recovery and the rate of survival, particularly as experienced by priests who cross cultural boundaries for their ministration.

Overall, one important question that deserves more attention and should be addressed in the future is the research question of this dissertation: *How might the concept of cultural competence inform the formation or training of Nigerian priests [in the twenty-first century] for service abroad?* “As integral to the evolution of reform,” this question and budding ones would stand to benefit not merely from further research, but also from policy, curriculum development, and practice.
Limitations of the Study

No educational idea can be treated exhaustively by any study, not the least of which is cultural competence. Besides the issue of context, there are also other considerations such as sources and resources that inform the study, as well as biases or predispositions, personal or selfish benefits, and uniqueness. These, along with many others, can cast a shadow on research investigation and analysis.

“Peshkin suggests that it is important to be aware of our subjective selves and the role that this subjective self plays in research since being aware is better than assuming we can be rid of subjectivity.” This statement underscores one of the limitations of this study. Subjectivity can potentially affect this study by way of an argumentum ad hominem despite the fact that it is a pragmatic issue. In other words, people may attack the findings leading to the implications, suggestions and conclusions of the study as a product of motives or character that appeals to mere emotions and not based on reason or logic; rather than the policy and position maintained for the greater good. In spite of the possibility of this kind of attack, this dissertation stands firm in arguing that the motivation, interest and findings, as herein articulated, can at least provide some clarity to the discussion of the idea of cultural competence.

Undoubtedly, one’s subjective perspective can influence the conscious and unconscious selection of literature as well as the analytical process in a research. Therefore, being aware of my subjective self, implies an awareness of the qualities that would either enhance or limit the validity of the study; “each person’s history, and hence world, is unlike anyone else’s. This means that the way in which we see and respond to a
situation, and how we interpret what we see, will bear our own signature. This unique signature may not be a liability but a way of providing insight into a situation.”

It is on the note of subjectivity that Gilgun writes about “Reflexivity in Qualitative Research.” Thus, due reflexivity, all researchers, no matter which methods and perspectives they use, must be reflexive if their research is to be useful. “That researchers influence research processes and research processes influence researchers are a given in theoretical physics. These assumptions are also givens or basic methodological principles, in most forms of qualitative research,” including this dissertation. It is against this backdrop that awareness, as a form of reflexivity, is a factor that researchers must be conscious of.

Researchers are reflexive when they are aware of the multiple influences they have on research processes and on how research processes affect them. Researchers would do well to consider becoming reflexive in three general areas: the topic they wish to investigate...the perspectives and experiences of the persons with whom they wish to do the research...and the audiences to whom the research findings will be directed...Accounting for all three of these areas enhances the quality of both processes and outcome...Finally, being reflexive in these areas increases research accountability, not only to the intellectual communities who are part of our audiences but to the other audiences as well, such as practitioners who may apply findings to the lives of living, breathing human beings. Our own experience and perspectives influence every aspect of the
research we do. Creating awareness is an open and honest approach to doing and reporting research.\textsuperscript{246}

The method adopted in any study can be found wanting based on one of the observations made by McClelland in her dissertation where she also treats limitations of her study. She writes to the effect that while “methodology appears to have integrity, legitimate questions may be raised concerning its internal validity. The fundamental problem can be stated quite simply: could or would another analyst, following the same procedures, arrive at the same conclusions.”\textsuperscript{247} To the degree that this study is carried out with a chosen method, which is descriptive and analytic, this limitation applies.

Other areas of limitations can be found in the data collection method and approaches to analysis of material. Thus, this dissertation study is an analysis of available literature on the concept of cultural competence in a cross-cultural missionary context. With such an abundance of resources on cultural competence, it is quite a challenge to collect literature that would be sufficient to completely address the questions of the study. And with regard to the chosen methods of analysis, there is also the challenge of making a holistic and generally accepted analysis, not to mention if these methods are truly adequate for answering the question and budding questions posed by this inquiry.\textsuperscript{248}

There are still other limitations. For instance, in the analysis and application of the concept, it is possible to “inappropriately” analyze or “misapply” some aspects of the phenomenon, thereby misrepresenting the original intention of the author of the ideas in the explanation of cultural competence. The inappropriateness and misapplication also extends to other concepts in this study such as understanding, enculturation,
acculturation, inculturation, and so on. This can affect the valid analysis of the concept, hence, raising an issue of validity of the study. However, in defense of this limitation, the comment in McClelland’s dissertation is germane: “While such limitations are important to note, it is nevertheless the case that choices and judgments may not be entirely uninformed and that without speculative work, new knowledge would be difficult to obtain.”\textsuperscript{249} Besides, it is in such thinking of appropriateness and correctness that the observation by Becker is relevant. “Becker argued that there is no way to be sure when the dominant approach is wrong or misleading or when your alternative is superior. What you can do is to try to identify the ideological components of the established approach, and to see what happens when you abandon these assumptions.”\textsuperscript{250}

Furthermore, the purpose of this dissertation is to discover, analyze, and thoughtfully apply the concept of cultural competence to other areas with the hope that people would benefit from its findings. Regarding validity, this study asserts that the test of validity is not whether or not the findings are the only ones or even the best findings that can be obtained; but, rather whether or not they are, or appear to be, useful in the study of cultural competence in a cross-cultural priestly context. This raises the question of objectivity and trustworthiness and so goes the question of whether the study might enhance the training of priests for service abroad. Thus my opinions about the various issues cannot be said to be totally absent, no matter how the attempt is made to keep my views to myself.

Analysis creates a wide and open ground, wherein interests, intentions, perspectives, and dreams play a role in communicating a message about common
experiences and familiar concepts. Yet the fact remains that interest in the development of cultural competence occurs in a variety of fields and disciplines, and is “adopted by researchers espousing a variety of theoretical perspectives.”²⁵¹

Finally, this study is not shy of the imperfections under the consideration of what is called the iceberg theory, which acknowledges the fact of invisible and visible cultures. In a larger educational consideration, the theory unequivocally declares the limitation of human knowledge concerning the full and complete understanding of any concept, phenomenon, and related ideas. Explaining this theory, in her book-length 256 pages ethnographic account of a revolutionary indigenous self-determination movement, Place to Be Navajo – Rough Rock and the Struggle for Self-determination in Indigenous Schooling, Teresa L. McCarty writes that “While I think I know the community well, I recognize there is very much I do not know and never will.”²⁵² In this insight, McCarty alludes to the invisibility and/or implicitness of the “amorphous” nature of culture and all that is linked to it. The allusion is to the effect that neither the cultural insiders nor the newcomers are aware that certain aspects of their culture exist.

In appraisal of the humble reflection by McCarty, Frederick Erickson seizes the moment in making the salient point that “in multicultural education and in discourse of cultural diversity more generally, the focus has been on visible, explicit aspects of culture, such as language, dress, food habits, religion and aesthetic conventions. While important, these visible aspects of culture, which are taught deliberately and learned (at least to some extent) consciously, are only the tip of the iceberg of culture.”²⁵³ Against the backdrop of this long explanation, interpretation and application of the iceberg
theory, this study falls under the same limitations, blindsides, and shortcomings—stated or implied. Therefore, like an onion with many layers, which this study peels off and analytically examines, there are more that can still be discovered and uncovered by other researchers within the same area of cultural competence analysis and in the same cross-cultural priestly context with its implications for the training of priests for service abroad.
Notes


2. Ibid.


6. Australian Catholic University, “Theo244: Church: a Community of Believers.”


14. Ibid.


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.


21. Ibid.

22. Welch, “Unlock possibilities.”

23. Ibid.


31. Pius XII, *Fidei Donum*, no. 5.

32. Ibid., no. 6.


34. Ibid., no. 20.

35. Ibid., no. 21.


37. Allen, Jr., “Global priest shortages, faith and reason in the U.K. and a loss in Ohio.”

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Pius XII, *Fidei Donum*, no. 66.

41. Allen, Jr., “Global priest shortages, faith and reason in the U.K. and a loss in Ohio.”

42. Ibid.
43. Pius XII, *Fidei Donum*, no. 63.

44. Hoge and Okure, *International Priests in America,* viii.

45. Benedict XVI, “Papal Address to *Fidei Donum* Missionaries.”


47. Pius XII, *Fidei Donum*, no. 74.


51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., 2.

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55. Ibid., [back cover of book].

56. Ibid., vii.

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59. Ibid., 7.

60. Ibid., 10.

64. O’Connor, “International Priests.”
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
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124. Levinson, “Proofreading Dissertation.”


131. Ibid.


134. Ibid., 3.


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154. Levinson, “Proofreading Dissertation.”

155. Ibid.


159. Ibid.


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165. Ibid., 949.


175. Ibid.

176. Ibid.


186. Ibid.


188. Ibid., 40.


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194. Ibid., 5-6.

195. Ibid., 6.


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204. Ibid., no. 3.

205. Ibid., no. 4.

206. Ibid.

207. Ibid., no. 9.

208. Ibid., no. 10.

209. Ibid., no. 12.

210. Ibid., no. 19.

211. Ibid., no. 18.

212. Ibid., no. 20.

213. Ibid., no. 22.


215. Ibid.


220. Ibid., 77.

221. Ibid.


223. Ibid.


237. Ibid., 547.


239. Ibid., 1-2.


CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Against the backdrop of the problem and connected issues as well as related concerns raised in chapter one, which aim to make a strong case for the need, importance, and significance of cultural competence with its implications for the training of priests, this chapter is a collection of relevant literature that establishes the fact that there is a theory base for the study. Unarguably, a lot has been written, so much is being written and a lot more would be written about the need for the good and holistic training of priests. Most of what is written draws inspiration from the profound insights of church leaders, as informed by human experience.

From the collection of literature for the training of priests, four major ideas are worthy of note: 1) the church has never been silent on the need to give priests a solid training that highlights context and one that is conscious of changing circumstances as is evident in some basic Vatican documents directly addressing the issue; 2) seminaries and other houses of formation have curricula for the training of priests and welcome their revision and renewal; 3) “The New Evangelization” (TNE) focuses on developing strategies and improved ways of effective evangelizing and the re-evangelized for better results; and 4) cultural competence, which entails understanding of cultures as foundational to effective interaction among people, including a more effective priestly service, particularly in a culture other than one’s own, is a much sought-after skill for priests.
In a world that is growing smaller and becoming more connected and interdependent, cultural competence is a much needed skill for effective interaction and peaceful coexistence among people of different cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations, political persuasions, and related individual differences. Therefore, because acquiring the skill of cultural competence defies negotiation, it is a quintessence of intercultural sensitivity, evangelization, and globalization. Emphasizing the need for the skill, Diversity Training University International (DTUI) states:

Focusing on cultural competency not only raises awareness (betters attitudes, increases knowledge and improves skills) about why learning to manage differences can pay off for everyone, but also takes the primary focus of social engineering and squarely places it where it rightly belongs—on making people more competent in their cross-cultural interactions. In an organization, this means finding ways to close competency gaps so that people can work more productively together.247

**Basic Vatican Documents on the Training of Priests**

The Catholic Church takes seriously the training of priests for effective ministry. As a guide to what needs to be done, the Vatican periodically publishes documents, popularly known as *Decrees, Encyclicals* and *Pastoral Letters*. Although many of such documents exist with an ocean of commentaries, this study chooses to review two of the basic ones: *Optatam Totius — Decree on Priestly Training* and *Pastores Dabo Vobis — On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day.*
Optatam Totius — Decree on Priestly Training (Nov. 28th 1965) by Pope Paul VI

The growing concern to address relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world led Pope John XXIII to convene the Second Vatican Council (Latin: Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum Secundum), which formally opened on Oct. 11, 1962 and closed under the pontificate of Pope Paul VI on Dec. 8, 1965. At the end of the council, the Decree on Priestly Training — Optatam Totius, was produced and promulgated on Oct. 28, 1965. Although, there are controversies of interpretation and understanding of the outcomes of Vatican II, what cannot be denied is the focus of the document on the training of priests for effective service.

More than any other document before it, Optatam Totius — Decree on Priestly Training, proclaims the extreme importance of priestly training and lays down certain guiding expectations or rules by which to follow in accordance with the appropriate pontifical documents, which have already been or will be set up in the territory of the training. It prescribes that priests must be trained according to sound and tested principles that harmonize traditional practices with updates according to the condition of the modern world. This kind of training is a requirement for all prospective priests. Thus, the document

…aims at the desired renewal of the whole church, which depends on great part upon a priestly ministry animated by the spirit of Christ. The document centers on fostering good priestly vocations, giving more attention to spiritual training, revising ecclesiastical studies, preparing for pastoral work, and continuing studies after ordination. Special attention is given to developing priests whose sense of
the Church will find expression in a humble and filial attachment to the Vicar of Christ and, after ordination, in their loyal co-operation with bishops and harmony with fellow priest.”

Emphasizing the centrality of priests in the service of the church to humanity, and arguing for the necessity of the document, Amy Troolin writes that “Priests are necessary to the Catholic Church. Without them, Catholics would not have access to many of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, Confession, and the Anointing of the Sick. The Vatican II Fathers, recognizing the great significance of priests, composed Optatam Totius, or Decree on the Training of Priests, in order to lay out the principles and general regulations for priestly formation.” Not to be taken as a dogma, the document “simply sets forth basic principles to guide the establishment of more specific programs for priestly formation in the different countries and rites throughout the world.”

Optatam Totius addresses the following concerns: (1) The program of Priestly Training to be Undertaken by Each Country (Nos. 2-3); The Urgent Fostering of Priestly Vocations (Nos. 4-7); The Setting Up of Major Seminaries (Nos. 8-12); The Careful Development of the Spiritual Training (Nos. 13-18); The Revision of Ecclesiastical Studies (Nos. 19-20); The Promotion of Strictly Pastoral Training (No. 21); Training to be Achieved After the Course of Studies; and concludes with a reemphasis on training according to regions of priestly service.

The review of optatam totius—as in all others—in this study takes the approach of substantial engagement with the text. The opening statement which sets the tone and explains the reason for the document states:
…the desired renewal of the whole Church depends on a great extent on the ministry of its priests. It proclaims the extreme importance of priestly training and lays down certain basic principles by which those regulations may be strengthened which long use has shown to be sound and by which those new elements can be added which correspond to the constitutions and decrees of this sacred council and to the changed conditions of our times. Because of the very unity of the Catholic priesthood this priestly formation is necessary for all priests, diocesan and religious and of every rite. Wherefore, while these prescriptions directly concern the diocesan clergy, they are to be appropriately adapted to all.  

Section I, Number 1: The Program of Priestly Training to be Undertaken by Each Country

Taking into consideration the existence of many nations and different cultures, only general laws, acting as norms, can be made regarding program for priestly training. In this way the universal laws can be adopted and adapted to the particular circumstances of the times and localities so the training of priests can be in tune with the pastoral needs of those regions in which the ministry is to be exercised. Arguably, the particularity of this regulation that calls for attention to the training of priests according to national, regional, and cultural environments, as well as putting in perspective the realities of modern times and the changing world, makes the case for a necessary revision of the curriculum or program for priestly training in major seminaries, as this study advocates.
Section II, Numbers 2-3: The Urgent Fostering of Priestly Vocations

Addressing the need for a more intensive fostering of priestly vocations, *optatam totius* makes the task a shared responsibility by all Christians including, but not limited to, parents, teachers, bishops, priests, and parishioners. Thus, the entire Christian community must work together not just to foster vocations to the priesthood, but also to assist in the effective exercise of priestly service wherever priests are to serve. This can be done mainly through education that begins in the family as the domestic church.\(^{254}\)

Therefore, the principal contributors to fostering priestly vocation and helping in the education for effective ministry “are the families which, animated by the spirit of faith and love and by the sense of duty, become a kind of initial seminary, and the parishes in whose rich life the young people take part.”\(^{255}\)

Concerning the training of seminarians in minor seminaries, the document treats such institutions as incidentals. According to Mirus, “Where they exist, their programs are to be age-appropriate; open to family, social and cultural contacts; and focused on studies which can be easily continued should the students choose a different state of life.”\(^{256}\) On the other hand, since major seminaries are designed to develop and nurture the seeds of vocations through special religious formation and spiritual direction, the program’s guidelines should be adapted by regions according to the needs of their pupils.\(^{257}\)

Section III, Number 4-7: The Setting Up of Major Seminaries

In contrast to minor seminaries, “major seminaries are necessary for priestly formation. Here the entire training of the students should be oriented to the formation of
true shepherds after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest, and shepherd.”

This statement has deep implications and it relates to the development of cultural competence skills in order to be like Jesus Christ who was never a stranger; rather he was at home in every culture. This was possible because of the giving of recognition and showing of respect to every culture, needless to mention the understanding of individual ways of life. So for priests to be true shepherds after the model of Christ, who is an epitome of cultural competence, the following words from an old prayer card by an unknown author should be taken very seriously:

To live in the midst of the world, without wishing its pleasures; To be a member of each family [every culture], yet belonging to none; To share all sufferings; To penetrate all secrets; To heal all wounds; To go from men to God and offer Him their prayers; To return from God to men to bring pardon and hope; To have a heart of fire for charity and a heart of bronze for chastity; To teach and to pardon, console and bless always – What a glorious life! And it is yours, O Priest of Jesus Christ.

Because the words of this prayer point to a perfect pastoral end, all the forms of training: spiritual, intellectual, disciplinary, and pastoral are to be ordered with concerted efforts toward this end. To a large extent, this can only be a reality if the administrators and teachers of seminarians are selected from people who are not only prepared in sound doctrines, but also have suitable pastoral knowledge, especially knowledge derived from cross-cultural pastoral experience. This is important because, according to optatam totius, “administrators…and teachers must be keenly aware of how much the success of the
students’ formation depends on their manner of thinking and acting.” Chances are, with the exposure to different cultures, the teachers can bring into the mix of the criteria for qualification the disposition to cultural competence among other criteria, such as “spiritual moral and intellectual qualifications.” Underscoring the need for qualified teachers, Troolin sums it up in her commentary that “Candidates for the priesthood must be carefully screened to make sure that they are fit for the great responsibility they intend to undertake. If necessary, candidates should be guided into vocations better suited to them.”

Section IV, Numbers 8-12: The Careful Development of the Spiritual Training

*Optatam totius* states that spiritual training is closely connected with the doctrinal and pastoral training. With the special help of the spiritual director students are “taught to seek Christ in the faithful reading and meditation on God’s word, in the active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and in the divine office, in the bishop who sends them and in the people to whom they are sent.” The statement about priest seeking spirituality “in the people to whom they are sent” is particularly important to this study. It implies that spirituality [already] exists among the people to whom priests are sent, in all cultures of the world. To that end, in order to see, appreciate and embrace this fact, the lens of cultural competence provides a better view. Thus, those practices of piety that are commended by the long usage of the Church can also be found to exist in the religions of other cultures, notwithstanding where they are located and who the adherents are. For instance, the elements of service; care for the poor, the children, and the sick; obedience to parents and to spiritual authorities; and
living simply as talked about by the church, are equally cherished, preached [about] and espoused in other religions of the world.

In addition to being “trained in the moral life, virtues, prayer, missionary zeal, participation in the life of the church, service to their fellow human beings, and self-denial,” a highly recommended path to spirituality is celibacy and the celibate lifestyle. Thus:

The students who follow the venerable tradition of celibacy according to the holy and fixed laws of their own rite are to be educated to this state with great care. For renouncing thereby the companionship of marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matt. 19:12), they embrace the Lord with an undivided love altogether befitting the new covenant…Let them deeply realize how grateful that state ought to be received, not, indeed, only as commanded by ecclesiastical law, but as a precious gift of God for which they should humbly pray.

Besides, it should be noted that the practice of celibacy is not an exclusive reserve of the Catholic Church. “Celibacy is practiced by most monks and nuns in Buddhism…[and] holy men in Hinduism…It is considered to be a sign of dedication and spiritual life.” However, the practice of celibacy differs cross-culturally as well as historically within a particular religious tradition. Making the point, in his book, Celibacy and Religious Traditions, Carl Olson writes that,

The essays…demonstrate that celibacy is a complex religious phenomenon. The control of sexual desire can be used to divorce oneself from a basic human biological drive, to separate oneself from what is perceived as impure, or to
distance oneself from a transient world. Within different religious traditions there can be found the practice of temporary celibacy, committing to long-term permanent celibacy, and outright condemnation of it. By maintaining a state of virginity, members of some religious traditions imitate divine models; other traditions do not admit the possibility of emulating such paradigms. Whether or not a religious tradition encourages or discourages it, the practice of celibacy gives us insight into its worldview, social values, gender relations, ethics, religious roles, and understanding of the physical body. Celibacy can contribute to the creation of a certain status and play a role in the constructions of identity, while serving as a source of charisma. In some religious traditions, it is possible to renounce sex and gain sacred status and economic support from society.**269**

Regardless of how celibacy is practiced in other religions, *optatam totius* unequivocally makes the point that candidates for the Roman Catholic priesthood must learn to embrace and appreciate the gift of celibacy with thankfulness and gratitude. This voluntary renunciation of marriage helps them practice undivided and unselfish love, completely surrender to God, acquire self-mastery, and bear witness to the resurrection. Laudning the training in celibacy and much more, Troolin observes that “priestly formation instills in candidates maturity, stability and strength of character, decision-making skills, sound judgment, self-control, discipline, obedience, and good qualities like sincerity, justice, faithfulness, modesty, and charity.”**270** All these sterling qualities, in part and in whole, can contribute to the easy development of cultural competence, particularly those of self-control, discipline, including respect.
Section V, Numbers 13-18: The Revision of Ecclesiastical Studies

The section on “Revision of Ecclesiastical Studies” makes the case for curriculum development, renewal and reform to meet the demands of the changing times, not only in particular regions, but also globally, both in ecclesiastical and secular matters. To that end, the Council highlights the importance of beginning knowledge acquisition by studying about one’s native culture and country through enculturation. It indicates that students should have the humanistic and scientific education common to their culture before they begin ecclesiastical subjects, plus knowledge of Latin, the language of their rite, and the language of Scripture and Tradition. But the first priority in revising ecclesiastical studies themselves should be “that the philosophical and theological disciplines be more suitably aligned and that they harmoniously work toward opening more and more the minds of the students to the mystery of Christ” and to the appreciation of other cultures and related differences.

Classes in philosophy develop in students “a solid and consistent knowledge of man, the world and God,” and help pupils learn the art of dialoging with the modern world. Through the knowledge of philosophy, students learn to use their reason in rigorous investigation, careful observation, and confident demonstration of truth, but they must also recognize “the limits of human knowledge” and the necessity of faith, wherein theology helps to strengthen. Hence, “theological courses focusing on Scripture teach students to do exegesis but also to help students learn the main themes of the Bible and find inspiration and nourishment in daily reading and meditating upon the sacred books.” Put more directly as stated by the Council Fathers:
The theological disciplines, in the light of faith and under the guidance of the magisterium of the Church, should be so taught that the students will correctly draw out of Catholic doctrine from divine revelation, profoundly penetrate it, make the food of their own spiritual lives, and be enabled to proclaim, explain, and protect it in their priestly ministry.275

The point must be made that protecting the doctrines of the Catholic Church, which are filtered through the study of the Bible, dogmas and Fathers of the Church, doesn’t mean suspending reason, denying facts, becoming blind to reality, and refusing to acknowledge context. More often than not, theological studies have been said to be responsible for “myopism” and insular mentality among priests. Such closed-mindedness makes ecumenism and inculturation heavy lifts. To diffuse the situation, cultural competence studies is an area of academic investment that is worth exploring by the church. This area of investigation promises to contribute to creating a more open mindset and informing a broader outlook to the human experience that would mitigate the unprogressive thinking of my way or the high way.

It is in light of studies in the larger area of culture that the document’s recommendation on studying other religions further strengthens need for cultural competence. This is because, in order to enter into the environment of other religions and gain knowledge of their practices, through dialogue, cultural competence skills are needed. So when the Council says that students should “also be introduced to a knowledge of other religions which are more widespread in individual regions, so that they may acknowledge more correctly what truth and goodness these religions, in God’s
providence, possess, and so that they may learn to refute their errors and be able to communicate the full light of the truth to those who do not have it, it means not only an acknowledgment of the existence of other religions, but also implicitly encourages the development of cultural competence skills as a respectful way to dialogue with other religions so as to know them better. For it is only by knowing what the other religions are—what they teach and practice—that errors can be refuted and the full light of truth can be communicated. To the degree that this statement is true, the need for the revision of the curriculum for the training of priests, including methods of teaching, is appropriate. Of which the Council Fathers agree in the statement that:

…the doctrinal training ought to tend not to a mere communication of ideas but to a true and intimate formation of the students, teaching methods are to be revised both as regards lectures, discussions, and seminars and also to the development of study on the part of the students, whether done privately or in small groups.

Sections VI & VII, Numbers 19-21: The Promotion of Strictly Pastoral Training And Training to be Continued After the Course of Studies

When it comes to pastoral training for present-day mission of evangelization in a world that is increasingly becoming diverse, the same pointers are said to be the cornerstone of that endeavor: It must be Christ centered; Genuinely diverse; Scripturally grounded; Theologically open-minded; Intensely missional; and Focused on personal and community spiritual growth. This compelling outlook to pastoral training that incorporates elements of cultural competence calls for creative education that addresses “the skills essential to support and manage change and bring coherence to new roles.” Summarizing the thinking of the Council on this aspect of training, Myrus writes:
The sixth section on pastoral training, emphasizes preparation for catechesis, preaching, liturgical worship, and administration of the sacraments; works of charity and assistance to the erring and the unbelieving; fostering and inspiring the apostolic activity of the laity; and promoting the various forms of the apostolate. Students are to be initiated into pastoral work not only during their studies but also during their vacations.280

Without a shred of doubt, pastoral concerns characterize and “permeate the entire training of students.”281 This consists of students practically learning how to administer the sacraments, teach, preach, offer spiritual direction, serve, promote the apostolate among the laity, and enter into dialogue with non-Catholics and non-Christians. Cognizant of the fact that priests exercise their ministry by teaching, preaching and dialoging with all sorts of peoples, including non-Catholics, non-Christians and all men and women—believers and non-believers, the type of pastoral training they are given or that they receive, really matters. It belabors the obvious to say that in order to be effective in accomplishing the task of the missions on all these fronts, such training must instill into students a sense of diversity, inclusiveness, respect, appreciation of multiple perspectives, a continuous disposition of curiosity and quest for knowledge seeking understanding. All these are some of the characteristics of cultural competence, which if not already taught in the seminaries, or even if done so already, priests should receive continuous education about them through pastoral institutes, programs, meetings, projects and other opportunities that they might grow in their knowledge.282
Stressing the necessity and importance of ongoing formation or continuous studies in response to the changing circumstances, the Council states:

Since priestly training, because of the circumstances particularly of contemporary society, must be pursued and perfected even after the completion of the course of studies in seminaries, it will be the responsibility of episcopal conferences in individual nations to employ suitable means to this end. Such would be pastoral institutes working together with suitable chosen parishes, meetings, held at stated times, and appropriate projects whereby the young clergy would be gradually into the priestly life and apostolic activity, under its spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral aspects, and would be able, day by day, to renew and foster them more effectively.283

True to type and undeviating from the aim, the purpose and the intent of this dissertation, this final section of optatam totius that charges episcopal conferences with the responsibility to establish various programs of further training to be pursued after ordination to the priesthood gives the impetus to suggest such training include, but not be limited to, training in the area of cultural competence.


The concerns of the training of priests in the circumstances of the present day, as contained in pastores dabo vobis [I Shall Give You Shepherds], are addressed to both clergy and the lay faithful of the Catholic Church. The document focuses on two main questions: First, formation for what purpose? And, second, formation in what areas of the priest’s life? The answers to these questions set the proper and contextual tone of the
discourse in this section of the study. Agreeing with the first question on formation for what purpose, Costello writes:

the concrete task of priestly formation presupposes the prior question: formation for what purpose? The *Instrumentum Laboris* bases the necessity of formation on two specific requirements: the priest’s mission, and the call to holiness inherent in the priestly vocation (IL, 25). The goals, structures, and processes of the initial formation must be shaped by these imperatives. The goal of formation is not merely to produce pastorally skilled practitioners but, rather, to foster a “model of being” in communion with Christ and those qualities which characterized his dealings with others (IL, 44).²⁸⁴

This deep identification with the person of Christ—who was never a stranger to any culture but at home with all cultures by finding respectful ways to navigate cultural differences, even though he remained a Jew—requires a certain transformation of the human personality: mindset, disposition, and action. And “a profound personal transformation requires the active involvement of the candidate as a willing and responsible participant.”²⁸⁵

To the second question, which inquires about the specific areas of priestly training, the areas are the *Human, Intellectual, Spiritual* and *Pastoral* formation. And these areas constitute the point of focus in this study.

Chapter one of *pastores dabo vobis* highlights the challenges to priestly formation, cognizant of the circumstance of the present day. This reality of the changing circumstances calls for a committed to ongoing training through education, especially
because the priesthood is destined to last in endless succession throughout history. Besides, the presence of which, [the priesthood] must be carried across and actively exercised in every culture of the world. This calls for a culture of continuity but with adaptations and sensitivity to context—place and time. In that sense, today’s priests “will continue the work of the priests who, in the preceding millennia, have animated the life of the Church…It is equally certain that the life and ministry of the priest must also ‘adapt to every era and circumstance of life…For our part, we must therefore seek to be as open as possible to light from on high from the Holy Spirit, in order to discover the tendencies of contemporary society, recognize the deepest spiritual needs, determine the most important concrete tasks and the pastoral methods to adopt, and thus respond adequately to human expectations.”286 In looking ahead, attention should be drawn to “The New Evangelization” as a response to the recommendation to adopt pastoral methods that more effectively respond to human expectations in a dynamic culture.

In Chapter Two, pastores dabo vobis provides a synthesis of the church’s teaching on the priesthood: its nature and mission. Three distinct interconnected perspectives serve to bring the holistic picture of the ministerial priesthood into clearer focus: ecclesial, Christological, and pastoral.287 The pastoral perspective is particularly important because it points to a relationship that orients the priests toward those who live in other cultures and beyond the visible parameters of the church and therefore, constitutes the missionary dimension of the priesthood.288 Because of its importance, the pastoral perspective qualifies to be the first in order of priority when understanding the nature of the priesthood.
Observably, it can be argued that the unsatisfactory emphasis on the pastoral perspective in the dimension of pastoral competence and practical skills in the document, *pastores dabo vobis*, increases the worry and accounts for negative factors affecting the effectiveness of priests in different cultural environments, which have a direct influence on their lives and ministry. Some of the setbacks are: “an incorrectly understood pluralism in theology, culture and pastoral teaching which – though starting out at times with good intentions – ends up by hindering ecumenical dialogue,” inhibits inculturation, and prevents the appreciation of multiculturalism.

Acknowledging the reality of multiculturalism, the document states:

A particularly important phenomenon, even though it is relatively recent in many traditionally Christian countries, is the presence within the same territory of large concentrations of people of different races and religions, thereby resulting in multiracial and multi-religious societies. While on the one hand this can be an opportunity for a more frequent and fruitful exercise of dialogue, open-mindedness, good relations and a just tolerance – on the other hand the situation can also result in confusion, [conflict] and relativism, above all among people and populations whose faith has not matured.

Given the multicultural space for exercising priestly service, “The ministerial priesthood is at the service, and promotion of the common priesthood of the entire people of God irrespective of ‘boundaries of dioceses, country or rites.’ Priests should be penetrated by a missionary spirit; they should be prepared to preach the gospel everywhere.”
Chapter three of *pastores dabo vobis* centers on the spiritual life of the priests. It stresses that the consecrated life of the priests must be lived in charity, “the force which animates and guides the spiritual life of the priest…”\(^{292}\) The disposition toward charity is akin to the disposition toward understanding, which is particularly needed in cultural competence, especially in light of the pressing pastoral task of “The New Evangelization” that calls for the involvement of the entire people of God. In chapter four of the document, the Council recognizes that modern material goods, along with certain social and cultural conditions can, and do impose distorted and false visions about the true nature of priestly vocation, thereby, making it difficult, if not impossible to embrace or even fully understand it. \(^{293}\) Arguably, cultural competence could help in the placement of priorities.

Chapter Five of *pastores dabo vobis* forms the crux of the matter in this section of the dissertation. It looks at the different or various areas of the formation of candidates for the priesthood: the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral areas. It also addresses the settings for the formation and the persons responsible for such an important task, which calls for carefulness.\(^{294}\) “The human formation is presented as the necessary foundation… The spiritual formation is the center and core which unifies and gives life to the priest and his ministry… Academic [Intellectual] formation is required for pastoral effectiveness in today’s world, and especially to respond to the demands of “The New Evangelization”… Pastoral formation is the end which specifies all other aspects of formation.”\(^{295}\)
**Human Formation—the Basis of all Priestly Formation**

The whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation.\(^{296}\) Human qualities are needed for priests to be balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities.\(^{397}\) This statement expresses not only a fact which reason brings to our consideration every day and which experience confirms, but a requirement which has a deeper and specific motivation in the very nature and full definition of the priest and his ministry.

As foundational to the holistic growth and balanced development of the human person, *pastores dabo vobis* addresses the developmental challenges facing young people in the modern world. Thus, it talks about the kind of maturity needed for the office of the priesthood and encourages ongoing formation to foster growth in priestly maturity. All this provides the framework and supports the foundational statement that human formation is “the necessary foundation” of all priestly formation.\(^{298}\) And in what sounds like a kind of auto-formation, the candidate must take personal and ultimate responsibility for his own formation.\(^{299}\)

Interestingly, the context in which human formation and related maturity is addressed is the socio-cultural milieu of the modern world, cognizant of its evolving nature. Those attractions of contemporary society that are based on a partial, ephemeral, superficial, trendy, or illusory understanding of human nature impede the development of full human maturity and to that end, diminish human authenticity.\(^{300}\) To counter any of these influences that stand in the way of human maturity for priests, the first objective aims at
fostering the candidate’s interior freedom. For the capacity to give oneself in love and
service is fundamental to any authentic human existence since it engages man’s freedom
and responsibility.\textsuperscript{301} For that reason, it amounts to overstating the truth that interior
freedom is particularly important for the priestly life. It is a necessary and
uncompromising condition for a genuine vocational commitment,\textsuperscript{302} and for effective
pastoral ministry.\textsuperscript{303}

The development of a sound, moral conscience constitutes the second objective of
human formation. Conscience is integral to every Christian life and is quintessential to
the life and ministry of the priest. Moral conscience increases the possibility of the
responsible exercise of personal freedom and thereby enhances the priest’s human
maturity.\textsuperscript{304} Evidently, both the intellect and the will are engaged in the operations of a
moral conscience: processing information, understanding the moral law, and being
willing to conform to its standards in action. Against this backdrop, “the priest’s
credibility and pastoral effectiveness is undermined when there is a lack of congruence
between his personal life and his proclaimed values.”\textsuperscript{305}

The third objective of the human formation is centered on love: affective maturity.
Discussing this is the presupposition that love is a central driving force in human life.\textsuperscript{306}
And because love is the foundation of understanding which enables the exercise of
cultural competence, the human formation makes a useful contribution to knowing how
to survive in a different place, especially in the culture of affection or affectivity. This
knowledge of know how is important because for instance, mere gestures of affection that
are far from suggesting sex or that might be considered sexually permissive in one
culture, might not be the case in another. And many priests who lack this cultural awareness have found themselves in troubled waters while ministering abroad. It is in light of some unwholesome experiences in this regard that the document’s ascription that the priest himself take the primary responsibility for ensuring his own ongoing formation should be taken very seriously.\(^{307}\)

**Spiritual Formation: In Communion with God and in Search of Christ**

Being a vocation that deals with spirituality and is associated with spiritual things, the spiritual formation of priests is of great importance. Without spiritual life, pastoral life will be hollow, empty, and without foundation. According to *pastores dabo vobis*, spiritual formation is a life of prayer and is nourished by prayer and reading the Scriptures and related books. In addition, the candidate needs spiritual mentorship to enable mature and free decisions built on esteem for priestly friendship and self-discipline.\(^{308}\)

The educational process of a spiritual life is seen as a relationship and communion with God. As an irrepressible religious need, it derives and develops from this fundamental connection. In the light of revelation and Christian experience through the ages, spiritual formation possesses the unmistakable originality which derives from and is energized by evangelical newness. Being the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual life engages the priest in his totality, wholeness and wholesomeness.

Borrowing from *Instrumentum Laboris* of the eighth ordinary general assembly of the Synod of Bishops (1993), the document states that spiritual formation introduces the candidate for the priesthood to a deeper communion with Jesus Christ, the good
shepherd, and leads to the total submission of one’s life to the Spirit, in a filial attitude
toward the Father and a trustful attachment to the Church. Spiritual formation has its
roots in the experience of the cross, which in deep communion leads to the totality of the
paschal mystery. To the extent that the paschal mystery is a mystery that calls into
communion the whole human race, the spiritual formation is central to the training of
priests so that the exercise of the priestly ministry can see in every culture some elements
of spirituality.

**Intellectual Formation: Understanding the Faith**

Intellectual formation has its own characteristics, but it is also deeply connected
with, and indeed can be seen as a necessary expression of, both human and spiritual
formation. It is a fundamental demand of the human intelligence by which one
“participates in the light of God’s mind” and seeks to acquire a wisdom which in turn
opens to and is directed toward knowing God and adhering to God through the
recognition of God in the service of humankind. This is wisdom. Supporting the need for
the quest for wisdom through the training in human intelligence, the very words of the
Council Fathers in *Gaudium Et Spes* [“Joy and Hope”], are memorable:

The intellectual nature of the human person is perfected by wisdom and needs to
be, for wisdom gently attracts the mind of man to a quest and a love for what is
ture and good. Steeped in wisdom, man passes through visible realities to those
which are unseen. Our era needs such wisdom more than bygone ages if the
discoveries made by man are to be further humanized. For the future of the world
stands in peril unless wiser men are forthcoming. It should also be pointed out
that many nations, poorer in economic goods, are quite rich in wisdom and can offer noteworthy exchanges to others.\textsuperscript{310}

The intellectual formation of candidates for the priesthood finds its specific justification in the very nature of the ordained ministry, and the challenge of “The New Evangelization.” “If we expect every Christian,” the Synod Fathers write, “to be prepared to make a defense of the faith and to account for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt. 3: 15), then all the more should candidates for the priesthood and priests have a diligent care of the quality of their intellectual formation in their education and pastoral activity. For the salvation of their brothers and sisters they should seek an ever deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries”\textsuperscript{311} including the sciences—technology; and humanities, particularly cultural, social, religious studies and much more.

Furthermore, the document strongly demands a high level of intellectual formation, such as will enable priests to proclaim the changeless Gospel of Christ and to make credible to the legitimate demands of human reason. Moreover, there is the present phenomenon of pluralism as defined by multiculturalism, and other “isms,” which is very marked in the field not only of human society but also of the Church herself, if not more evident in the latter. All this demands special attention to critical thinking for good discernment, particularly in navigating the murky cultural waters. This reality further explains the reason for an extremely and ongoing rigorous intellectual formation.

Mention should be made that in the rigorous intellectual training, special attention is devoted to philosophy and theology. The former, besides the knowledge of history of philosophy and philosophical traditions, helps to sharpen the level of logical thinking in
given situations. While the latter – the discipline of theology – “enables the candidate to
assent to the word of God, grows in his spiritual life and gets prepared for the future
ministry.”

Finally, the need for intellectual formation of priests becomes more urgent in
view of the changing and evolving face of human culture. Acknowledging the fact, the
Second Vatican Council states:

Since in our times human culture and the sacred sciences are making new
advances, priests are urged to develop their knowledge of the divine and human
affairs aptly and uninterruptedly. In this way they will prepare themselves to
undertake discussions with their contemporaries.”

Corroborating the idea, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN)
contextually states that “the age we are living in is witnessing a literal explosion of
knowledge. Here in Nigeria, priests have to deal with a growing number of highly
educated and well-informed people within their congregations and the wider society. An
ever-increasing number in the Laity are becoming highly knowledgeable, even in Sacred
Scripture and other theological and ecclesiastical disciplines. These things pose a serious
challenge for today’s priests. They need to constantly develop themselves intellectually to
cope with that challenge.”

Pastoral Formation: Communion with the Charity of
Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd

It would overstate the fact to say that pastoral formation is a necessity. In fact, of
the four areas of priestly formation, the pastoral aspect is considered the most important
and the end of all that constitutes priestly training. For that purpose, the Council text
insists upon the coordination of the different aspects of human, spiritual and intellectual formation, and stresses that they are all directed to a specific pastoral end. This pastoral aim ensures that the human, spiritual and intellectual formation has certain precise content and characteristics. Therefore, seminary must make candidates for the priesthood aware of the pastoral character of the ministry.

As a character that is definitive of the vocation, pastoral formation makes the future priests live as a “service,” his own mission of “authority” in the church as a community, and the world at large, setting aside all attitudes of superiority or of exercising a power if it is not that which is justified by pastoral charity. Recognizing that seminary alone might not be able to achieve the full pastoral training, pastores dabo vobis, extends the duty to other agents: bishops, communities of origin, the wider Christian family, associations and youth movement, and the candidate himself. Concerning the latter, wherein the candidate himself is charged with responsibility of his own formation, the exhortation states that the whole formation “is ultimately a self-formation.”

Pastoral formation also unifies and gives specificity to the whole formation of future priests. Because this aspect of training inextricably links the priest to the community, it implies that:

[t]he whole formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ the good shepherd […]. It is a question of a type of formation meant not only to ensure scientific, pastoral
competence and practical skill, but also and especially a way of being in 
communion with the very sentiments and behavior of Christ the good shepherd.\textsuperscript{319}

This statement speaks to the popular reference to priests as \textit{alter Christus}, that is, “other Christ.” It is much easier to emphasize the training of priests in the dimension of making them \textit{alter Christus}, but the practicality of such formation has always been challenging for generations. By implication, the shepherding position of Christ and the daily exercise of which, defies any cultural and denominational boundaries. And priests are called to live likewise. Recall the culturally defying stories of “Jesus and the Samaritan Woman” [and] “the adulteress.”\textsuperscript{320} In the first story, despite all the taboos created by the tension between Jews and Samarians, Jesus, in spite of being a Jew, bridged the long standing cultural divide by reaching out to, not just a Samaritan, but a woman at that. In a sense, the experience speaks to Jesus seizing the moment to practice ecumenism and inculturation through the exercise of inclusion, as a fundamental element of cultural competence.

The second story that talks about “the adulteress” is a perfect demonstration of the sentiment of empathy, which is one of the six facets of understanding in exercising cultural competence skills. And again, in the story is the challenge to all priests ministering in all cultures to do the same—to show empathy in understanding people’s situations and circumstances of life.

These two referenced stories that portray Jesus as a culturally competent man, bring to the fore the dimension of the abilities, capabilities and capacities of cultural
competence skill. And the development of such skills belongs to the intellectual and pastoral training of priests. Corroborating this idea, *pastores dabo vobis* states:

Of special importance is the capacity to relate to others. This is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a “man of communion.” This demands that the priest not be arrogant, or quarrelsome, but affable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console.

Looking ahead, suffice it to say that the experiences in the stories of the Samaritan woman and the adulteress constitute part of what chapter five of this dissertation talks about. In fact, because of so much that can be related to and learned from the stories in the perspective of culture wars and how to build bridges and find common grounds, they [the stories] can, and do make a compelling case for the inclusion of cultural competence as a stand-alone discipline in the curriculum for priestly training. Thanks that the priest, who is called to be a “living image” of Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular liveliness in his attitude toward others as we see narrated in the Gospel stories. Against this backdrop, goes the exhortation:

In order that his ministry may be humanly as credible and accepted as possible, it is important that the priest should hold human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ.
the Redeemer of humanity. It is necessary that following the example of Jesus
who “knew what was in humanity” (Jn. 2:25; cf. 8:3-11), the priest should be able
to know the depths of the human heart, to perceive difficulties and problems, to
make meeting and dialogue easy, to create trust and cooperation, to express serene
and objective judgments.322

Observation Concerning the Four Areas of Priestly
Formation vis-à-vis Cultural Competence and Other Matters Arising

The four areas of priestly formation, as examined, give reason for some curious
observations in view of the need for the training in cultural competence for pastoral
competence or effectiveness. Thus, while the apostolic exhortation [pastores dabo vobis]
extensively dwells on the following ideas: challenges to priestly formation; nature and
mission and priestly ministry; spiritual life of the priest; priestly vocation; formation of
candidates; and the ongoing formation of priests; and while giving an overly extensive
description of the kind of formative environment required to achieve the specific goal of
priestly formation, surprisingly, it says too little about what favors and what impedes
ministerial effectiveness in and within cultures—both one’s native culture and foreign
cultures. Put another way: the document shies away from directly confronting and
seriously talking about cultural competence of priests in the dimensions of whence, what,
why, when, who, and where. Even more surprising, is the observable fact that throughout
the document, there is no direct mention by name of the concept of cultural competence.

As mentioned previously that cultural competence properly belongs to the
intellectual and pastoral formation of future priests, the insightful addition on “the
ongoing formation of priests,” in chapter six of the *pastores dabo vobis*, creates another time period to make up for the “missed” but not “lost” opportunity of rigorously training in cultural competence. In some sense of drawing attention to the “missed” opportunity in training for cultural competence, in his dissertation, Paul U. Nwobi writes that “an ongoing formation process will guarantee a reclaiming of the lost principles of priestly character in priestly life and ministry, the root-cause of the crisis in the priesthood today. The crisis in priesthood then is an ‘invitation-event’ calling attention to a need for an ongoing formation, not simply an ‘evil-event’ that demands prosecution and punishment.”

Thus, Nwobi’s submission recognizes the fact that the priesthood faces different challenges today, not the least of which is the method of priestly formation in the perspective of culture and cultural competence. So, “the real problem is a crisis of formation and ongoing formation in the Catholic priesthood. The crisis problem has a structural root in seminary education that is simply an intellectual exercise.”

Admittedly, many of the crises in priesthood are not only structural and deeply rooted in history, they are also cultural. To this end, in addition to all that is recommended for the ongoing formation of priests, the training in cultural competence also belongs to such training—even more so because it combines both theory and practice. In other words, the training in cultural competence at this time has the double advantage of moving between classroom and fieldwork, in a manner of talking. It is in such experience that a crisis becomes a teaching moment and a turning point event in an institution, as against it being an “evil event.” Utilizing the moment leads, not only to
human development, but ultimately to the growth of an institution and organization, which benefits the society as a whole.

Importantly, the training in cultural competence involves a lot more than quickly thought of and simply imagined. Essential in this investment is the necessary intellectual formation and training in *multiculturalism*, as broadly conceived. According to Banks and Banks:

*Multicultural* education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that male and female students, exceptional students, and students who are members of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups will have an equal chance to achieve academically in school…To transform the schools, educators must be knowledgeable about the influence of particular groups on student behavior. According to Banks and Banks:

Offering some ideas on the approaches to and theory of multicultural education, with the United States

As a case in point, Seeberg et al., write:

One of the most comprehensive reviews of the practice and literature of multicultural education, which has become seminal work, was published by Sleeter & Grant (1987, 1988). These authors identified five distinctive approaches or models of multicultural education used widely in the United States at that time: (1) *teaching the culturally different*, (2) *human relations approaches*, (3) *single group studies*, (4) *inclusive multicultural education*, and (5) *education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist*.326
However, beneficial to the analysis of cultural competence, Seeberg et al. “argue that the most prevalent forms of multicultural education practiced in the United States are the first and second: teaching the culturally different and human relations approaches.”

The first approach is posited on the notion that people who differ culturally from the mainstream are, arguably, at a disadvantage not only in the larger society with its economy, but also in the church. On its part, the second model, the human relations approach, views good communication between people of different cultures as the goal. And it is one of the abilities of cultural competence. Thus:

Cross-cultural communication in both the teacher—student relationship and the student—student relationship can be taught by parlaying practical knowledge that fosters a deep understanding of the ways and beliefs of the other and the skills to face the self in order to understand the deep structure of culture in the human psyche and behaviors.

Suffice it to say that both of these approaches to multiculturalism of teaching the culturally different and human relations can be adopted by priests for effective service, whether in parishes, schools, or other institutions where they have a presence. Arguably, these approaches posit individual change and border crossing for all people who interact in a multicultural setting. Altogether, they lead to change that is transformative to all involved.

Worthy of in-depth emphases in this ongoing formation in multiculturalism through multicultural education are the essential concepts of inclusion, equality, and equity. No doubt, these are vibrant areas of interests. That is why definitions,
description, interpretations, explanations, and applications of these ideas can go just about everywhere, depending on peoples’ perspectives.

*Inclusion*, in its simple understanding talks about the state, policy, and action of making all peoples have a sense of belonging wherein they feel welcome and at home in a place—within a larger group, particularly church group. Indiana University writes that, “Inclusion is the acceptance of all people regardless of their differences. It is about appreciating people for who they are because even though we are all different, we are one. Inclusion allows people to value differences in each other by recognizing that each person has an important contribution to make to society.” For Halvorsen and Neary, “Inclusive education, according to its most basic definition, means that students with disabilities are supported in chronologically age-appropriate general education classes in their home schools and receive the specialized instruction delineated by their individualized education programs (IEPs) within the context of the core curriculum and general class activities.” Supporting this definition, the National Institute for Urban School Improvement states that, “inclusion is an effort to make sure students with disabilities go to school along with their friends and neighbors while also receiving whatever, ‘specially designed instruction and support’ they need to achieve high standards and succeed as learners.”

*Equality* means the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities. In context of cultural difference, equality speaks to a worldview of evenness, parity, sameness, and uniformity. As it relates to this study, equality is better analyzed within the
context of diversity of which the “Scotland Anti-Bullying Service” expresses the following opinion:

Many children and young people experience bullying because they are “different” or because they are perceived to be different. Scotland has become a diverse and multi-cultural country, home to people from different backgrounds, race, faith and gender. More and more we are learning, working, socializing and mixing with a broader group of people and we must be open to the different perspectives, opinions and needs that this brings. So, what is equality and diversity? How can it be defined and how can we ensure that we integrate an equality and diversity approach in to everything we do, particularly where children and young people are concerned, to teach them the value of difference? Equality enables us to create a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Equality is mostly backed by legislation which is designed to address unfair discrimination among members of a particular group in society, but it’s everyone’s responsibility to.  

A radical interpretation of equality in its wide sense is contained in the Scotland Act 1998. It “encompasses gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and also individuals and groups facing discrimination on the grounds of age, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinion.” Equality, therefore, is a right. And in an egalitarian society and a fair world, all human beings have the right to equality: to be equal in dignity, to be treated with respect and consideration, to be understood in terms of where he or she is
coming from, and to participate on an equal basis with others in areas such as economic, social, political, cultural or civil life. To say that the training of priests should emphasize this fact is to belabor the expected.

True and compelling as the egalitarian idea of equality might be, Robert Nozick’s powerful criticism of the concept must be taken seriously, “especially on the claimed neglect of issues of personal responsibility within egalitarian theory.”334 It is in light of this critique of equality that the concept of equity is invoked. Generally, equity is an educational theory that points to the quality of being fair and impartial. It is a branch of law that developed alongside common law in order to remedy some of its defects in fairness and justice. In some sense, equity tames the overblown, unregulated and boundary-free interpretation and understanding of equality. Against this backdrop, equity points to giving people their due as individuals in justice, fairness, and impartiality. As a social issue, equity is an educational theory that attempts to explain relational satisfaction in terms of perceptions of what is fair and unfair, particularly in the distribution of resources. Because of the difficulty in judging what is universally accepted as fair or unfair, in all cultures, nations, societies, institutions, and organizations, greater equity remains a challenge, even as it varies between settings. Bottom line: inequity is a human experience that might defy a total elimination and complete eradication.

Although totally eliminating, completely eradicating and perfectly redressing inequity is an uphill task, it can be ameliorated and cushioned. And what institution should do a better or more appreciable job than the church, through her agents as priests! This is both a question and a fact. The judgment to exercise equity comes from a special
kind of formation wherein a priest might better be equipped to know the conditions under which inequalities increase and decrease, and the outcome of policies and strategies designed to enhance equity. And the skills to exercise equity are better instilled through education in cultural competence wherein a priest might know what is fair and unfair in interpersonal relations, both between him and others and among others, when his intervention is needed.

The overriding importance of the different definitions, descriptions and analyses of the great ideas in the concepts of inclusion, equality, and equity is that they belong to the church and could be contextually applied by priests in their ministerial service. Doing so effectively is what is meant by cultural competence in action.

In view of the rapid changes in the world and the needs of “The New Evangelization,” training in cultural competence is necessary for the continual personal growth, transformative maturity, and constant updating among priests. However, such training does not divorce itself from the training before ordination. As stated in pastores dabo vobis:

The ongoing formation of priests, whether diocesan or religious, is the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality which began and developed in the seminary or the religious house with the training program which aimed at ordination. It is particularly important to be aware of and to respect the intrinsic link between formation before ordination to the priesthood and formation after ordination. Should there be a break in continuity, or worse a complete difference between these two phases of
formation, there would be serious and immediate repercussions on pastoral work and fraternal communion among priests, especially those in different age groups. Ongoing formation is not a repetition of the formation acquired in the seminary, simply reviewed or expanded with new and practical suggestions. Ongoing formation involves relatively new content and especially methods; it develops as a harmonious and vital process which – rooted in the formation received in the seminary – calls for adaptations, updating and modifications, but without sharp break in continuity.336

Among other advantages, ongoing formation for and among priests, either as supported and as sponsored by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, or brought about by the personal initiative of the priest, increases knowledge, gives support structure for priests, provides a continued and balanced checking of oneself and one’s activity, and creates an opportunity for constant motivation and aids, which will enable priests to carry on one’s mission.337 To say that this should be permanent and “always be a part of the priest’s life”338 is to make a statement of fact. Little wonder that in its national program of priestly formation, the Nigerian bishops, in addition to impressing on the part of the priest the most need of “the never-ending commitment to ongoing, deep, personal growth and renewal”339 strongly recommend “well-planned sabbaticals” for priests. These sabbaticals are not only opportunities to rest and catch one’s breath from what can be an overwhelming pastoral work, very importantly, they provide periods for educational enrichment and intellectual growth. Making the case, Nigerian bishops unanimously argue in a way that is agreeable:
In the course of their pastoral ministrations, priests are often victims of overwork and physical exhaustion, of psychological fatigue and discouragement, [including boredom]. There may well arise in them a loss of focus as to who they are and what they are about…Sabbatical periods, times for renewal, refreshment and updating, should be mandatory. While many varied activities may be part of these sabbaticals, in their essence they are periods to have more time with the Lord Jesus Christ, freed from heavy pastoral responsibilities. One highly challenging and enriching program is that of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

For some, sabbaticals could be a period to update oneself in theology or other subjects. Given the heightened recognition of the importance of culture and the trend in the global redistribution of priests, this study suggests that it would be an idea that is worth the while for priests on sabbaticals to seriously consider investing such periods in an in-depth investigation of one’s own native culture – enculturation – so as to gain a better understanding of most of the taken-for-granted cultural idioms and practices. By the same token, a decision to spend such times in school or in a different culture, with the sole purpose and intent of acquiring cultural competence skills in theory and practical experience – acculturation – could be considered as time well-spent in a priest’s ongoing formation.

The importance of continuous formation especially in the context of acquiring information and more knowledge in a wide variety of fields, particularly in the field of cultural competence – preferably in a secular university – is further strengthened by the fact that, priests are not there to serve themselves but the pluralistic community that
constitutes and exists in and among the people of God. “So, ongoing formation, in ensuring the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral maturity of priests leads to a constant and fruitful mutual exchange between the priest’s life of faith and that of the laity.” indentation 341 Indeed, besides either taking time off for exclusive studies or combining both pastoral work and academic undertakings in a formal school setting, “the very relationship and sharing life between the priest and the community, if it is wisely conducted and made use of, will be a fundamental contribution to permanent formation, which cannot be reduced to isolated episodes or initiatives.” 342

However, it is all-familiar experience that combining pastoral work and studies in a formal school setting can be overwhelming. “In this sense” pastores dabo vobis states that “the people should see that priests are allowed time for study and prayer.” 343 Encouraging this idea, in its national program of priestly formation, the Nigerian Bishops talk about “special studies” for and by priests after ordination. 344 Besides, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council prescribe that “after gaining some pastoral experience, suitable priests should be chosen to pursue higher studies in universities, even abroad and especially in Rome. In this way, the young Churches will have at hand men from among the local clergy equipped with the learning and skill needed for discharging more difficult ecclesiastical duties,” 345 not the least of which is the duty of effectively ministering in a different culture, which requires cultural competence.

Among the many benefits, such times devoted for study help “to prevent cultural impoverishment or getting entrenched in one’s ways, even in the pastoral field, as a result of mental laziness. They help to foster a greater synthesis between the various elements
of the spiritual, intellectual and apostolic life. They open minds and hearts to the new challenges of history and to the new appeals which the Spirit addresses to the Church.”

Figuratively capturing the argument for priestly formation to be holistic and continuous, Fr. Gregory Jensen reflects:

Being a pastor is more like being a jazz musician than it is being say an engineer. All three of these occupations require a great of technical skill to be sure. But the pastor, like the jazz musician, is often called upon to improvise on a theme more than, like the engineer, apply a theory to a problem. This is all to say that pastoral ministry is more art than science.”

This observation brings to the fore the need for intellectual readiness, adaptive capability, and a willingness to be flexible by priest in exercising [their] pastoral work in service of the people in the community. This skill ensures a more effective ministry than the one in which a priest carries out his service, not only with a predisposition, but also with an already formed theory in which every problem, every challenge, and all issues in the community must fit into an unchallenged and untested framework. Such approach amounts to seriously going off track. A better way forward, therefore, is an approach in which priests continually seek knowledge through education so as to better understand and effectively manage human problems, both from a contextual and individual perspective. Adopting a one-size-fits-all approach is a crisis of the mentality of a global pseudo-culture which constitutes a recipe for pastoral disaster.

In suggesting a way of addressing the connected crisis in the priesthood, again, Nwobi draws attention to priestly formation or the training of priests. Using as a classic
example the “Zero tolerance policy” adopted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in June of 2002 to address the issue of sexual abuse of minors by priests, as well as all other related offences, Nwobi writes that the attempted zero tolerance as a response to the crisis in priesthood rather compounds the crisis. It creates a culture of fear, suspicion, and insecurity, which in part and in whole adversely affect pastoral effectiveness. Nwobi recommends that a proper response to the crisis must include a focus on how to structure and maintain an appropriate, effective formation process in seminary schools and an ongoing formation in priestly life and ministry.\(^{348}\)

Nwobi’s study also recommends a three-step practical approach to include “a) a courage to speak honestly about their lives’ needs and experiences; b) a courage to listen genuinely to individual and community needs and interests; c) a courage to affirm and acknowledge in truth and compassion the dignity and respect of one another in all relationships.\(^{349}\)

Furthermore, Nwobi’s other three-step training process approach to structure and the priestly life and ministry is memorable. He suggests: i) restructuring the seminary system from “a place” to study and prepare for ordination to be a “formative community” where seminarians discover and develop themselves, their gifts and their commitments to serve God and the people of God. ii) Constructing and restructuring a human formation process or system that is more than a skill development training to include human formation and relationship; what could be called administrative skills formation. iii) Taking a second look at and consequently restructuring a spiritual formation process that is more than the ancient monastic spiritual exercises to include an ongoing life-long
spiritual formation on conversion and renewal that can lead to transformative lifestyle.\(^{350}\)

The last suggestion concerning spiritual formation shuns what Noddings metaphorically describes as producing a “man of God living abstemiously on top of the mountain, praying thrice daily, and denying himself of human intercourse” Incidentally, such abstemious living is “judged or seen as displaying the virtue of holiness,”\(^{351}\) as against a robust social way of life with its real human interaction.

**Brief on “With Saint Thomas as Teacher”: Priestly Formation in the Light of the Second Vatican Council**

The study by Reverend Father Anthony A. Akinwale, O.P. on priestly formation in present-day circumstances as encouraged by the Second Vatican Council makes a useful contribution to this review of literature. Weighing in from the Dominican Institute in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, Akinwale’s perspectives highlights some pertinent ideas. He reminds all who are concerned, of the imperative to read the “texts of the Council in the context of today, to be more precise, in the immediate context of a crisis of fidelity to priestly commitment graphically and shockingly exemplified by cases of infidelity to priestly celibacy that is not restricted to any particular culture, nation, or region of the world.”\(^{352}\) It suffices to observe that, true as it may be that the crisis in priesthood, as herein captured in the infidelity to priestly commitment to celibacy, is a global problem; it is even more true that culture and cultural competence has a role to play, not so much in solving the problem, but in reducing the tension and checking on related mistakes in this sensitive area, as priests minister in different cultures.

To put it in perspective, it suffices to say that against the backdrop of cultural difference, particularly in the exercise of celibacy, “the need to ensure that Africa trains
her priests adequately has never been so urgent." The recent scandal is not only a brutal reminder of the vital importance of priestly holiness, wherein a priest is called to conform to the image of Christ, it is also a matter of being knowledgeable about the components of cultural competence: knowledge, awareness, attitude/disposition and skills. It is also a matter of priests going through the cultural adjustment stages articulated in the “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity” (DMIS) as discussed in this dissertation in the pages following. For instance, armed with the knowledge of the components of cultural competence and the experiential journey through the stages of the DMIS one can appreciate the conversation with Justin Bieber. Thus, Bieber told *We Love Pop* magazine about his UK fans that “In the UK, things are less…What’s the word? You take things less seriously. Things are accepted in the UK that aren’t accepted in the US. You guys are more open-minded. So the way the UK fans approach me is different.” Corroborating the point made by Justin Bieber, though in a different context, talking about the work of New York Department Police, Rudolph Giuliani (2002) writes: “What works in one area may not be the best method elsewhere…Each precinct commander developed and implemented strategies designed to produce the best results in his particular neighborhood.”

Finally, in his essay, Akinwale develops and expatiates on the following subheadings for ongoing study and future investigation in the training of priests: *Vatican II as an Instance of Authentic Development of Christianity or Tradition in Modernity* (pp. 1-4); *Optatam totius or Formation for the Munus Triplex [threefold office of Jesus Christ – priest, prophet and king] at the Service of Communion* (pp. 4-10); *Formation for*
Holiness (pp. 11-16); Formation for Holiness and Intelligence for Competence (pp. 16-17); Conclusion (pp. 17-19).

Current Situation in Priestly Training: The Existing Curriculum

Despite the long history of missionary work, wherein the church sends priests to distant lands and foreign cultures for pastoral work, it is a matter of concern to repeat what many have said and are saying that there is great need for the church to bring up to date the ways to effectively train priests, especially for service abroad. Most probably, the concern is consistent with the fact of the non-institutionalization of the important relationship between cultural competence and effective priestly service. Hence, it comes with no surprise that the idea of what may be described as conducting cultural awareness test of priests prior to departure is a rarity, if it exists anywhere at all. This preparatory concern demands some attention and calls for increased interest, even as seminaries are charged to vanguard such preparation in the area of cultural competence.

Observably, there is the glaring absence in the curriculum of the knowledge of cultural competence in seminaries. Instead, the curriculum and extracurricular activities are “overdosed” with the teaching of philosophy, “saturated” with the drilling in theology and “overwhelmed” with doctrines and related exercise in spirituality. Even where culture is tersely touched on and talked about—thanks to my own personal experience during my years of priestly training in Faith & Culture and Missiology classes/courses—there is no mention of the concept of cultural competence. In Faith & Culture the approach is what can be called “comparative religion” and “comparative culture.” Such approach merely talks about the awareness of the existence of other religions and cultures
in the world, as well as the differences and similarities. In Missiology, a course offered with the objective to make students see the church as a missionary thing, supposedly tells us plainly that when you go to a place, you have to study the area, study the culture of the people, and adapt. But the important discussion on cultural adjustment process is either lacking or is a rarity in the curriculum. Even though the course impresses the need to understand the people you are sent to work with, and vice versa, there is still more that needs to be done for an improved training and pastoral preparation.

Looking at both courses, Faith & Culture and Missiology, one is left with the sense that even though the analysis of the concepts therein, as the building blocks of the courses, are well described, for the most part, they fall short of the requirements of thick description. Such a description would have covered sufficient grounds in unpacking the experience of ministering in a different culture in the linear sense of the pedagogy, properly captured in three phases of the before (enculturation), during (acculturation, inculturation and collaboration), after (taking action to improve conditions), and ongoing (cultural appreciation and respect). Issues can also be taken with the inadequacy of the courses to coach or emphasize how to live in and efficiently, effectively evangelize the people in their native cultures, cognizant of the importance, the centrality and the defining place that culture plays in the day-to-day life of the people.

This absence of the emphasis on cultural competence in the approach of teaching culture-related courses in seminaries speaks to the futuristic lack of the knowledge of the importance of other aspects of the components of cultural competence: attitudes/disposition and skills, which are sorely needed by priests sent for service,
especially abroad, to enable them navigate the fine, thin, delicate and sensitive cultural lines in the work of evangelization. Thanks that in this work of evangelization, it is expected that priests preach the gospel message and make it and the people therein to be at home, while minimizing the friction and checkmating related spoken and unspoken tensions, as much as possible.

Another glaring setback in the teaching of the courses – *Faith & Culture* and *Missiology* – is in the context of narrowness. The teaching only goes so far without the challenge contained in taking actions to improve cultural conditions, which is a hallmark of cultural competence—the grand finale, ultimate goal and full cycle of cultural competence. Against the backdrop of this setback of the lack of taking action, one is left asking the question of: what use is one’s cross-cultural experience even with the acquisition of cultural competence if one has nothing to concretely show for in his own native culture? This question further exposes the inadequacy in the preparation of priests for service abroad in a different culture, especially if the culture is “better” than one’s own regarding living conditions.

The failure of better preparation of priests in the area of cultural competence does not solely exist in seminaries. The dioceses where priests come from are not any better at doing a good job on this front. Given this situation, the ramifications of insufficient training and dissatisfactory education about this important skill are significant. Altogether, it leads to lack of understanding with its hydra-headed consequences: ineffective ministry, friction, adversity, tension, insecurity, homesickness, and so on.
It might be appropriate to say that this review is not about the locales or regions for the training of priests as it is what constitutes the academic curriculum in seminaries and other houses of formation. So, this study is not a final or once-and-for-all fix of the problem for the universal church in the context of priestly formation. That being said, given the movement of priests from the global south to the global north, the argument for the preference of US-trained priests to minister in America carries the day. This is because, arguably, “they are more adapted to American culture and church life, and on average their [American] English is better. Their seminary training is assumed to have been, in effect, an acculturation period.”

To prove the point of the disturbing situation concerning cultural competence training in seminaries, a close and critical look at the academic curricula for priestly formation speaks loudly to this negligence, non-prioritization, very limited emphasis, or even complete absence of cultural competence, either as a field of study or a major topic constituting an educational issue and a pastoral necessity. Even in houses of formation where cultural awareness training is done, the endeavor is either not sufficient or tardy. Interestingly, it appears none of the curricula examined in this study directly mentioned by name the concept of cultural competence, although in a variety of ways some discuss it in other terms, such as Faith & Culture and Missiology, as previously stated. Even in conversations with high ranking members of the church hierarchy and a look into the campaign sheet for vocations, the materials for canvassing priestly vocations fall short of including cultural competence; rather, they highlight several qualities of a potential priest to include: above-average intelligence; good physical, mental, and emotional health; a
love for the poor; a willingness to sacrifice personal or material gains; and a desire to serve others. This assertion is supported in the pages that follow, which very briefly examine the current situation in priestly training through the eyes of select existing curricula from seminaries and other houses of formation.

**Seminary of All Saints, Uhiele Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria**

The formation given to students in Seminary of All Saints enjoys the claim of being “very much holistic and best analyzed as physical and human. Intellectual, pastoral and spiritual as expressed, especially by the Church Documents on Priestly Training, *Optatam Totius* and *Pastores Daba Vobis.*” The training is in three phases and lasts for eight years. The first phase is “Philosophicum” and it lasts for four years. The second phase is pastoral and it lasts for one year. And the third phase, which is “Theologicum,” lasts for three years. Observably, in these phases, the amount of time devoted to the pastoral training of future priests is particularly noteworthy—only one year. This confirms the worry highlighted in this study about the limited emphasis on or lack thereof of serious and in-depth pastoral training of candidates for the priesthood.

In spite of this observation, wherein much is left to be desired regarding the pastoral formation of priests, the program goes on to describe its “academic formation program as integral,” arguing that the philosophical training is broadly based:

- it consists of humanistic, natural and social sciences as well as linguistic disciplines…The fourth year is both the end of Philosophicum and the beginning of the Theologicum, especially as there are courses on Theological Methods, Basic Elements of Christian Theology, Catholic Social Doctrines, Missiology,

Informing about what the pastoral year consists of, the program states that “it is practical in content and it is the year that the student begins to see the priestly life and realities concretely.”363 Taking issues with this claim, one can only wonder how much training on the practicality of the priestly life in just one year is too little. No thanks that, for the most part, such training is nothing more than training “the student ad altare Dei,”364 that is, “to the Altar of God.” How about tailoring the pastoral training more to the people of God, one may ask? This involves how to work with people in different cultural settings, life situations and circumstances. The terse dwelling on or absence thereof of making the pastoral training a continuous formation in the curriculum leaves so much to be desired. It calls for an invitation to revisit and revise the program of formation wherein, as is the case in the spiritual formation, there could also be a weekly conference on subjects pertinent to the cultural exposure of young clergy, especially by formators who have had a cross-cultural pastoral experience, as well as by visiting speakers who have appreciable related contextual theoretical and practical knowledge.

True as the argument on finding wanting of the pastoral formation may be, credit must be given to the program for its claim of practically exposing the students to “the apostolic life by hands-on experience in such areas as parish and campus ministry, counseling, parish religious education, diocesan tribunal and vocation offices, hospital ministry, social ministry to the poor and the disadvantaged, ministry to those in prison and correctional institutions and ministry to the elderly.”365
By and by, the pastoral formation puts the student’s commitment to a realistic, concrete, and contextual test. Being more of a field experience, the student better understands what lies ahead in the apostolate and is prepared to make an informed choice, as well as a more mature commitment to the priesthood. “It helps develop sensitivity to the needs and aspirations of people and exposes the candidate for the priesthood to different ways of life and the circumstances and problems peculiar to each.”

Sacred Heart School of Theology: Priestly Formation Program – Curriculum

In unpacking its program, including the academic curriculum of priestly formation, Sacred Heart School of Theology, Franklin, Wisconsin, U.S.A., begins with these confident words to serve as policy or mission statement:

The priestly formation program at Sacred Heart, as presented on the following pages, is the product of more than 35 years of experience in preparing those with significant life experience for the priesthood. The faculty and administration, recognizing the unique character and background of such candidates, continue to examine the curriculum and policies of this priestly formation program while seeking to fully respond to the directives of ecclesiastical authorities, particularly the National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Program of Priestly Formation (5th ed.).

Without prejudice to the line in the mission statement of “seeking to fully respond to the directives of ecclesiastical authorities, particularly the National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Program of Priestly Formation (5th ed.),” looking ahead, one could
guess that this program might fall short of the expectation of this dissertation in the
dimension of incorporating, institutionalizing and prioritizing cultural competence as an
essential educational component of priestly formation. The program, as presented, is
divided into three phases: *Pre-Theological program, Master of divinity* and *Certificate in
Priestly Formation*.

**Brief on Pre-Theology Program - Curriculum**

In the pre-theological undergraduate/introductory studies, human and spiritual
formation are integral parts of the program. The curriculum of formation into seminary
community consists of the following areas of attention: *Acts of the Apostles, discernment, pastoral outreach, relationships, discipleship, non-judgmental listening, prayer, liturgy of the hours, lectio divina*. With the study of philosophy as a requirement, concentration is on these areas: *Ancient philosophy* (p. 45), *medieval philosophy* (p. 45), *modern philosophy* (p. 45), and *contemporary philosophy* (p. 45), as well as *logic* (p. 45), *philosophical anthropology* (p. 46), *philosophical ethics* (p. 46), *metaphysics* (p. 46), *natural theology* (p. 46), and *epistemology* (p. 46). Optional courses are, *Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (p. 55), *philosophy of nature* (p. 55), *evolution and divine design* (p. 55), *science and religion* (p. 55), *phenomenology* (p. 55), *American philosophy* (p. 55).\(^{368}\)

The following courses in undergraduate theology are required to complete the
pre-theology program: *Catholic doctrine I* (p. 46), *Catholic doctrine II* (p. 46),
*interpersonal communication skills* (p. 46), *worship and liturgical music* (p. 47), *prayer styles, introduction to scripture* (p. 47) and *introduction to Christian morality* (p. 47).

The pastoral formation in the pre-theology training deals with *didactic* on the social
justice needs of our society and the global community; *pastoral outreach* field activities; and *reflection* on pastoral outreach experiences.\textsuperscript{369}

**Brief on Master of Divinity Program - Curriculum**

To obtain the Master of Divinity in Sacred Heart School of Theology, the graduate requirements consist of a satisfactory completion of the aforementioned human and spiritual formation, including meeting and participation in *spiritual direction*, *liturgical program*, *prayer groups*, *group seminars*, *formation advisor*, *formation evaluation*, and *recollection*. Making reference to Pope John Paul II’s exhortation in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the human formation herein emphasizes the priestly calling as one in which “a priest is called to shape ‘his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ.’”\textsuperscript{370}

The academic curriculum for the intellectual formation involves taking theological courses with heavy concentration on: *Scripture studies*, *Church history*, *Systematic studies*, and *Pastoral studies*, as well as other *electives*. Among other ideas, in relation to what might be thought of as essential for culturally competent priests, *pastoral studies* highlights *preaching skills* and *preaching practicum*, but without the needed emphasis on contextualization; rather, attention is given to the understanding and application of the “principles of public speaking, oral interpretation, and vocal techniques as the basis for public address in both liturgical and non-liturgical settings.”\textsuperscript{371} However, in fairness to the program, *preaching practicum* is on actual preaching in a variety of settings. “It is also designed to provide the student with the opportunity to consider the problems that the homilist confronts as he attempts to interpret the Gospel to a
contemporary congregation.” But the concern is that it doesn’t go far enough since the preaching practicum is America bound. Such an audience might be considered too limited given the possibility of priests from this cultural setting to be sent to other parts of the world.

By the same token, the treatment of such important course as ecumenism (p. 57) under electives—instead of among the core curriculum—is a further demonstration of undervaluing, underpricing or treating with levity the vital step of bridge-building, which is an important aspect of cultural competence in the dimension of inculturation. This undervaluing speaks volumes about a seeming lack of interest in what ecumenism is all about: promoting unity among the world’s Christian churches. Thanks that this is a movement that is so needed in the world today, and it belongs to cultural competence. The observation on undervaluing makes somewhat “redundant” and unserious the statement in the curriculum under the electives that talks about the expectations of students. Thus: “In addition to the core curriculum, 10 credits or electives are required. Two credits must be in a course that expands the seminarian’s cultural awareness beyond his own culture, eight in theology, scripture, spirituality or languages (Spanish, Hebrew, Latin or Greek).”

In the pastoral formation, the program underscores the centrality of pastoral skills, even as its states that “a life of priestly service requires finely tuned pastoral skills.” To that end, pastoral formation is accomplished through instruction, immersion in pastoral settings and theological reflections on pastoral experiences. Proving the point, the program informs that “pastoral placements are intentionally balanced between sites in
sponsoring dioceses/religious communities and the metro Milwaukee area. Sacred Heart’s strategic location in the Milwaukee area enhances its ministry options which include a diversity of cultural and ethnic settings as well as a variety of parish models."

Encouraging as this practice in the pastoral formation might be, the concern still remains that the outreach in terms of the cultural geography is narrow and too limited when you consider the speed of migration and the shrinking world. Perhaps, the program might benefit from expending its geographical horizon to cover more vast cultural settings—if possible, beyond the US.

**Brief on Certificate in Priestly Formation**

In Sacred Heart School of Theology, the Certificate Program consists of the same four components as the Master of Divinity Program: spiritual, human, intellectual, and pastoral formation.

Generally, what is admirable about the academic curriculum in the program of priestly training in Sacred Heart School of Theology, at least in the context of international or foreign-born priests coming to minister in America, is the study of English as a Second Language (ESL). This involves *appropriate grammar usage, effective writing and reading skills, effective speaking in preaching, presiding, and counseling situations, accurate pronunciation in daily conversation and in liturgical reading, strong listening skills, preparation for the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) examination, academic writing courses for reviews, reports, arguments and homilies.* All this aims at achieving proficiency in English, which is an important ability, capability and capacity of cultural competence as discussed in this dissertation.
Thus as a member of the Christian community and the larger society, ESL helps young clergy and priests to become enculturated into the American Church and American society. “They develop an awareness of American customs and social behavior. Learning the culture as well as the language prepares students to move into parish settings ready to minister effectively.”

Summing up its priestly formation program in the unified areas of human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral training, Sacred Heart School of Theology quotes from the USCCB’s Program of Priestly Formation:

The U.S. bishop’s document on the “Ongoing Formation of Priests” noted that formation is an ongoing lifetime requirement for priests, indeed for any church minister. The Program of Priestly Formation calls ordained ministers to continual change, transformation and conversation to a “life-long commitment to growth.” Intellectual, pastoral, spiritual formation, and human formation, the four pillars of priestly life and ministry, are not divided up. In reality, they are one integrated process, a way of life, a practice field for seeing and holding all persons in the mystery of God.

From examining the curriculum pages of adult priestly and diaconate formation programs at Sacred Heart School of Theology, it can be argued that, to a large extent, the greatest fear is confirmed: there is a limited or lack of training in cultural competence, particularly in the dimension and scope that this study looks at the concept and consequently proposes. Because of the belief that such training would have a huge contribution to the formation of priests, it is worth repeating that it is “only” by
institutionalizing cultural competence that an institution dedicated to training future priests can truly strive to become the leading center on the theory and practice of priestly formation. Empowered by this vision and goal, this dissertation furthers the argument for the education of priests for effective service to the church and humanity at large.

_The Nigerian Priest in the Third Millennium (Issued by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria [CBCN], 2004: A Prototype of Regional/National Priestly Formation Program)_

Cognizant of the importance of priestly formation according to regional needs and circumstances, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) produced a telling document in 2004 entitled, “The Nigerian Priest in the Third Millennium.” This document, upon careful examination, could be considered a prototype of regional priestly formation. Being a prudent document that is well-thought out in a practical reflection, it could serve as a sample or model that is built to test a concept or confirm a process. In context, it is capable of acting as a thing to be replicated with much to learn from.

The idea of developing regional programs for priestly formation is encouraged by the Council Fathers as communicated in some Vatican documents on priestly formation and as stated in the _Code of Canon Law_, as well as supported by some think tanks, who write about it—drawing upon experience and conversations. Setting the stage, Canon 242 of the Code of Canon Law talks about “National Program of Priestly Formation”:

Each nation is to have a program of priestly formation which is to be established by the conference of bishops, attentive to the norms issued by the supreme authority of the Church, and which is to be approved by the Holy See. This program is to be adapted to new circumstances, also with the approval of the Holy
See, and is to define the main principles of the instruction to be given in the seminary and general norms adapted to the pastoral needs of each region or province… *Optatam Totius* laid down basic principles for the renewal of priestly formation and mandated each nation and rite to development its own program to be revised and reviewed by the competent authority on a regular basis. In 1970 the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education’s *Ratio* (since revised in 1985) provided the universal guidelines to assist the national conferences in developing their particular programs.  

It is against the backdrop of this promulgation that one can appreciate the development of regional programs for priestly formation by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) and the USCCB in 2004 and 2005, respectively.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) entitles its program as “The Nigerian Priest in the Third Millennium.” The program captures some of the following main ideas in its table of contents: *Context – Nigerian Culture: Some positive elements of priesthood in African traditional religions [ATR], some negative elements of priesthood in ATR, Recommendations; Christian identity and mission of the priest: Trinitarian foundation, share in the ministry of Jesus Christ – priest, prophet, king/servant; Characteristics of priests – qualities called for: Personal witness of priests, Ministerial qualities for priestly, prophetic, king/servant roles, relationships; Spirituality for priests: The context for priestly spirituality in Nigeria, essential elements of priestly spirituality; Ongoing formation - renewal and updating: human, spiritual, intellectual,*
pastoral, well-planned sabbaticals, special studies; Welfare of priests; concluding remarks.\textsuperscript{380}

Recognizing the Nigerian culture for the setting of priestly formation, the bishops state that several major factors set the context for priesthood in Nigeria, singling out two factors especially. “The first looks to the traditional, religious cultures of Nigeria and, in particular, to the exercise of priesthood in African Traditional Religions (ATR). A second factor is the rapid move of Nigeria to modernity, the fact that change seems to be the order of the day.”\textsuperscript{381} The document acknowledges that:

There is a great awakening in Africa of a profound cultural, social, economic and political consciousness, which the church does not ignore. This awakening includes a new quest for meaning, a search for fundamental values and a more radical expression of selfhood in one’s native language and culture. Nigerian priests now seek their own identity, deriving from their particular socio-cultural, ecclesiastical and pastoral milieu. The gift of faith and vocation always involve some dialectic of participation, freedom and co-responsibility in the recipients. Like all other historical beings, Nigerians respond to the gift of the priesthood against the backdrop of their environment, cultural categories and social conventions. Pope John Paul II already called on Africans thus: “…look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions, look to the faith… Here you will find genuine freedom – here you will find Christ who leads you to the truth.”\textsuperscript{382}
This acknowledgment, declaration and awareness of the fact that “priests are called from a certain cultural ambience,” as the double advantage of enculturation and human empowerment. It instills a sense of cultural appreciation wherein “for the Nigerian priest, the notion of the priesthood in African Traditional Religions (ATR) forms part of the cultural horizon for understanding the priesthood of Jesus Christ.” This is a necessary element of cultural competence – appreciation of one’s native culture – though not without a recognition of and appreciation of multiple cultural perspectives both in priestly formation and other aspects of human interaction. Putting it in perspective, this native cultural element enables healthy and intelligent dialogues on some of the following relevant questions: “In what manner does the African cultural heritage influence priestly life and ministry? Are there elements in African Traditional Religion that can promote priestly values, such as poverty, obedience, chastity, stewardship, community life? What elements may weaken the meaning of priestly consecration?” No doubt, priesthood in ATR possesses certain elements that may enrich the exercise of Catholic priesthood, even as the contrary might be the case in some areas.

Observably, it can be argued that, for the most part, the program of priestly formation in Nigeria is culture-centric, in discussion and approach. This means that context is taking very seriously in priestly formation in Nigeria because the value of cultural and social milieu affects and influences choice and decisions. Against the backdrop of this setting, the pedagogical approach to the program suggests what can somewhat be likened to the culture-centric approaches developed by the teaching Umoja
community in Chicago, U.S.A. As gleaned from the culture conscious and culturally responsive pedagogy:

Umoja Community faculty are given extensive training in culturally responsive pedagogy and practices. According to Gay (2000) culturally responsive teaching uses the culturally knowledge, prior experiences, and performance style of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students. Umoja community programs implement course curriculum which respects and celebrates the culture heritage of the students in the program. The students’ own cultural experiences are acknowledged and respected which generates active dialogue and increased classroom participation.\textsuperscript{386}

The culture-centric focus and approach in the formation program of Nigerian priests is good to the extent that the program is very much conscious of the culture of the Nigerian people, which is the region where the young clergy would minister after his ordination. But yet, there is a concern in this type of focus and concentration. The concern is about the possibility of priests formed within the context of the Nigerian culture to be sent abroad for service in a different cultural context. Perhaps, this is where the challenge of the intellectual formation is tested in which or wherein the priests now must learn to apply the rigorous knowledge acquired in philosophical training, in the new environment, as they deal with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Besides, more opportunely, the noble idea of ongoing formation of priests also comes to the rescue in this situation of over concentration of training in a narrow focus. The latter provision of
ongoing formation holds the potential of affording the priest a precious opportunity to make good on the knowledge acquired in the seminary and the pastoral experience gained from his native culture through a contextual application. The ability to do the application through adaptation is what is called pastoral competence, which is an offshoot and the result of cultural competence.

To appreciate the pivotal and determinant idea of pastoral competence, Burt Braunius of the Church Leadership Center itemizes the following as “Competency Criteria for Commissioned Pastors.” Maturity of faith; Personal integrity and call; Understanding of the old and new testaments and contextual as well as insightful biblical interpretation; Knowledge of reformed theology and reforming tradition; Church history; Knowledge of and adherence to the constitution of the church; Nature and administration of the sacraments; Ability to preach; Capability to minister within the church; Understanding of and adherence to pastoral ethics and practices.  

Among these criteria, the one that serves the purpose and advances the cause of this study is the need for pastors, in this case, priests, to have knowledge of reformed theology and reforming tradition. Thus, although without compromising the essential truth, priests must know and be knowledgeable about the different trajectories of theology and have the openness toward the evolving nature of ecclesial traditions. Therefore, they must “demonstrate an understanding of the doctrines of the church and how they have emerged over time in the context of the church’s interaction with culture.”
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB): Program of Priestly Formation

The USCCB entitles its program of priestly training in a direct and simple manner: “Program of Priestly Formation.” In this program, which is the fifth edition, approved by the full body of bishops at its June 2005 General Meeting, some pertinent ideas featured in the table of contents include the following: *The nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood; The life of priests; Priestly vocation in the Church’s pastoral work and admission of candidates; The formation of candidates for the priesthood (human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation); Community; The continuing evaluation of seminarians; Seminaries: Governance, administration, and faculty governance; Administration; The ongoing formation of priests; Conclusion.*

As “expected,” the treatment of the ideas in the table of contents is mostly a reiteration of the guidelines for priestly formation contained in some basic Vatican documents dealing with the subject—the training of priests. Hence, the document declaratively states in its opening pages that excerpts come from “the Catechism of the Catholic Church, while most of the references derive from Pastores Dabo Vobis, Novo millenio ineunte, Ecclesia in America, Fides at ratio, Study of Philosophy in Seminaries, Directives Regarding the Formation of Seminarians for Ministry to Marriage and Family, Catechesi tradendae, Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms for Ecumenism, Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian.”

In the conclusion of the work on the program, the United States bishops express their confidence that this essential task, with the goal of mission, will continue in a more
effective way in the opening years of the third Christian millennium. “It is their hope that this fifth edition of the *Program of Priestly Formation* will serve this goal.”

Continuing to draw attention to the worry that this study expresses, a curious observation is appropriate: With the glaring absence of the word *culture*, and without any mention of the concept, *cultural competence* in the table of contents of these two regional or national programs of priestly formation as produced by the Nigerian and American Bishops, one is left to wonder where this important concept belongs in the documents for the training of priests. And an examination of the said documents confirms the greatest fear of the complete absence of emphasis on cultural competence. To the degree that only a mention in passing of ideas related to the concept is found in what is considered *Program of Priestly Formation* in the twenty-first century, even with the trend in the global redistribution of priests, the case for cultural competence in this study is further strengthened.

**Catholic Church Interest in Cultural Competence: “The New Evangelization”**

The issue of cultural competence in all fields of human endeavor is gaining an increasing audience of interest, including the church, wherein some members of the hierarchy, scholars and researchers are beginning to realize that this concept, with the experience and expectation therein, cannot be ignored. Ignoring it is to do so at one’s own expense and at the peril of the institution. To that end, this section of the dissertation answers the question of the fast and rapidly emerging Catholic Church interest in cultural competence for effective priestly ministry and in view of “The New Evangelization.”
Building Cultural Competence and the Call for a New Evangelization

As one of the nations on earth with the highest number of immigrants, and with the continuous influx of new arrivals from different cultures of the world, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) rises to the occasion to address the situation of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. In its Leadership Institute Program – Track III, which deals with “New Evangelization,” the USCCB states that “everyone who teaches on behalf of the Church requires appropriate attitudes, knowledge and skills in intercultural situations in order to competently engage today’s cultural pluralism and secularism.”

As the spokesperson and discussion leader of the guidelines for Intercultural Competence endorsed by the USCCB Committee on Cultural Diversity, Jesuit Fr. Allan Figueroa Deck, Associate Professor of Catholic and Latino Studies, writes on “Building Cultural Competence and the Call for a New Evangelization.” Framing the question for discussion is the repeated acknowledgment that:

One of the most significant changes taking place in the world of catechesis and religious instruction over the last fifty years is the absolutely central role that competence in culture and intercultural relations plays in the world of catechesis. This is so because the Magisterium places catechesis squarely within the context of the Church’s identity and mission to evangelize, which in turn focuses our attention precisely on the engagement of Christian faith with cultures.

Come to think of it, when the church preaches and teaches through priests, it engages cultures and the people within those cultures. Therefore, culture is the target of the
church’s evangelizing and catechizing mission. It is not merely an interesting or optional
sidelight that is explored after having thoroughly mastered the content of catechesis and
adopted appropriate methodologies. Emphasizing the centrality of culture in the
evangelizing mission of the church, the document (under review, “Building Cultural
Competence and the Call for a New Evangelization”) draws strength from Pope John
Paul II’s apostolic exhortation on the topic of catechism in the contemporary period, 
*Catechesi Tradendae*. Thus:

We can say of catechesis, as well as of evangelization in general, that it is called
to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures. For
this purpose, catechesis will seek to know these cultures and their essential
components; it will learn their most significant expressions; it will respect their
particular values and riches.  

In this quotation is a pointed reference to an active and interested meeting of the
Christian message not only with particular ethnic and national cultures, such as the US,
the native American, the Hispanic/Latino cultures, and so forth; rather, today’s priests,
regardless of their cultural background, must have an awareness of and be conversant
with today’s dominant worldwide culture, that is, the culture of modern, secular societies.
In this consideration, as it were, the gospel message as preached by priests and other
members of the church, like catechists, must take seriously the engagement of the content
of faith with people and specifically with the original cultural beliefs, as well as core
attitudes which include ways of thinking and behavior that constitute culture in its
deepest human sense. Therefore, because of the strategic positions of priests and their
role in evangelization, the church’s urgent call for a new evangelization depends on priests’ preparedness and response.

Focusing on the challenge of secularism, it suffices to say that intellectual formation of all Christians, particularly of priests, in this area is certainly of extreme importance. For secularism is also a culture of immense weight, of speedy spread, of global audience and of far-reaching consequences. Thanks to secularism, a deal of data is telling that both younger and older generations of Catholics, worldwide, are woefully deficient in their ability to give an intelligent description of their faith and, more alarming living up to its standard of conduct. This growing concern further challenges the intellectual formation of priests.

For instance, some of the challenges posed by secularism and which, sadly, many Catholics, including priests, find it hard to make an intelligent and convincing argument are the all-too familiar and touchy issues of “contraception, abortion, Christian marriage, immigration, capital punishment, and economic justice.” It should be noted that the response to these challenges is not and should not be limited to merely proclaiming what the church teaches about them. Rather, a more constructive way of addressing the issues calls for the knowledge of cultural competence, wherein context is a factor and understanding in all its facets is important in making judgments, however, without being overindulgent and compromising. This caveat is true, and so goes the same for heavy lifting when judging people in situations of “dilemma.”

In order to more appropriately offer an effective pastoral service, address controversial issues, and proffer related solutions to human problems, the USCCB states:
familiarity with culture and how it works together with knowledge, attitudes, and practical skills in intercultural encounters goes a long way toward bridging the gap between catechesis as centered on content on the one hand and as leading to transformed lives on the other—that is, effecting an ongoing Christian conversion…The Church today tells us that knowing practically how to engage culture and cultures is the key.\textsuperscript{397}

Responding to the importance of engaging cultures as the key to fruitful evangelization, and, in context, to effective priestly service, building cultural competence became a hot topic at the November 2011 meeting of the US bishops. To that end, the Committee on Cultural Diversity of the USCCB approved five guidelines for intercultural competence in ministry. They are stated as follows: “1. Frame issues of diversity theologically in terms of the Church’s identity and mission to evangelize. 2. Seek an understanding of culture and how it works. 3. Develop intercultural communication skills in pastoral settings. 4. Expand one’s knowledge of the obstacles which impede effective intercultural relations. 5. Foster ecclesial integration rather than assimilation in Church settings, with a spirituality of reconciliation and mission.”\textsuperscript{398} It is important to note that the purpose of the guidelines is to bring, not just priests, but all ecclesial ministers to a basic level of familiarity with cultural and intercultural relations and communications, including all the components of cultural competence discussed in this study: knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and skills.

Expounding more, the essay on “Building Cultural Competence and the Call for a New Evangelization” emphasizes the centrality of culture and cultures as the target of all
the church’s efforts to evangelize by teaching and preaching an ever-changing
demographic landscape affecting the church in the United States as seen in parishes,
schools, organizations and institutions. This dramatic demographic shift makes cultural
competence to be achieved through intercultural proficiency, a necessary condition for
successful evangelization. Therefore, to become effective, priests, discerning
evangelizers and catechists must begin to develop this kind of awareness as something
that is foundational and fundamental.

Against the backdrop of the concern and growing interest in the Catholic Church
in the direction of cultural competence, in their reflective curriculum for intercultural
competence, the US bishops are unequivocal in stressing “the theological underpinning of
catholicity, the Church’s universality, and an ecclesiology of communion and
participation that values unity in diversity or differences.”399 By implication, such interest
points to developing the ability to respect legitimate differences, appreciate multiple
perspectives, be open to other points of views, and exercise pastoral care in a way that is
far from imposing a one-size-fits-all approach to working in diverse community settings.
Thanks that unlike what used to be the case in the past, wherein diverse communities
were divided into bailiwicks or parishes constituting mostly of people from common
cultural backgrounds, today, such arrangements are either dying away or are increasingly
becoming difficult to do so. Hence, in many churches today, it is not just a matter of
interacting with one or two cultural outsiders, “but engaging and serving a bewildering
combination of diverse groups.”400
Given the reality of diversity in today’s church; given cultural appreciation of native cultures and the inclination to ethnocentrism; and given the militant refusal to the attempt of assimilation, the church must consider in an entirely new way, how to proclaim and transmit the faith in the work of evangelization. All of this calls for more attention and greater emphasis on intercultural competencies. This is the challenge given by the Magisterium (that is, the teaching authority of the church) to the Catholic Church all over the world. “At the core of what is involved in those competencies is a sense of what makes both particular cultures and the paradigmatic modern, secular culture work.”

At the end of the day, in the effort to respect and value all cultures, in the striving to inculcate a sense of belonging, in the attempt to make no stranger among “us,” and in the drive to make all feel at home through the development and exercise of cultural competence, the goal of the mission must not be lost in shuffle. Hence the question: “How can the Christian message transform these cultures for the sake of the Gospel?”

To conclude, the essay highlighting the interest of the Catholic Church in cultural competence along the lines of:

Building capacity for cultural and intercultural proficiency and competence is the most strategic step ecclesial ministers can take today to respond intelligently to their challenges and to what the parish, school, and organizational realities on the ground are telling us. Effectively responding to Pope Benedict XVI’s call for a New Evangelization must begin here with the capacity for cultural and intercultural discernment, the ability to engage one’s own culture as well as modern, secular culture and myriad others cultures with the Gospel.
Catholic Cultural Diversity Network Convocation: Dialogue about Challenges of Unity in Diversity

As the name suggests, the reason and intention for the meeting of the church under the main theme: “Catholic Cultural Diversity Network Convocation,” as organized by the USCCB is obvious: to acknowledge the reality of cultural diversity and to dialogue about the challenges that the experience poses, and to highlight the opportunities and benefits, as well as to see how to contain the experience of unity in diversity. This is fundamental. It is expected that “three hundred church leaders – bishops, priests, religious and laity—from all ethnic and cultural families and walks of life will gather May 6-8, at the University of Notre Dame for the Catholic Cultural Diversity Network Convocation (CCDNC).”

In addition to emphasizing the church’s growing racial, cultural and ethnic diversity with the need to encourage and foster a robust Catholic identity, there is the open acknowledgment to the effect that it is no longer a secret “that most Catholic parishes, dioceses, schools and organizations as well as the ranks of the clergy, religious and lay leaders are undergoing a profound change as a result of dramatic demographic shifts.”

This reality necessitates a dialogue. And

The dialogue will revolve around three main questions: How do today’s diverse members of the church understand themselves as a community in diversity? What do they want to say to their brothers and sisters in faith from other cultures? What are the opportunities moving forward for building relationships and collaboration?
The process of constructively addressing the above questions is vital since new leadership, especially in the priestly ministry, mostly of non-European descent is steadily arising in the US church. Hence, today, more than ever before, it is clear that since the church must face the reality of cultural diversity, an interest in the conversation on cultural competence is an experience that must be sustained.

**Cultural Competence and Clergy Unite: The Need for Multicultural Considerations for Seminarian Applicants**

The Catholic Church interest in cultural competence is not only creating opportunities for informal conversations and serious discussions on the concept, it is also producing some student research in academic institutions. The research ranges from the consideration of cultural competence as a requirement for admission into the seminary, to the advocacy of including cultural competence in the curriculum of priestly training, and to making cultural competence an important experience in the ongoing formation of priests. One of such research that argues for cultural competence as an important consideration for seminary applicants is a study carried out by Monica Sue Richards in 2012, aptly entitled, “Cultural Competence and Clergy Unite: The Need for Multicultural Considerations for Seminarian Applicants.” Arguing from a psychological perspective, the abstract of the study makes a compelling case for the goal of the research. Thus:

The evaluation of candidates for Catholic seminaries prior to their admission is an uncommon practice. However, in the past 40-50 years psychologists have played a vital role by adding psychological measures and their clinical perspectives to this evaluation process. Although these psychological evaluations have gathered insightful information that has better informed individuals in making a choice
about a candidate, recent research suggests that many of the psychologists conducting these evaluations have not taken measures to ensure cultural competencies within these evaluations.\(^{407}\)

Overall, the study outlines the ethical obligation psychologists, as well as seminary formators and related bodies, have in providing culturally competent evaluation to seminarian applicants. Not content with pointing out what is missing, the study makes some suggestions and recommendations for all concerned so as to better ensure culturally competent clinical interviews and assessments in the future. The first suggestion states the importance “for applicants from other countries to receive special help in gaining the necessary understanding of the religious and cultural context for priestly ministry and life in the United States.”\(^{408}\) The second suggestion addresses the need for a culturally responsive interview. Thus, when conducting a clinical interview, it is important for the psychologist to consider the cultural background of the applicant. “Psychologists must address the client’s diversity variables in order to formulate an accurate conceptualization that will be appropriate for the client.”\(^{409}\) This entails a consideration of all possible cultural explanations for an individual’s clinical presentation. More directly, then, a culturally responsive interview consists of actively learning about the multiple, intersecting systems, which include, but are not limited to, extended family, non-kin-relationships, cultural and political contexts, even physical and natural environments, and whatever else constitutes his worldview—all this as relevant to an individual’s life.\(^{410}\)

A multicultural approach is the third recommendation in the evaluation of seminarian applicants. Explaining this point, the study makes the familiar observation
that most psychologists have been trained to conduct interviews using a universalist
approach. Thus:

Interviewers have been taught to interview all people in the same way, regardless
of the participant’s specific culture. This approach accentuates the similarities
among people and ignores their differences. Although this methodology may
appear to be treating people more fairly, in reality it results in not fully meeting
the client where he or she is. This broad-spectrum approach is based on interview
styles, formats and questions that were developed for the majority group and these
structured interviews may be biased against several minority groups (i.e., age,
educational level, ethnicity, language)…In contrast to the universalist approach,
some psychologists practice with a culture-specific lens, in hopes of capturing the
information typically excluded from the traditional structured interview. This
perspective does capture the difference among cultural groups, but usually at the
expense of losing the universal and individualistic frameworks. The intricate task
of the psychologist is to learn about the client’s culture while at the same time
consider each person individuality.

Not only for readiness for the interview, but also as a demonstration of cultural
competence in the dimensions of awareness and knowledge, it is advisable that the
interviewer has at least a fair knowledge of the personal histories in a historical cultural
context of the applicant. This is what makes the fourth suggestion in Monica Sue
Richard’s study. She argues that whenever possible, psychologists should gather
information about the interviewee’s cultural background before the first meeting.
Background reading on a person’s ethnic, cultural and/or religious group will enhance the psychologist’s understanding before the initial or first meeting and will help guide against stereotypes and misunderstanding during the interview. True as this might be, the envelope should not be pushed too far because “each individual is unique and he or she may not ascribe to the same characteristics or experiences common to his or her cultural group;”413 within each cultural group there exists a range of intra or within-group differences.

Other all-too-familiar recommendations for effective interviewing that measures cultural competence point to the acculturation, and unusual perceptions and experiences. In acculturation, it is necessary for interviewers to construct questions aimed at assessing an applicant’s immigration, migration and/or acculturation status.414 Taking into account the unusual perceptions and experiences is also important. Although this is challenging, assessing the beliefs and behaviors that are deemed unusual in the dominant or even minority culture could be seen to provide some positive and healthy way going forward in inquiring better knowledge of the individual’s culture and personal uniqueness.415

Warning on the human inclination of biases, prejudices, and subjectivity, the study offers a specific culturally sensitive framework for approaching seminarian applicants during the evaluation. To that end, psychologists and related persons are cautioned to be aware of their own biases when conducting these types of evaluation.416

The need for the psychological evaluation which considers the measurement of cultural competence in the admission and training of future priests is made all the more urgent in view of the fact that “according to a recent survey by the Center for Applied
Research in the Apostolate (CARA), the US Catholic priesthood is increasingly becoming more culturally diverse (2009). This trend in the demographics of the Catholic priesthood is beneficial to know because it directly informs the church and those involved in the application process of the priesthood about those areas of diversity and cultural competency that need to be incorporated into the selection of future priests. In addition, the trend can inform the development and renewal of the curriculum for priestly training.


“The New Evangelization” (TNE) is a Catholic Church movement with many moving parts, and so goes its definition, description, and interpretation, which sometimes throws more confusion in the mix. Confirming the fact, John L. Allen Jr., of the National Catholic Reporter rightly observes that “while that phrase may mean something to insiders, it typically leaves normal people…scratching their heads.” In any case, what needs to be known is that evangelization is synonymous with missionary efforts, that is, the effort to convert people, get them into church, make them active participants, and draw them deeper into the life of faith.

Most of Pope John Paul II’s encyclicals, make reference to the fact that “the expression New Evangelization was popularized in the encyclical of Pope Paul VI Evangelization in the Modern World, as a response to the new challenges – that the contemporary world creates for the mission of the church.” From where he stands, Dave Nodar observes that this call to a new evangelization is a prophetic and revolutionary calling to the Roman Catholic Church. It is not a calling to communicate
a new message. For “evangelization cannot be new in its content since its very theme is always the one gospel given in Jesus Christ.” On this foundation of the basic message of eternal life, John Paul II states that evangelization should not be limited to individual unbelievers but also addressed to non-practicing Christians and to entire cultures with attention paid to its ardor, methods and expression. Hence, it must be adapted to all cultures and the people of our day.

In answering the question about the characteristics of the New Evangelization, in Redemptoris Missio, John Paul II sketches out some of the characteristics to include: “1. The New Evangelization is Christocentric. 2. The New Evangelization is the responsibility of the entire people of God. 3. The New Evangelization is not just for foreign missions. 4. The New Evangelization is directed to individuals and whole cultures. 5. The New Evangelization is not limited to the presentation of the basic Gospel message (kerygma) but is a comprehensive process of Christianization. 6. The New Evangelization calls for missionary spirituality.” And of course, the new evangelization calls for cultural competence.

According to the USCCB, “the focus of the New Evangelization calls all Catholics to be evangelized and then go forth to evangelize.” In a special way, it focuses on “re-proposing” the Gospel to those who have experienced a crisis of faith due to some reasons, such as the tension between culture and religion, as well as the conflict between religious cultures. It is in light of the reality of the disconnect and ongoing experience wherein people are becoming adrift and aloof of church matters that Pope Benedict XVI called for the re-proposing of the Gospel both to those regions awaiting the
first evangelization and to those regions where the roots of Christianity are deep but who have experienced or are experiencing a serious crisis of faith due to secularization and cultural reclamation.\(^ {424} \)

In terms of the crisis of faith considered to be the result of secularism, the new evangelization aims to reach out to many alienated Catholics who are thought to be secularized. To that end, it is assumed that Europe and America are a special preoccupation, because that is where a disproportionate share of these “distant Christians” are found.\(^ {425} \) On the other hand, the crisis of faith due to cultural reclamation turns the search light of the new evangelization more directly to cultures of the Christianized world where people are strongly reclaiming the cultural values of their native cultures. This is true among people of indigenous cultures who feel a disservice done to their cultures by Christianity through misinterpretation and misrepresentation. Given this situation, the re-proposing of the Christian faith in the new evangelization speaks to the importance of dialogue between culture and religion with the aim of building bridges to achieve a better outcome of inculturation. This effort can be likened to salesmanship. That is why good salesmen are needed in the persons of priests with high levels of cultural sensitivity, appreciable knowledge of interreligious encounter, and dependable cultural competence skills.

In light of the job of “The New Evangelization” (TNE) and the church’s interest in cultural competence, it serves the purpose to say that the purpose of this study is to contribute to the preliminary and ongoing research needed to create a substantive theory regarding the importance of cultural competence in the thinking, practice and lived
experience of the church’s missionary work in different cultures of the world, specifically for priests, particularly those to be sent or already sent abroad for service.

Through his own lens of tracing the development of events, Mark Silk rightly observes that “anyone who follows the hierarchy of the Catholic Church knows that Job One over the past few years has been something called The New Evangelization. Pope Benedict created a Pontifical Council to advance it.”

426 Tracing a recent historical unfolding, Columbia Magazine informs that, “on Oct. 11, 2012, the church embarked on the Year of Faith, which will continue until the Solemnity of Christ the King on Nov. 24, 2013…As the Year of Faith began, the World Synod of Bishops met for three weeks in Rome to discuss “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.”

At the opening of the Synod the pope delivered a homily on which he noted three complementary aspects of evangelization: the mission of announcing the Gospel to non-Christians; the evangelization of the baptized who have “drifted away”; and “ordinary evangelization” within Christian communities.

427 Although not expressly stated, what is noteworthy and important for observation is that the three complementary aspects of evangelization itemized by the pope cannot be carried out in a vacuum—where there are no pre-existing and existing ways of life known as cultures and traditions, as well as age-long practices within those cultures. To that end, the acknowledgment and the know-how of navigating those cultures not only determines the success but are also conditio sine qua non (necessary conditions) for achieving the goals of such work of evangelization.
Thus the evangelization of non-Christians, of those who have drifted away and ordinary or day-to-day spread of the good news calls for a *new* way and challenges the missionary spirit of cultivating and exercising cultural competence by all who are called to that vocation. In light of this reality, therefore, “to carry out the work of the new evangelization we must acknowledge that we confront a new situation in our hemisphere.” And that new situation, which is a multiplicity of *cultures*, must be dealt with in a new way with *humility* and with no show of superiority both by priests and lay people. Affirming the role of the latter (that is, lay people) in evangelization, “In *Christifideles Laici*, the 1988 apostolic exhortation on the mission of the laity, Blessed John Paul II wrote that the laity has an ‘essential and irreplaceable role’ [7] in the work of the new evangelization.”

The newness that “The New Evangelization” demands is not so much in the form of the *contents* of witness as previously alluded to, but that the witness calls for a consciousness of the fact that it must be made “in societies that have already heard the Good News preached and have rejected it,” or are reluctant to accept it due to cultural differences or even as a result of the dangerous clash between the existing culture and the new Christian culture. And more often than not, the clash is because of skepticism on the part of the evangelized who find it difficult to reconcile the words of the evangelizer with the person’s actions. Given this fact, therefore, it could be said that “our witness in many instances is to a skeptical world that has already heard much of what we say and now is waiting to see whether Christians can actually live according to what they profess.” Such waiting challenges a vision to evangelization that transcends cultures and
languages. It is not a political vision, but a vision of common humanity entering into dialogue and encountering Christ as living in all cultures: tribes, tongues, and nations.\textsuperscript{432}

In a sense, TNE challenges a moving away from mere doctrinal teaching to real and pragmatic evangelization, especially one that has genuine option for the poor and the vulnerable; one that emphasizes God’s mercy and one that is careful of imposition of beliefs and religious practices with their styles on people. Thus, TNE is not about what (doctrines and contents of the message). It is about where (the whole world), who (the evangelizers—both ordained ministers and lay people/men and women) and especially how (method, approach, and style).

Observably, Pope Francis’ style of pastoral leadership seems to capture the full and complete package of TNE in the particular dimension of pastoral sensitivity, understanding, mercy, and care for the poor and vulnerable. Little wonder that:

He has already singled out for praise a book on God’s mercy by Cardinal Walter Kaspar, who has drawn the ire of conservative rigorists. In addressing the journalists who covered his election, he was careful not to impose the sign of the Cross on those of other faiths and non-believers. He has spoken of making common cause with secular people of good will…The message seemed clear: Pope Francis will try to live up to his namesake, Francis of Assisi, as a man of the poor and of peace…\textsuperscript{433}

Arguably, in practically communicating his style of TNE, no one expects Francis to come out of the closet as a moral relativist. He recognizes and understands the ministry of the priesthood to the effect that “Although they have obligations toward all men,
priests have a special obligation to the poor and the weak entrusted to them, for our Lord himself showed that he was united to them, and their evangelization is mentioned as a sign of messianic activity.”

Therefore, from the perspective of cultural competence as a vital element and a driving force in TNE, the point Pope Francis seems to be making is about collaboration and

the need to build bridges to those who do not share our positions…Those others include people of other faiths and also non-believers so that the differences which divide and hurt us may never prevail, but rather the desire to build the links of friendship between all peoples, despite their diversity…[For] There cannot be true peace if everyone is his own criterion, if everyone can always claim exclusively his own rights, without at the same time caring for the good of others, of everyone, on the basis of the nature that unites every human being on this earth.

The interest in the new evangelization is the reason why the Catechetical Sunday which was celebrated on September 16, 2012 focused on the theme: Catechists and Teachers as Agents of the New Evangelization.” Challenging all hands to be on deck, a statement from the chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop David Ricken reads that “before Catholics can go out to evangelize, they must be evangelized…We celebrate catechists because, since they instruct people, they have a crucial role in the New Evangelization, [which is centers on] the effort to rekindle the faith in Catholics, whether practicing or not, is a major focus of the Year Faith”
Bishops Announce Guidelines for Intercultural Competence in Ministry

Speaking of “re-proposing” as the direction of the new evangelization, on November 14, 2011, the US bishops announced five guidelines for intercultural competence in ministry. The five guidelines as previously itemized make connecting Catholic identity with cultural diversity as key to re-proposing the faith, even as it urges the recognition of cultural diversity in the church as a pastoral priority. The project which took shape over the past three years in response to the bishops’ pastoral priority on recognition of the cultural diversity in the church had more than forty bishops in attendance at the presentation of the guidelines. And “the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States Archbishop Pietro Sambi conveyed a blessing and words of encouragement from Pope Benedict XVI.” At the occasion, cultural competence was described and applauded as understanding the gift of cultural diversity. Because people of non-European descent constitute the majority of US Catholics, cultural competence is indispensable. “Church ministers must understand cultural differences when they work in marriage preparation, on faith formation in schools, the promotion of vocations, and of course, in the promotion of social justice and dignity.” Corroborating the point a year later, Bishop Jaime Soto of Sacramento, California, chairman of the Cultural Diversity Committee said:

Diversity in the Church is happening. The skills from the Cultural Competency Workshop will assist pastoral ministers to make it happen more effectively in their communities.
The guidelines, which are expressed in the form of components of cultural competencies are – knowledge, attitudes and skills. They are explicitly linked to the universal church’s focus on the evangelization with the hope that they might enhance one’s ability to effectively engage people and cultures, as well as deal with cultural boundaries and relations.

In order to streamline the work of the Cultural Diversity Committee, the following are the key mission responsibilities:

1. Collaborating intentionally and systematically with all USCCB committees and offices on issues and initiatives that impact cultural diversity in the Church and people with special pastoral needs.
2. Being a resource and advocate to USCCB committees and offices on issues relating to cultural diversity and people with special pastoral needs.
3. Communicating and promoting the teachings of the Church and the resources of the USCCB to dioceses and national Catholic organizations, especially those ministering in cultural diverse settings, to migrants and refugees, and to people on the move.
4. Provide training to regional and national groups related to resources developed by the USCCB, its committees, and its work groups.
5. Study issues relating to faith and life of Catholics in culturally diverse communities and people on the move.
6. Advocate for and coordinate the efforts of the permanent subcommittees to address cultural diversity in the Church.

Prior to the eventual development and presentation of the guidelines for intercultural competence, mention must be made that in 2010, one of the goals the US bishops set out to pursue until the end of 2011 was the goal of the recognition of cultural diversity among others like, strengthening marriage, faith formation focused on
sacramental practice, priestly and religious vocations, life and dignity of human person. Taking a closer look at the interest and works of the US bishops, Deal Hudson makes the root-awakening observation along the lines of:

It appears that something like a cultural competency standard is now being applied to the various ministries of the Church. In fact, for the past two years, there has been a Secretariat of Cultural Diversity at the USCCB with five subcommittees: Hispanic; African American; Native American; Asian Pacific; and Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers. This secretariat is already working on developing the cultural competency guidelines.

In an extensive attention to the new evangelization with a showing of bogus and robust interest in cultural competence through an acknowledgment of the intermingling of cultures, in 2012, the US bishops through its committee on evangelization and catechesis, published an ambitious document entitled, “Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization.” In light of the changing face of the church due to the cultural presence of people from all over the world in the church’s congregation and the entire society, the document looks into the following pertinent ideas:

Part I: Current Cultural Context: The ministry of Jesus; Our current situation; The new evangelization; Positive developments; Areas of growth. Part II: Historical Context of the New Evangelization: Pope Paul VI Call for evangelization; Blessed John Paul II and the new evangelization; Pope Benedict XVI and the future of the new evangelization. Part III: The Focus of the New Evangelization: Those who are evangelized; The response of the new evangelization to today’s
world. Part IV: Culture of Witness: Conversion; methodologies; discipleship; a commitment to the Christian life; parish life; the liturgical life of the church—popular devotions and piety; the Christian family; catechists and teachers of the faith; religions experience. Part V: Key Components of Outreach Programs: The Holy Spirit and conversion; leadership; team preparation [collaboration]; an atmosphere of hospitality and trust; catechesis, including sacramental catechesis; prayer and popular piety; the Sunday Eucharist and effective preaching; resources; continued support.445

In addressing the issue of cultural diversity using the tool of the new evangelization, specific attention is paid to the idea of looking at the call of the new evangelization within cultural context and ideas on how to create a culture of witness, as contained in Part I and Part IV of the document, respectively, as referenced above. Such witnessing in and within cultures challenges a Christian life of understanding that is lived with charity and faith as the most effective form of evangelization.

From the US bishops’ standpoint, it can be said that, cognizant of the diverse groups, which are also made up of people at many different levels of acculturation to the American experience, the bishops are very clear about the fact that the church’s mission is not to Americanize, but to evangelize. By implication, this means respecting the cultures in the form of languages, customs and styles whereby particular cultures live their Catholic faith while at the same time, seeking to form their emerging Catholic identity in light of the word of God and church teaching.
Flashing back on the foregoing and looking ahead, in light of “The New Evangelization” – the opinions expressed about it, the suggestions put forward that might lead to doing a better job, the strategies being adopted, the ongoing conversation, the various publications and documents, not the least of which is this dissertation – one can say, with some amount of certainty, that there is better preparation currently underway for the training of priests and other church ministers. The training is not only for effective service abroad, but also to efficiently minister in a culturally diverse world, even at home. When all is said and done, it is hoped that cultural competence training would be a top priority among the various ways of addressing not only the effectiveness of priestly service, but also in confronting the reality of globalization, as well as in recognition of multiculturalism as an “apostolate.” This is more urgent today because, just as Seeberg et al. observe that “cultural pluralism has been called the central problem of the 20th century,” this dissertation believes that cultural competence is the challenge of the twenty-first century and beyond. And the church seems to have its finger on the real problem.

**General Definition/Description of Cultural Competence**

Different authors give different definitions, offer different descriptions, and give different interpretations and analyses of the concept of cultural competence. Besides the bandying of the concept in areas that should rightly do so, the endless repetition of the idea – like a mantra – in the wider society and outside its original narrow technical context by non-specialists, who use it vaguely or imprecisely, has thrown the meaning of the term into much debate and controversy. This makes it too complex and complicated
to understand what the concept really means. However, in as much as the reality of the idea of cultural competence as being just about everywhere speaks to the importance of the concept and reflects an increasing recognition of its centrality, the somewhat “murky” situation also keeps the debate lively and the conversation ongoing, especially in attempts to answer some of the following recurring questions: What is cultural competence—its definition and description? How can the concept be analyzed? What does it mean to various people with different experiences in different contexts, such as in cross-cultural situations? In context, what are the implications of the theoretical knowledge of cultural competence for priestly training in the twenty-first century and beyond, particularly for service abroad?

This dissertation dares the daunting task of defining, describing, and analyzing the concept of cultural competence in order to primarily answer the last question concerning the cultural competence in the training of priests. And the answer attempts to address the main research question of this study: What are the implications of the theoretical knowledge of cultural competence for priestly training, particularly for service abroad?

**Definition of Culture**

To understand cultural competence, it is important to grasp the full meaning of the word “culture” from the perspectives of select scholars. This is because “the ability to comprehend cultural diversity depends on understanding the idea of culture itself.” In spite of its long history and common usage, scholars have not been able to agree on a single and simple definition of the word, culture. Historically, it is assumed that the English anthropologist, Edward B. Tylor, was the first to define the concept in print.
According to Tylor, “Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Since that definition, hundreds of other definitions have been offered.

Nine Curt defines culture as the way of life of a people, the sum of their learned behavior patterns, attitudes, and material things. A constructivist definition of culture which was established by the sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, distinguishes between objective and subjective culture. Objective culture refers to the institutional aspects of culture, such as political and economic systems, including educational, religious and marriage institutions, and to the products of culture, such as art, music, cuisine, including history, to the extent that it traces the development of a society’s institutions. On its part, subjective culture refers to the experience of the social reality formed by a society’s institutions—in other words, the individual worldview of a society’s people. It is the subjective culture that gives us direct insight into the worldview of different groups, and it is the knowledge herein that translates into more effective interaction.

Stating their general view on the concept of culture, Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton write:

Our general view is that culture is about rationality—the relationships among individuals within groups, among groups, and between ideas and perspectives. Culture is concerned with identity, aspiration, symbolic exchange, coordination, and structures and practices that serve relational ends, such as ethnicity, ritual,
heritage, norms, meanings, and beliefs. It is not a set of primordial phenomena permanently imbedded within national or religious or other groups, but rather a set of contested attributes, constantly in flux, both shaping and being shaped by social and economic aspects of human interaction.\(^{452}\)

Wunderle describes culture “as a shared set of traditions, belief systems, and behaviors.\(^{453}\) These behaviors are shaped by many factors, including history, religion, ethnic identity, language, and nationality. Culture evolves in response to various pressures and influences and is learned through socialization; it is not inherent.”\(^{454}\)

In terms of religion, culture can be defined as:

a system of beliefs based on humanity’s attempt to explain the universe and natural phenomena, often involving one or more deities or other supernatural forces and also requiring or binding adherents to follow prescribed religious obligations. Two identifying features of religion are to some extent (a) require faith and (b) seek to organize and influence the thoughts and actions of their adherents. Because of this, some content that all religions are to some degree both unempirical and dogmatic and are therefore to be distrusted.\(^{455}\)

In an ocean of the definitions of culture, Cushner et al. ask the important question: “What do all cultures have in common? Some try to answer this question by examining the functions or purposes of culture.” Webb and Sherman, for example, describe culture in a functional way”\(^{456}\) to include the following elements: means of communication—language; power structure—status; regulation of reproduction—family; system of rules—government; written rules—laws; unwritten rules—custom; explanation
of relationship to nature—magic, myth, religion and science; conception of
time—temporality; significant lessons—history; and the manner of preservation and
entertainment—art.\textsuperscript{457} In all this, some ideas inherent in the concept are the fact that
humans construct culture; culture is shared; culture is both objective and subjective;
culture is nurtured,\textsuperscript{458} and cultures are different.

A Brief Theoretical Backdrop Regarding Cultural
Differences and [Cultural] Continuity

Explaining the theoretical background regarding cultural differences, John Dewey
speaks of the “unconscious influence of the environment,”\textsuperscript{459} and the way that our
surroundings help to shape our expectations and dispositions, including those things that
are liked or disliked by the society as a whole, which are assimilated into the mind of the
learner. In attempting to answer the question of how “the young assimilate the point of
view of the old,”\textsuperscript{460} Dewey writes:

The answer, in general formation, is: By means of the action of the environment
in calling out certain responses. The required beliefs cannot be hammered in; the
needed attitudes cannot be plastered on. But the particular medium in which an
individual exists leads him to see and feel one thing rather than another; it leads
him to have certain plans in order that he may act successfully with others; it
strengthens some beliefs and weakens others as a condition of winning the
approval of others. Thus it gradually produces in him a certain system of
behavior, a certain disposition of action. The words “environment,” “medium”
denote something more than surroundings which encompass an individual. They
denote the specific continuity of the surroundings with his own active tendencies.\footnote{461}

Although Dewey recognized the power that our surroundings and environment can have in influencing us to believe and act in certain ways and not in other ways, we must turn to the work of other theorists for a more in-depth description of how this comes about. On this note, Hewitt writes of symbolic interactionism. He argues that “human acts are meaningful acts, and we do not simply act out of particular biological motivations. Each action is mediated by the symbols we have learned, so that even those acts, such as eating, which respond to fairly concrete biological needs tend to be wrapped in layers of social meaning.”\footnote{462} This focus on symbols forms the basis of Hewitt’s argument and expresses his strong opinion that symbols came into existence as our ancestors mediated in social groups to deal with their habitat and coordinate their behavior amongst themselves. Hence he writes:

First, symbols transformed the world from a collection of stimuli into a world of objects…That is, we began to attach [names and] symbols to objects and events and to manipulate the symbols rather than the events themselves. Second, symbols made it possible for the social group itself to become part of the habitat in an effective and precise way…Third, because symbols made it possible to name others, they led to the creation of a new kind of object in the world – the self. Human beings are not simply animals with the capacity to use symbols – we are animals with selves, the only such animals in the world. Having and using a
name for self makes it possible for the individual member of a group to see himself or herself as a member.\textsuperscript{465}

Although one may not be personally convinced of the origins of the use of symbols that Hewitt presents, his emphasis on the prime importance and utility of symbols in human experience seems convincing. For instance, speaking from my own side of the Nigerian culture –the Etung culture – there is what can be called the \textit{insibiri} \textit{culture}. In a simplified description, \textit{insibiri} is a culture that is loaded with symbols, including communication between and among members who belong to a group called the \textit{Mgbe} or the \textit{Ekpe society}. It is against the backdrop of Hewitt’s take on symbols that, concerning the \textit{insibiri culture}, one can say [tha]t culture is not something locked inside peoples’ heads, but rather, is embodied in public symbols. These symbols are the means through which the members of a society communicate their worldview, value orientations and ethos to one another, even to future generations. As in the case of the said \textit{insibiri culture} in the Mgbe or Ekpe society, such symbols and many others are heuristically liberating. They are ultimately vehicles for meanings and perform practical operations in the social process. In context, because of the \textit{initiation} element in the \textit{insibiri culture}, the symbols turn boys into men and make women of outstanding qualities members of a special and highly respected society. This ushers them to the deeper world of the unconscious.

Furthermore, Hewitt gives a place for emotions in social conduct and decision making, and even points out how emotions are labeled and treated differently in different cultures. He explains how one other key aspects of symbolic interactionism is the
cognitive basis of role-making and role-taking. As meaning emerges over time for individuals in a society, they must have some grounds for determining their conduct in interactions with one another. Those grounds are cultures. And even in rather routine situations, they must be able to adapt to alternative possibilities for their own and others’ acts.\textsuperscript{464} Such adaptations are brought about by cultural competence.

Going deeper, Hewitt borrows from the phenomenologist Alfred Schutz in explaining how the stock of knowledge that people acquire is stored in typifications. He (Hewitt) explains that the idea of a typification “is itself quite simple but its implications for conduct are vast. People know what to expect of one another in particular situations because they ‘know’ that various types of people behave in typical ways under particular circumstances.”\textsuperscript{465} The expectations in the typifications are products of context or contextualization. Hewitt gives the example of the classroom. Thus:

The conduct of the professor in the classroom can be understood by students and, within limits, predicted by them, because they share a conception of how professors typically behave under varying circumstances. Their typification of the conduct of a certain person as that of a professor is what makes the conduct comprehensible to them. Their typifications consist simply of a set of standard expectations and assumptions about what they think professors usually, ordinarily, generally, and typically do. As long as what the professor is doing can be regarded as what professors do, the identity of the professor and the definition of the situation go unchallenged. That is, meaning continues to emerge in the situation – objects remain intact and organized in relation to one another.\textsuperscript{466}
Hewitt emphasizes that humans are not usually conscious of this typification, except for when the situations, or the actors in them, challenge their assumptions. It should be pointed out that this example is particularly of interest in cross-cultural interactions, where the typifications people have are frequently not met and actors struggle to find meaning and their role in relation to others. For example, students from one culture might be expecting a certain kind of behavior from the teacher according to the typifications they have developed over their lifetime, and when those typifications are challenged to the contrary, they become uncertain of both their own role and the roles of the other actors involved in the given experience.

Of particular appreciation is how Hewitt deals with the influence of culture and environment in an informative way without making it deterministic. Symbolic interactionism seems to allow room for agency, while at the same time accounting for the reality of the influence that our culture and language have on our thoughts and behavior. He explains:

It is essential that the possibility for novel and creative responses to even the most routine situations be kept in mind, for otherwise we are apt to create images of human conduct that do not accord with reality. Much of social science, including sociology, is obsessed with the goal of finding regularity and pattern in human behavior. This obsession often takes the form of a belief that everything that people do is fully and completely determined by environment, and therefore can be explained completely. Against this image, symbolic interactionists portray a human organism that does act in familiar and repetitive ways much of the time,
but that has the capacity – and uses it now and then – to behave in basically new and unfamiliar ways. We are, of course, strongly influenced by those around us, by the language they speak and the world of social objects they build for us, by their approval and disapproval, by the situations they create, and by their presentations of self. But we occasionally surprise ourselves, not to mention others, by acting in ways that suggest our disregard of others approval, our disbelief of their presentation of self, or our willingness to do things we have never done before.\textsuperscript{467}

In light of the agency humans have and the way in which we act meaningfully with the world, Hewitt makes another interesting point in lines of the fact that despite our ability to transcend the environment we were initially socialized into, much of our time is spent in replicating and recreating those roles and situations that we are used to. This observation points to continuity, which explains another implication of the interactionist position to the effect that the very routine and stable everyday reality we create maintains itself to a great extent because we believe in it and continue to remake it in our acts.\textsuperscript{468}

This theoretical background of cultural differences, which also explains the natural proclivity of humans to recreate cultures, leads us to see the influence of cultural epistemologies on how we view things, talk about them, and interact with the world. This is the profundity of the concept of culture of which Spronk explains when he writes:

Culture, especially as it operates in learning contexts, is far more profound and dynamic than these surface features alone. It involves beliefs and values, ways of
seeing the world, and ways of knowing, thinking, doing, and relating to the cosmos and to society. These beliefs, values, and practices are learned from infancy onward, and are … very much bound up in the process of defining one’s identity, or better, identities…⁴⁶⁹

Against this backdrop knowledge of theoretical background of culture and the social construction of cultural knowledge and reality, the next pages discuss specific implications of cultural variations and cross-cultural interactions. This is done through the lens of the meaning of cultural competence as essential to the understanding of cultural variations and as a skill to the effective handling of cross-cultural interactions, and effective priestly service, to put it in perspective.

**Definition of Cultural Competence**

Research on the elaborate concept of cultural competence reveals other synonyms such as: “cultural sensitivity, cultural diversity, cultural relevance, cultural awareness;”⁴⁷⁰ “ethnic competence;”⁴⁷¹ cultural proficiency, intercultural competence, diversity competence, consciousness, even multiculturalism, and so on. This concept has become ubiquitous in human services language and settings. “Though the literature from various disciplines is replete with discussions on the topic, there still exists much disagreement regarding the definition of cultural competence, as well as how to operationalize, test, and apply concepts related to cultural competence in social service settings.”⁴⁷² What is unarguable is that there are several iterations of cultural competence as described by different authors with each striving to describe the concept from a uniquely different perspective as informed by profession, area of specialty and specific interest.
Whatever names are chosen and used by researchers in talking about cultural competence, suffice it to point out that after reviewing a number of definitions and descriptions of cultural competence, the following are herein highlighted because they represent or are based on original or exemplary works. They are also selected because of their importance in effective cross-cultural experience and interaction, as well as their potential impact to the general field of human services, including cross-cultural priestly ministry.

Cross et al. offer a definition of cultural competence that establishes a solid foundation for the field. They state that, cultural competence “involves systems, agencies, and practitioners with the capacity to respond to the unique needs of population whose cultures are different than that which might be called ‘dominant’ or ‘mainstream’ American.” In other words, “Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.” In this definition, the word culture implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, beliefs, customs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group. And the word competence implies having the capacity to function effectively in diverse and multicultural situations. “Competence implies more than beliefs, attitudes and tolerance, though it also includes them. Competence also implies skills which help to translate beliefs, attitudes and orientation into action and behavior within the context of daily interaction with families and children.”
In their discussion of the concept, Cross et al. point out five essential elements that contribute to a system’s or institution’s or agency’s ability to become more culturally competent. They are: (1) Policy—valuing diversity; (2) Training—having the capacity for cultural self-assessment; (3) Resources—being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact; (4) Research—having institutionalized culture knowledge; and (5) Practice—reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity and having developed adaptations to service delivery in the context of the community served. It is important that these five essential elements be manifested at every level of an organization including policy making, administrative, and practice, as well as in the attitudes, structures, and services.

From Roberts et al., “Cultural competence refers to a program’s ability to honor and respect those beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes and behaviors both of families who are clients and the multicultural staff who are providing services. In doing so, it incorporates these values at the level of policy, administration and practice.” All “this often requires the re-examination of mission statements; policies and procedures; administrative practices; staff recruitment; hiring and retention; professional development and in-service training; translation and interpretation processes” to mention a few.

In its May 2004 summit, the Oregon Department of Education defined cultural competence as a developmental process occurring at individual and system levels that evolves and is sustained over time. Noteworthy in this process is the fact that striving to achieve cultural competence is a dynamic, ongoing, developmental process that requires a long-term commitment. This definition also recognizes that individuals begin
with specific lived experiences and biases, and that working to accept multiple world views is a difficult choice and task.

Furthermore, referring to the concept of cultural competence as intercultural competence which require intercultural skillset, Dan Landis, et al. state that “the intercultural skillset includes the ability to analyze interaction, predict misunderstanding, and fashion adaptive behavior.” In general terms, intercultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. As a primary goal of diversity initiative, central to the many benefits of cultural competence is that developing the skills in all settings creates understanding, makes for a level playing field, and guarantees effective recruitment and retention in the workplace. It also enables a harmonious management of diverse workforce, productivity of multicultural teams, marketing across cultures, and the development of a climate of respect for the uniqueness of one another. And in a cross-cultural priestly context, cultural competence brings about effective and respectful methods of evangelization, especially through inculturation.

A voice from the Diversity Training University International (DTUI), Vaughn states that “Cultural competence refers to an ability to successfully negotiate cross-cultural differences in order to accomplish practical goals” and the acquisition of the skills therein enable people to interact and work more effectively in culturally diverse settings. In context, the goal of cultural competence is not a selfish one, as in dating someone who speaks a different language. Rather, it is a socially responsible one, as in
trying to create a more inclusive society. It is also a collaborative goal, which implies trying to work as a member on a cross-cultural team.

The National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) emphasizes that cultural competence requires that organizations and institutions do the following:

- Have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.
- Have the capacity to: (1) value diversity: Which emphasizes appreciation for the ways in which cultural differences can create value in organization, institutions, and the society at large. In practical terms it is not sufficient to merely tolerate people of different backgrounds and viewpoints, but differences should be considered as strengths; (2) conduct a cultural self-assessment; (3) manage the dynamics of differences: This means being conscious of the dynamics when people from different cultures interact. Diversity can cause conflict and force individuals out of their comfort zones, but it need not cause division and discord; (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge: The challenge here is that the importance of such knowledge must be emphasized by those at the top of the organization, and it should be evident in the group’s policies and practices; and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of the community they serve: This calls service delivery to reflect an understanding of cultural diversity. In other words, service providers should move beyond theory into practice by carrying
out changes to meet the needs of their diverse clients or patients—in the medical field.

- Incorporate the above values, principles, and capacities in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery and involved systematically consumers, key stakeholders and communities. These emphases are what make the difference between a group that merely preaches diversity and a group that implements, practices and lives out what all that is required.

From the stated myriads of definitions, it is obvious that there is hardly any one definition of cultural competence that is all-encompassing or all-embracing. Rather, definitions of the concept have evolved from diverse perspectives and interests, as well as needs of federal statutes and programs, private sector organizations, professions and academic settings. Notice that some definitions emphasize awareness, knowledge and skills needed to interact with people of different cultures, while others focus on attitudes and understanding. However, the core concepts and principles espoused remain constant as they are viewed as enjoying universal application—across multiple systems and general fields of human interaction. These core concepts mandate that organizations, institutions and individuals must have the ability to: (1) value diversity and similarities among all peoples; (2) appreciate multiple perspectives; (3) understand and effectively respond to cultural differences; (4) engage in an ongoing cultural self-assessment especially at the individual level; (5) make adaptations to the delivery of services and enabling supports; and (6) institutionalize cultural knowledge. It is against the backdrop of the ability to engage in an ongoing cultural self-assessment that Tervalon
and Murray-Garcia’s definition of cultural competence makes sense. In their view, cultural competence is best defined from the perspective of humility, which implies it as not being a discrete endpoint but as a commitment and an active engagement in a lifelong process that individuals enter into on an ongoing basis.  

As noted above, because cultural competence is closely associated with diversity, it is also called *diversity competence*. Diversity means different things to different people. For some, diversity is all about “managing” race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and so on. The term has evolved to include concepts focusing on organizational cultures and the intersection of power or power-relation, structure, and including the perspectives of the under-represented, non-dominant groups in organizations to ensure they have a voice. Put in the words of Norris & Lofton, “diversity is used to build communication.” In this way, it encourages the process of inclusive organizations.

Based on the perspective of *objective culture*, *diversity* is further described as cultural differences in values, beliefs, and behaviors learned and shared by groups of interacting people defined by nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, economic status, education, profession, religion, organizational affiliation and any other groupings that generate identifiable patterns.” This definition is consistent with those of other writers, who characterize diversity as “differences in people based on their various identifications with group membership…a process of acknowledging differences through action,” and appreciating it. Doing so should be a cause for celebrating, valuing, and “harnessing the rainbow.”
While some unsubstantiated arguments hold that some people are born with cultural competence, the contrary argument enjoys abundant evidence to the effect that cultural competence is developed and can be learned. This means examining our biases and prejudices, developing cross-cultural skills, searching for role models or mentors, and spending as much time as possible both in another culture and with other people who share a passion for cultural competence. Hence, cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period of time. Because of this evolvement, individuals, organizations, and institutions are always at various levels of awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills along the cultural competence continuum.

**Brief Definition for this Study**

A definition of cultural competence that suits the context of this study is offered by Joseph, S. Gallegos, et al. In their view, “Cultural competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each.” Among other things, this definition holds the potential for transformative and balanced growth, which leads to “the cultural production of the educated person.” Furthermore, in some sense, with the knowledge to recognize differences in identity, and the ability to navigate through all the differences by respectfully and effectively responding to people, cultural competence can also lead to “cultural liberty.” With cultural liberty, through the availability of resources and choices, a person can attain full human development. And to the extent that
the relationship, the interrelation or the correlation between cultural competence and cultural liberty – particularly in the church context – has not been sufficiently explored, cultural competence is “an uncharted dimension of human development,” even as it is an essential aspect of priestly training and effective ministry.

Finally, based upon review of relevant literature, and following the general notion of the concept, this research defines cultural competence as having the knowledge to understand differences and the ability to interact effectively with people both of one’s native culture and of different cultures in more than one area of life such as: religious traditions, human resources, government agencies, healthcare professions, educational institutions, learning abilities, disabilities, sexual orientation, and so on. This description is used as the working operational definition for this dissertation.

**Brief Historical Background to Cultural Competence in U.S. Education**

The term *multicultural competence*, first surfaced in a mental health publication by psychologist, Paul Pedersen at least a decade before the term cultural competence became popular in academic discourses and other culture-related conversations. Explaining the historical background of the concept in US education, it has been observed that with the larger population of minorities and racial integration during the 1960s and 1970s, the public school systems of the United States had to grapple with issues and the attendant challenges of cultural sensitivity. Grappling with the situation was born the idea of multicultural competence. Incidentally, most teachers in public school systems came from white, middle class backgrounds. And most of the teachers were educated, primarily English-speaking, and mainly from the Western European
cultures. They often had trouble trying to communicate with speakers of limited English proficiency, let alone people of vastly different value systems, and normative behaviors from that of Anglo-European culture. Out of this environment came the need to train educators and others in the area of cultural competence so as to provide new teachers with the background and skills to work effectively with children of all backgrounds and social classes.

Today, with the growing diversity of the student body in US public schools, colleges and universities, it is increasingly imperative that teachers have and continually develop cultural competence that enables them to respond to, connect and effectively interact with their students. To take a case in point that necessitates the need for cultural competence, observably, the achievement gap between cultural minority and majority students suggests that some sort of communication disconnect often occurs in minority classrooms because of cultural mismatch between teachers and students. This prevents positive and productive educational growth for both parties. The hope is that the contrary might be the case, provided the educator is a culturally competent communicator.

Over the last few years, scholars have increasingly shown interest in the relationship between learning, reading, schema, and culture. For instance, people’s schema depends on their social location, which as Anderson explains, includes a reader’s age, sex, race, religion, nationality, and occupation, amongst other factors. Considering schemata determine how people understand, interpret, explain, analyze, and apply everything in and to their world. So it is clear that background and experience really do affect the learning and teaching processes, and how each should be approached in
context. In short, Anderson says, “The schema that will be brought to bear on a text depends upon the reader’s culture.” More simply, he describes a person’s schema as their “organized knowledge about the world.”

In considering the role of schema, one of an educator’s principal functions in teaching, particularly with literacy, is to “bridge the gap between what the learner already knows and what he needs to know before he can successfully learn the task at hand.” This bridging of gap is important because according to Staton, successful communication between instructor and pupil occurs when teachers and students come to “share understanding.” Teachers must remember that they are “cultural workers, not neutral professionals using skills on a culturally detached playing field.”

Generally, not only in the United States, but all over the world, teachers come in contact with a wide variety of subcultures as they educate future citizens of the world – including in the seminaries where future priests are trained. Therefore, teachers are at the forefront of the challenge to bring diverse groups together within a larger society to interact effectively and understandably. Some of the issues confronting teachers that should be or are best handled differently within different cultures and communities are, but not limited to: student learning challenges/disabilities, behavioral problems, attitudes and dispositions, drug addiction, child abuse, mental health, and above all, economic situation or poverty.
Brief Summary of Various Theoretical Perspectives on Cultural Competence in Select Fields

An increasing number of fields, disciplines, and professions are finding the need to discuss “cultural competence,” or their ability to respond to cultural influences and differences, especially in recent years. Particularly, the service-oriented professions that cater to international audiences have found that to be effective in their delivery, the culture of the recipient and the competence of the caregiver/service-provider need to be taken into consideration. That is why one hears of something like “multicultural counseling competencies,” which focus on communication, including semantics and body-language; online learning with instructional designs tailored toward learners’ or students’ learning environment; and lately, there is much talk about pastoral competencies, and so on. All this is in response to the need for professionals to better deliver services to clients from different cultural backgrounds.

As seen throughout the literature, theorists have different notions of what cultural competence means. Against this backdrop, the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) observes that “there is no one definition of cultural competence. Definitions of cultural competence have evolved from diverse perspectives, interests, and needs and are incorporated in state legislation, Federal statutes and programs, private sector organizations and academic settings.” Recently and as a matter of urgency, diversity professionals in all walks of life are discovering the value and practical implications of the concept of cultural competence and are describing it in context, as the next pages of this study attest in select fields.
The Field of Health Care

“Many physicians give neutral, harmless ‘medication’ to people who insist they’ve got to have something to make them sleep. To lots of folks the act of swallowing a pill, even though (unknown to them) the pill has no medication, makes them feel better.” This statement captures one of the ways physicians practice cultural competence in the field of healthcare. They listen carefully to the patient in order to understand what he or she wants so as to feel better. Thus, insofar as what the patient wants in order to feel better is not against medical ethics and is not harmful to the patient—in the short and long run—the health care field determines that the action can be carried out by the medical practitioner for the good of the patient based on his or her beliefs. This is what it means to practice teamwork by working with the patient.

It is a fact that cultural competence for all health care providers in any practice setting is especially desirable in today’s team-oriented health care environment. Purnell makes the important observation that “to meet the needs of a multicultural society, health care in the new millennium stresses teamwork in providing culturally sensitive and competent care to improve client outcomes. Publications addressing the future predict an increasingly diverse workforce.” Generally, “Cultural competence in health care describes the ability of systems to provide care to patients with diverse values, beliefs and behaviors, including tailoring delivery to meet patients’ social, cultural, and linguistics needs,” as well as personal choice of physician and preferred place for medical attention—to stretch it a little.
Since the health care profession has within it many fields, so are there definitions and descriptions of cultural competence, based on understanding and tailored to meet the expectations of the specific field. The field of mental health care defines the concept as “The set of behaviors, attitudes and skills, policies and procedures that come together in a system, agency or individuals to enable mental health caregivers to work effectively and efficiently in cross/multicultural situations.”507 Strengthening this definition, the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Services, states that cultural competence includes: “Attaining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable administrators and practitioners within system of care to provide effective care for diverse populations, that is, to work within the person’s values and reality conditions.”508 This implies that cultural competence acknowledges and incorporates variance in normative acceptable behaviors, beliefs, and values in determining an individual’s mental wellness and or illness, and incorporating those variables into assessment and treatment.

From where they stand, The American Association for Health Education defines cultural competence as the ability of an individual to understand and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and mores that differ across cultures, and to consider and respond appropriately to these differences in planning, implementing, and evaluating health education and promotion programs and interventions.509 The National Alliance for Hispanic Health views cultural competence as a proficiency when providers and systems seek to do more than provide unbiased care as they value the positive role culture can play in a person’s health and well-being.510 Corroborating the ongoing definitions,
National Medical Association describes the concept as the application of cultural knowledge, behaviors, and interpersonal and clinical skills that enhances a provider’s effectiveness in managing patient care.\textsuperscript{511}

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Developmental Disabilities define the term cultural competence as meaning services, supports and other assistance that are conducted or provided in a manner that is responsive to the beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes, language and behaviors of individuals who are receiving services, and in a manner that has the greatest likelihood of ensuring their maximum participation in the program.\textsuperscript{512}

**Evaluation Field**

In evaluation, cultural competence is described as a systematic, responsive inquiry that is actively cognizant, understanding, and appreciative of the cultural context in which the evaluation takes place; that frames and articulates the epistemology of the evaluative endeavor; that employs culturally and contextually appropriate methodology; and that uses stakeholder-generated, interpretive means to arrive at the results and further uses the findings.\textsuperscript{513} Affirming the significance of cultural competence, the American Evaluation Association (AEA) acknowledges that the diversity of cultures within the United States guarantees that virtually all evaluators will work outside familiar cultural contexts at some time in their careers. Therefore, cultural competence in evaluation theory and practice is critical for the profession and for the greater good of society. Hence, in its guiding principle, AEA states that in order to ensure recognition, accurate interpretation,
and respect of diversity, evaluators should ensure that the members of the evaluation team collectively demonstrate cultural competence.\textsuperscript{514}

**The Field of Psychology**

American Psychological Association multicultural guidelines in education, training, research, and practice of psychology state the following six expectations, as a matter of policy, in the context of cultural competence: (1) Psychologists are encouraged to recognize that, as cultural beings, they may hold attitudes and beliefs that can detrimentally influence their perceptions of and interactions with individuals who are ethnically and racially different from themselves. (2) Psychologists are encouraged to recognize the importance of multicultural sensitivity/responsiveness, knowledge, and understanding about ethnically and racially different individuals. (3) As educators, psychologists are encouraged to employ the constructs of multiculturalism and diversity in psychological education. (4) Culturally sensitive psychological researchers are encouraged to recognize the importance of conducting culture-centered and ethical psychological research among persons from ethnic, linguistic, and racial minority backgrounds. (5) Psychologists strive to apply culturally–appropriate skills in clinical and other applied psychological practices. And (6) Psychologists are encouraged to use organizational change processes to support culturally informed organizational (policy) development and practices.\textsuperscript{515}

**The Field of Liberal Arts**

Studies carried out by professionals in the field of liberal arts examine the level of sensitivity, and exhibition of cultural competence for faculty at liberal arts institutions
within higher education. For instance in the study by Helms, et al., the dependent or outcome variables were the perceived and actual developmental level of cultural sensitivity. While the independent or predictor variables consisted of: Nationality/Ethnic background, Gender, Age range, Educational level, Graduate Professional Preparation, Level of Multicultural Skills, Awareness and Knowledge, Discipline, Work and Life Experiences both in and outside of the Collegiate Environment, Length of Time Spent in Another Culture, and Location of Formative Years. To determine the level of cultural competence in the study, the findings include four components: “preparation in the area of cultural competence in graduate school regardless of the discipline, on-going cultural competency training and skill development/enhancement once hired as a faculty member, the incorporation of campus events centralizing around the concept of culture for the community, and faculty mentoring.” Each of these components, in one way or another, contributes to the acquisition of cultural knowledge and in the exercise of cultural sensitivity by liberal arts professionals. The recommendation from the study is to conduct this kind of study in all liberal arts institutions among both full-time and part-time faculty as well as graduate students who serve as teaching assistants.

The Field of Social Work

“The notion that cultural competence is crucial to sound social work practice is widely accepted in the profession. However, there exists a gap between the achievement of the goal of developing culturally competent practitioners through social work education and the ability to measure such competence.” In spite of the existing gap, in the social work profession, the concept is defined along the lines of the ability of
professionals to function successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin.\(^5\)

The Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) acknowledges the fact of “social work’s increasing focus on spiritual competency as one expression of cultural competency.”\(^6\) In an article entitled, “Developing Cultural Competency With Latter-Day Saints Clients: A Strength-Based Perspective,” Walton et al. utilize “a strengths perspective to help social workers better understand the unique cultural and religious dimensions of effective practice with LDS Church (i.e. Mormon) clients…The article concludes by offering suggestions to enhance the cultural sensitivity of service provided to this growing population.”\(^7\) One of the most important stated implications for practice is that “information regarding religious beliefs and practices of LDS clients will facilitate a more culturally competent social work practice.”\(^8\)

Thus, to the extent that religion is increasingly accepted and addressed by social workers, cultural competence is important for social workers, and interventions should be congruent with clients’ beliefs, values, and practices. And there should be continuous learning and self-reflection about one’s own attitudes and beliefs, especially when they may differ from the clients.\(^9\)

**Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL)**

In the specific area of teaching English as a second language, cultural competence demands the instructor’s ability to do the following: (1) Identify and understand their own culture(s); (2) Effectively and positively communicate with others in culturally
appropriate ways to better meet student needs; (3) Understand the effects their students’ first languages and cultures have on their acquisition of English; and (4) Create positive multicultural environments for learning and understanding.\textsuperscript{524}

**The Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)**

Closely connected to Instructional Design and Technology (IDT), The Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) does include in their Code of Ethics two standards that relate to encouraging cultural diversity in (a) the media being created and (b) their publications and conferences. Here, one of the most acceptable and frequently used definitions of cultural competence identifies three components: (a) knowledge, (b) attitudes and/or beliefs, and (c) skills.\textsuperscript{525}

**Military Field**

In the military field, cultural competence is mostly viewed in the context of mission performance and effectiveness. Referring to the concept as cross-cultural competence (CCC), Ross defines it as “the expertise which enables an individual in the military to perform in any number of cultures to achieve organizational goals (in contrast to more specific regional knowledge and language skills).”\textsuperscript{526} This implies the “development of knowledge and skill through experience and training that results in a complex schema of cultural differences, perspective-taking skills, and interpersonal skills, all of which an individual can flexibly (or adaptively) apply through the willingness to engage in new environments even in the face of considerable ambiguity, through self-monitoring and through self-regulation to support mission success in a dynamic context.”\textsuperscript{527}
For Healey, cultural competency is “the appropriate level of cultural awareness and language skills needed to successfully plan and execute military operations in a specific foreign culture.” In analyzing the development of the skill in military operations, Healey writes about the different levels of cultural competence hierarchy, which he itemizes in the order of beginning starting points as: data, information, knowledge, and understanding. Here, data is defined as “Signals which have been processed, correlated, integrated, evaluated, and interpreted in any way.” Information is data processed into or displayed into a format understandable to the people who must use them. Knowledge is analyzed data that provides meaning and value, such as cultural variations and manifestations, which include behaviors, values, and cognition. And understanding is knowledge that has gone through a synthesis and can be or is applied to a specific situation to gain a deeper level of awareness of that situation. “Each level of the Cultural Competence Hierarchy represents different skill sets as well as levels of education and training. It will aid in determining the required level of cultural competency relevant to rank, billet, and military specialty when conducting military operations overseas.”

As in other contexts, there are elements of culture that apply to military planning and operations which have the capacity to affect military operations in either way. “They include religion, ethnicity, language, customs, values, practices, perceptions and assumptions, and driving causes like economy and security. All these factors, to the degree that they constitute the ensemble of the knowledge of cultural competence in the
military field, they affect the thinking and motivation of the individual or group and make up the cultural terrain of military operations.\footnote{531}

**General Field of Service Delivery**

In the field of service delivery, cultural competence embraces the principles of equal access and non-discriminatory practices. It is achieved by identifying and understanding the needs and help-seeking behaviors of individuals and families. The best practice is driven by client preferred choices, not by culturally blind or culturally free interventions.\footnote{532}

**Individual, Family, and Community Engagement**

Cultural competence recognizes the self-autonomy of the individual, despite the fact that the person belongs to a family and lives in a community. It also seeks to know in order to appreciate the cultural difference in the definition of family. This is important because family as defined by each culture is usually the primary or starting point of any interaction in a community. And speaking of community, cultural competence extends the concept of self-determination to the community. It allows communities to determine their own needs. Members are full partners in decision making in a spirit of collaboration and deliberation. This is called community engagement. Such engagement results in the reciprocal transfer of knowledge and skills among all collaborators and partners.\footnote{533}

**Missionary Field or Ecclesiastical Context**

Even though churches and missionaries have a long history of existence in native cultures and going into foreign cultures to work, there is no handy definition of cultural competence in this field or in this strict context. However, one source suggests the
following idea as a demonstration of cultural competence, which entails “A strong respect for spirituality, whether traditional (prior to European contact), Christian (resulting from European contact), or a combination of both…” Based on this suggestion, it can be said that cultural competence in ecclesiastical context or missionary/mission field in some sense speaks to a blending of traditions or religious syncretism, wherein traditional spiritual practices, and/or mainstream faiths may coexist.

Very importantly, both or all spiritual traditions should be presented as alternative realities not as the only way, and people become members or adherents by choice through informed decision and formal free request. On this note of freedom of choice, the Catholic Church writes:

Those who are ready to receive the gospel message are to be instructed in the truths of the faith so that, if they freely request it, they may receive baptism (c. 865.). Freedom in embracing the Catholic faith has been a sacred principle from earliest times and was explicitly stated in canon 1351 of the 1917 code…There is no need of force or injury, for religion cannot be forced; to move the will, words rather than blows are to be used…Ando so we keep no one against his will—for one who lacks devotion and faith is useless to God…There is nothing so voluntary as religion; for if the heart of one who offers sacrifice is turned away, religion is gone it is nothing…”

These definitions and descriptions of cultural competence from select fields show that professions and professionals are recognizing the impact cultural issues can have in human interaction. Observably, even though the fields emphasize specific elements of
their definition—customized to their profession, each has a common idea of what it means to be culturally competent, which is effective interaction. Altogether, the various perspectives makes it unarguably clear that cultural competence is becoming increasingly necessary for work, home, community and social life, not to mention its necessity in cross-cultural experience and missionary work in different cultures, whether it is for long or short-term.

At the end of piecing together the ideas in this chapter of review of literature, suffice it to say that the endeavor agrees with Erik Hofstee’s observation to the effect that reviewing secondary literature could be the most time-consuming, painstaking, challenging and even an overwhelming section of a dissertation to research and write. However, as an important part of a dissertation, extensive reading of secondary literature is worth the time and trouble because, “you’ll learn a lot and you’ll get many ideas that will be useful elsewhere in your dissertation.”536
Notes


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256. Mirus, "Vatican II on Priestly Training."

257. Paul VI, Optatam Totius, no. 3.

258. I b i d ., n o . 2 .

259. I b i d ., n o . 3 .


261. Paul VI, Optatam Totius, no. 4.

262. I b i d ., n o . 5 .
263. Troolin, "The Document of Vatican II - Optatam Totius."
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266. Troolin, "The Document of Vatican II - Optatam Totius."
270. Troolin, "The Document of Vatican II- Optatam Totius."
271. Mirus, "Vatican II on Priestly Training."
273. Ibid., no. 15.
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291. Ibid.

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297. Ibid., no. 38.


301. Paul VI, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 11.
302. John Paul II, Pastores Dabo Vobis (PDV), no. 43.


305. Ibid., nos. 7-8.

306. Ibid., no. 8.

307. Ibid., no. 36.

308. Ibid., nos. 25-26.

309. Ibid., no. 44.

310. Costello, Forming a Priestly Identity, 89.


312. Ibid., no. 44.

313. Costello, Forming a Priestly Identity, 8.

314. John Paul II, Pastores Dabo Vobis (PDV), no. 44.

315. Ibid., no. 48.


317. John Paul II, Pastores Dabo Vobis (PDV), no. 44.


319. John Paul II, Pastores Dabo Vobis (PDV), no. 70.

320. Costello, Forming a Priestly Identity, 93.

321. Academic Centre, Labels: Theology, "The Summary of Pastores Dabo Vobis of Pope John Paul II."


324. I b i d . , 1 .


327. I b i d .

328. I b i d . , 2 8 0 .


343. *Ibid*.


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353. *Ibid*.


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363. Ibid.

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425. Allen, Jr., "What's this 'new evangelization' thing, anyway?"

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CHAPTER III

FACETS OF UNDERSTANDING: AN ANALYSIS OF GRANT WIGGINS AND JAY McTIGHE’S SIX FACETS OF UNDERSTANDING AS A PART OF THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

What is understanding and how does it differ from knowledge? How can we determine the big ideas worth understanding? Why is understanding an important teaching goal, and how do we know when students have attained it? How can we create rigorous and engaging curriculum that focuses on understanding and leads to improved student performance in today’s high-stakes, standards-based environment?

These questions drive Wiggins’ and McTighe’s original contribution to the subject of understanding in educational discourse in *Understanding by Design*. Subsequent to its original publication, the authors solicited feedback from thousands of educators and other people equally interested in the subject who had used the book, and then used that feedback to substantially revise the work to better meet the need for teaching for understanding. Consistent with its original aim, the revised text, as published in 2005, aims to help in the design of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Wiggins and McTighe argue that familiar coverage and activity-based approaches to curriculum design fall short. Instead, a focus on six facets of understanding can enrich student learning, and by transferability or application, can improve relationships, as well as broaden the meaning of cultural competence.
In this book, the authors not only discuss the evasiveness of the term “understanding,” but more importantly, develop what is known as “Six Facets of Understanding”: Explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge. These key notions take on the task of analyzing the concept of understanding. It is against the backdrop of these ideas that this chapter analyzes what can be called the pedagogy of understanding. The hope is that with the combination of provocative ideas, thoughtful analysis, and tested approaches, the treatment of understanding in this dissertation would offer formators in seminaries, who teach future priests, a clear path to the development of curriculum that ensures better learning and promises better preparation for priestly service.

Assessing understanding might be the most complex process an educator can undertake. “The challenge of assessment is no less than figuring out what a learner really knows, whether he or she can apply what she or he knows, but also, where he or she needs to go next.” Not only as a result of the challenge of assessment, but also frustrated by the bandying about of the term, “Wiggins and McTighe go on to say that two generations of curriculum writers have been warned to avoid the term “understanding’ in their frameworks.”

Generally, as a noun, understanding is the ability to comprehend something. As an adjective, it means a sympathetic awareness of other people’s feelings given their unique experiences and respective situations. Also known as intellection, understanding has been said to be a psychological process related to an abstract or physical object, such as person, situation, or message whereby one is able to think about it and use a concept to
deal adequately with that object. As a relational concept, understanding is a relation between the knower and an object of understanding. It implies abilities and dispositions with respect to an object of knowledge sufficient to support intelligent behavior. In a sense, to understand something is to have conceptualized, imagined, and pictured it with your mind’s eye to a given measure.

According to The Advanced Placement Program for Students, (ALPS), in both formal and informal settings, “Knowledge, skill, and understanding are the stock in trade of education.” To that end, in a classroom of teacher and students; in related settings for instruction; over the radio; on television sets; in organizational briefings; in formal and informal meetings; in situations of parents talking to their children about life; in books, and in daily conversations between people, the word *understanding* is far from a rarity. It is used by just about everyone and found just about everywhere. The ambiguous and ubiquitous nature of the word warrants the following questions: What does *understanding* generally mean? Does the meaning of *understanding* need to be contextualized?

Because it’s so difficult to agree on what understanding is or means – what it looks like, what learners, travelers, and people of multiple cultural experiences should be able to say or do to prove that they in fact understand, the distinction must be made between *knowing* and *understanding*. Explaining the point in the specific context of understanding, Ip (2003) writes:

To understand is “to comprehend,” and to comprehend is “to take in” or embrace.

Seeing solitary facts in relation to a general principle is the essence of
An understanding is a generalized meaning or insight. And insight is a basic sense of, or feeling for, relationships; it is a meaning or discernment. A tested generalized insight is an understanding; it is a meaning of discernment that one may profitably apply to several or even many similar, but not necessarily identical, situations or processes. The most valuable insights or those confirmed by enough similar cases to be generalized into an understanding. A student understands any object, process, ideas or fact if he/she sees how it can be used to fulfill some purpose or goal. The outcomes of a collection of understandings are generalizations, theories, generalized insights, general ideas, concepts, principles, rules and/or laws.\(^{542}\)

As well-thought out as Ip’s ideas about understanding might be, somewhat difficult to accept is his conclusion about the outcomes of understanding as generating generalizations. Because times change, situations evolve, experiences are different, people are unique, and cultures are not the same, generalizing understanding amounts to imposing preconceived ideas on new situations and people therein, especially in a cultural context. In this context, one size does not fit all. Dealing with cultural settings demands a case-by-case approach. For example, if one is going to be effective, one should not import or apply one’s own understanding of an idea, a concept, or a practice directly from one’s own culture to another. Such unbundled importation and un-scrutinized application without adaptation falls short of the expectation of cultural competence.
Expounding further on the distinction between knowledge and understanding, the Advanced Placement Program for Students, (ALPS) observes that, very often, we feel assured a student has knowledge when the student can reproduce it when asked. The student can tell us what Anthony did, where Nigeria lies, what the Magna Carta was for, what the Law of Gravity is. But understanding proves more subtle. “In a phrase, understanding is the ability to think and act flexibly with what one knows.”

Everyone wants to understand the meaning, significance, and use of what knowledge they have acquired either from a classroom through formal education or through the experiences they have gathered in the course of life. In this endeavor, it is observed that truth is simple, but understanding is complex. The tremendous, essential realities may lay in front of our eyes at every moment, but our eyes are shut, and our heads are twisted away. Why? Because we do not understand. We live on the surface, perceiving reflections and images, reacting to events at different levels of emotions, and striving to make sense—striving to understand. True as this striving might be, the stronger truth is stated by the Huzanity School, located in Anchorage, Alaska, U.S.A.:

Understanding is simple, universal, and under-utilized capacity, which we all have. There is no continuity between ignorance and understanding. Ignorance is the domination of a single truth, which subjugates all others. It holds tight to its minimal and narrow conceptions. Understanding liberates from bondage to appearances. It breaks shells, reveals secrets, creates possibilities…knits together the torn fabrics our experience.
In part and in whole, the thinking of Huzanity School about understanding as an intrinsic component of humans speaks to how this dissertation, for the most part, sees and understands Wiggins and McTighe’s six facets of understanding. They belong to the unpacking of the meaning and implications of multiculturalism, as broadly conceived. Therefore, this research argues that understanding is part of human nature. It is founded in a commitment to challenge the fixity in one’s perception, which can sometimes produce illusory images, create more than yawning gaps, bring about insensitivity, and make a culture of distance. With understanding comes the penetration of distinct entities, and the possibility of viewing from every perspective. It is not an overly tedious or an over challenging task. It is not even an intellectual endeavor. It is a transformative process, in which one reaches towards, embraces, and, at least for a moment, becomes the alien being. The rigidity of narrow formulations softens, and dissolves. The schematic division between subjects is healed…Bringing understanding to action, in the real world of relationship, art, society, is a nobler task; and without this, even the magical process of understanding is barren.⁵⁴⁵

Analyzing Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe’s Six Facets of Understanding

In Understanding by Design, Wiggins and McTighe lay out a model or conceptual framework for instructional designers. Arguably, this model is not only well suited for the purely academic community, it also belongs to other areas of learning and human interaction, including the pastoral field, in context, priestly service in and across cultures. As the crux of the discourse in this chapter, the discussion seeks to itemize and elucidate some facets in the overarching concept of understanding, which is considered the
bedrock or foundation for the exercise of cultural competence. The analysis is done in light of Wiggins’ and McTighe’s six facets of understanding: *Explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge*. According to Henderson and Gornik these facets suggest “that understanding is not a single concept but rather a family of interrelated abilities.” Understanding and living out these six facets “makes up a mature understanding.”

**Explanation**

Explanation, also called elucidation, explication, or exposition, is a statement or account that makes something clear. It is a reasoned and reasonable account that gives justification for an action, belief, and related doings. It can also be described as a set of statements constructed to describe a set of what is considered facts which clarifies the reasons, causes, context, and consequences of those facts. By virtue of this (explanation), rules and laws are established either as original ideas or to clarify the existing ones in relation to any objects or to counter objections. In scientific or academic research, explanation is one of the purposes of research that might lead to the uncovering of new knowledge, and “argues” for the relationship among different components of a concept or aspects of the phenomenon being studied or under investigation.

Although explanations and arguments largely resemble each other in rhetoric and rhetorical use, there is a subtle distinction. Thus, while the former (explanation) tries to show *why* or *how* something is or will be, the latter (argument) attempts to show that something is, will be, or should be the case. Against this description of argument, Ralph H. Johnson states that “In logic and philosophy, an argument is an attempt to persuade
someone of something, by giving reasons for accepting a particular conclusion as evident.\textsuperscript{548} It is this close resemblance and subtle distinction between explanation and argument that is the cause of much difficulty in thinking critically about claims and assertions.

It should be pointed out that in all contexts or considerations of the term explanation, \textit{understanding} is the key; without which explanation is impossible. Therefore, mature understanding produces a good explanation, which entails providing “thorough, supported, and justifiable accounts of phenomena, facts, and data.”\textsuperscript{549} It demands the unpacking, in simple and easily understood ways, sophisticated theories, murky concepts, complex experiences, puzzling or opaque phenomena, and unclear ideas, including clarifying the happenings in an event, in knowledgeable and justified accounts. “It is understanding revealed through performance and products that clearly, thoroughly, and instructively explain how things work, what they imply, where they connect, and why they happen.”\textsuperscript{550} Hence, understanding is not just mere knowledge of facts but in depth knowledge of cause---\textit{why}, and the procedural knowledge of \textit{how}.

The element of \textit{thoroughness} in explanation involves deep thinking and systematic reflection. This is so typically in explaining an amorphous concept and when an event is subsumed under general and powerful principles. \textit{Connectivity} is an aspect of explanation which underscores Dewey’s statement to the effect that to understand something “is to see it in its \textit{relation} to other things: to note how it operates or functions, what consequences follow from it.”\textsuperscript{551} So, in explanation, one goes beyond the information given to make inferences, connections, and associations, all of which should
be able to create allusions. Powerful images, illustrative examples, insightful models are the results of this understanding since they have the potential of binding together seemingly desperate facts into a coherent, consistent, comprehensive, and illuminating account. With this, “We can predict heretofore unsought for or unexamined results, and we can illuminate strange or unexamined experiences.”

Therefore, for a student to reveal an understanding of things, such as experience, a lesson taught by the teacher, a concept, or even his/her own story, such student must be able to give reasons and provide relevant, compelling, and telling evidence to support the claims. Hence, understanding in this sense goes beyond true, borrowed opinions. And stating other people’s point of views or repeating mere hearsays will not suffice. For an understanding of a subject, then, there must be an invested effort and proper investigation of facts in order to make a good explanation that portrays a sense of ownership of the account. This way of showing understanding is the reason why, when calling upon students to reveal their understanding, the following verbs are often used: explain, substantiate, corroborate, justify, confirm, predict support, verify, and prove.

Most notable in the instructional implications of this type of understanding, as described herein, is that, as the first facet of understanding, explanation “suggests that we deliberately seek a better balance between knowledge transmission (through the teacher and text) and student theory building and testing.” This implication calls for building lessons in the academic curriculum of a class/course around overarching and essential questions, issues, and problems that demand student theories and explanations. In context of priestly training, such questions and issues may include the following: vocation,
Celibacy, family, Christianity, mission, missionary, culture, cross-cultural pastoral experience, authority, obedience, and so on. This list makes up some of the questions and issues that can benefit from explanation to show how a young clergy or seminarian understands them and even asks questions of why to broaden his understanding—before he commits. This is important.

**Interpretation**

In common parlance, the word interpretation refers to action of explaining the meaning of something, such as an idea or data. It is an action of rendering in clearer terms what needs to be explained based on a person’s understanding. In education, interpretation means many things. “It can mean the translation of languages, perceptions about poems or novels, how a person feels about a historic building, or thinks about a scientific theory.”

It is also described as a “communicative process, designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage, through involvement with objects, artifacts, landscapes and sites.” In stressing this meaning of interpretation, the point must be made that it is not simply a process of presenting information. A communicative strategy is required, and is used to translate information to people, from the perspective and technical or professional language of the expert, in this case, the teacher.

In their second facet of understanding, *interpretation*, which can also be called the “interpretive” facet since, in one sense of understanding, all of our knowledge is interpretive as we try to make sense of the world, Wiggins and McTighe begin by making the argument that the main object of interpretation is understanding, not
explanation. Understanding occurs when we organize essentially contestable but “incompletely verifiable propositions in a disciplined way.”\textsuperscript{667} Explaining this, Wiggins and McTighe write that “A principal means for doing that organizing is through narrative: by telling a story of what something is about”\textsuperscript{558} This requires a wealth of experience that enables the telling of meaningful stories; offering apt translations; providing a revealing historical or personal dimension to ideas and events; and making the object of understanding personal or accessible through images, anecdotes, analogies, and models.\textsuperscript{559} But in order to choose a more helpful story to tell, the following questions are important for reflection: What does it mean? Why does it matter? What of it? What does it illustrate or illuminate in human experience? How does it relate to me? How would the students relate to it? Does it make sense? What sense?\textsuperscript{560}

For instance, to create an understanding through interpretation, a grandfather or grandmother tells stories about the Depression to illustrate the importance of saving money for a rainy day. Or, an international priest shares his experience of culture shock to impress the message of cultural differences and how even an unintentional cultural misstep could cost you your mission. These kinds of stories from good storytellers are very enlightening and engaging, which makes it possible for people/students to make sense of the stories of others through interpretation, decoding, translation, and empathetic application. Because the stories are not just scattered facts and abstract ideas, they help us prepare, find meaning and make predictions. It is against the backdrop of good stories of life and lived experiences that define the human condition that Wiggins and McTighe write:
Stories help us remember and make sense of our lives and the lives around us. The deepest, most transcending meanings are found, of course, in stories, parables, and myths that anchor on all religions. A story is not a diversion; the best stories make our lives more understandable and focused.\textsuperscript{561}

In the classroom of teacher and students, the challenge is how to make stories relevant to a lesson or an idea contained in a textbook using this facet of understanding, interpretation. Addressing this challenge in teaching requires bringing the text to life by revealing, through study and discussion, that the text speaks to the concerns of the students, either in the immediate circumstance or down the road. However, it must be pointed out that all understanding of a text, person, or event by means of stories or narratives are not equal in depth and breadth of insight and so do not command equal enlightenment and engagement.

Even though interpretation is closely related to explanation, two things stand out in this facet. The first thing is that, it is based on individual perception or personal perspective, which makes the action, for the most part, subjective. Second, it is a process that aims to provide the audience or students with a reflective opportunity to personally connect with an old experience, familiar idea, previous incident, or related place. This connection could be done in different ways and at different times, but what is common is that there is an opportunity to explore how the interpretation of something makes meaning to individuals. So, since interpretation affords opportunity for meaning-making, it can be said that its goal is to increase understanding. This goal explains why “There is a philosophical tradition which regards interpretation as a special way of acquiring
understanding." In this tradition – that is, the humanities – interpretation explains or displays the meaning of its object, making possible its understanding.

Generally, it can be argued that “Diverse and fluid though the use of the word interpretation is, its connection to meaning and understanding is fairly robust and general.” In the strict context of Wiggins and McTighe’s contribution, interpretation calls upon stories, narratives, and translations that provide meaning and create educational opportunities to expand understanding through ongoing meaning-making. This makes interpretation a process and a means to an end, which is understanding. And meanings bring understanding to a whole new level by transforming it. Even though meaning is subjective, and so in the eye of the beholder, the meanings we ascribe to all events, big and small, transform our understanding and perception of particular facts. The student possessing this understanding can show the significance of an event, reveal an idea’s importance, or provide an interpretation that strikes a deep chord of recognition and resonance. That is why to educate students for autonomous intellectual performance as adults; to produce students who understand and not just who know; to create a sense of empowerment and ownership of knowledge, and above all, to make students co-creators of knowledge, “we must teach them to build stories and interpretations, not just passively take in official ones. They need to see how knowledge is built ‘from the inside’…In short, students must have firsthand knowledge of the history of knowledge creation and refinement if they later are to create and refine knowledge.”
Application

Perhaps, the best way to define application is to first determine what it is not. “Application is not just accumulating knowledge…Application is not just illustration, [which] only tells us how someone else handled a similar situation…Application is not just making a passage relevant.”566 For instance, history is filled with philosophers who knew what the Bible said but failed to apply it to their lives, thereby keeping them from believing and changing. Again, today, there are many pastors, including priests, who know so much philosophy, are so versed in theology, and can quote the bible from “Genesis to Revelation,” but are far from practicing what they preach. These situations speak to the mere accumulation of knowledge that puts a premium on the ivory-tower, academic thinking. The tradition of pragmatism is against this. We need to walk the walk, not just talk the talk.

What then is application? In the view of Wiggins and McTighe, application means effectively using and adapting what we know in diverse contexts. “It is the ability to use knowledge effectively in new situations and diverse contexts.”567 It involves matching one’s idea or action to contexts. It entails knowledge of the concrete situation. Supporting this point, Gardner writes that understanding simply means “a sufficient grasp of concepts, principles, or skills so that one can bring them to bear on new problems and situations, deciding in which ways one’s present competencies can suffice and in which ways one may require new skills and knowledge.”568 In order to bring this about, a look at the following questions is important: “How and where can we use this knowledge, skill,
Application is a context dependent skill. As such, Bloom notes that
“if the situations are to involve application as we are defining it here, then they must
either be situations new to the student or situations containing new elements as compared
to the situation in which the abstract was learned…Ideally we are seeking a problem
which will test the extent to which an individual has learned to apply the abstraction in a
practical way.”
The success of this endeavor does not depend on un-scrutinized and
unreflective repetition of information learned; rather, it requires the appropriate
application of concepts and principles to questions and problems that are newly posed
and that challenge the mind to search for similar or related situations in the past that can
help in addressing the new situation.

The “applicative” facet of understanding derives its strength from the effective
use and adaptation of what we know in diverse and real contexts. It is considered
understanding to the extent that the one who understands can apply the understanding in a
new situation. “Memorizing formulae or definitions and applying them rigidly lulls the
student into a false sense of security when consideration of multiple factors or subtleties
are what is required.” True reliable and authentic understanding is revealed in effective
real-world application. Walker and Soltis call this application facet, “associative” because
“we also use our learning associatively when we link things previously learned with new
things and in new situations.” In a military context, application calls for flexibility,
which entails the ability to switch easily from one strategy to another—that is, adjusting
behaviors as the situation demands—while focusing on the desired outcome of the mission. Flexibility can also be understood in two more ways: not making or forcing people in another culture to do things the way you do and trying different ways of reaching a goal.  

Overall, application begins by knowing and understanding. It is about putting into practice what we already know and answering related questions. In education, application challenges the accumulation of knowledge by putting it into use in context to address a given situation. So, “We show our understanding of something by using it, adapting it, and customizing it.” A good application is said to have three parts: First, it is an explanation that ties it directly to the text; second, it is a bridge that explains the relationship between the text and a given situation to make the text relevant; and third, it has the ability to show, or it is capable of showing, one how to apply the text to a personal situation or to someone else’s situation. Because the latter aspect of applying application to someone else’s situation is somewhat difficult to do, it can be called meta-application. And it is this latter understanding of application that cultural competence requires, even as it is highly expected of priestly service in all cultures.

**Perspective**

In common language, perspective is a point of view based on a person’s understanding of a subject, concept, or an idea. It is an expression of a personal opinion or subjective evaluation of relative significance. Perspective also speaks to the relationship of aspects of a subject to each other and to the whole. For instance, to put American history in perspective means focusing on a particular aspect of the history in
relationship to the whole, such as The American Revolution, Vietnam War, Depression, Assassination of Abraham Lincoln, The Civil Rights Movement, and so on. To have a perspective goes beyond merely having a point of view. In Foundations of Education it means to see and hear points of view through critical eyes and ears; and to see the big picture. So, perspective requires critical thinking, reexamination, and forming of opinions or insightful points of views after the “facts.” This is what is called or known as Foundations of Education Perspective.

In the critical-thinking sense of the term, students with perspective expose questionable and unexamined assumptions, conclusions, and implications, When a student has or can gain perspective, she can gain a critical distance from the habitual or knee-jerk beliefs, feelings, theories, and appeals that characterize less careful and circumspect thinkers.577

To arrive at a strong and compelling perspective, Wiggins and McTighe pose the following questions that should be asked by anyone seeking understanding through perspective: “From whose point of view? From which vantage point? What is assured or tacit that needs to be made explicit and considered? What is justified or warranted? Is there adequate evidence? Is it reasonable? What are the strength and weaknesses of the idea? Is it plausible? What are its limits? So what?”578 An objective answer to these questions enables one to see things from a dispassionate, disinterested, unselfish, and unemotional perspective. That is why:

This type of understanding is not about any student’s particular point of view but about the mature recognition that any answer to a complex question typically
involves a point of view; hence, an answer is often one of many possible plausible accounts. A student with perspective is alert to what is taken for granted, assumed, overlooked, or glossed over in an inquiry or theory. So, it can be said that perspective is “the ability to escape the passions, inclinations, and dominant opinions of the moment to what circumspection and reflection reveal to be best.” It involves making tacit, untested, or unproven assumptions and implications, explicit. It is often revealed through an ability to ask questions like what of it? What about it? How does it look from another point of view? And so what? And the answer to any of these questions, including the one given by a teacher or read from a textbook, must be seen as point of view. This way of understanding perspective creates new theories, stories, narratives, and applications that are particularly important when perspectives are likely to be different, which is the case when more than one culture or cultural context is involved. Therefore, as an aspect of understanding, perspective is a mature, autonomous achievement, an earned and deserved understanding of how ideas look from different vantage points, which is one of the definitions of a culturally competent person.

The description of the expectations of perspective agrees with the sixth level in “Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor), which is called “evaluation.” Calling it “perspective consciousness,” Olson et al. assert that it is a level of “awareness that one has, that is not universally shared, that there is a distinction between opinion and perspective (worldview) (Harvey).” This facet of understanding also includes knowledge, and the experience to manipulate that knowledge
so as to predict and reflect on what works and does not work and how to deal with members of a different culture. Perspective-taking, frame shifting, and code switching are all ways of describing the skill or ability one can develop, given individual situations and differing cultures.

**Empathy**

“Empathy has many different definitions. These definitions encompass a broad range, from caring for other people and having a desire to help them, to experiencing emotions that match another person’s emotions, to knowing what the other person is thinking or feeling, to blurring the line between self and other.” Since it involves understanding the emotional states of other people, then, empathy is the disposition and ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Simply put, empathy is the ability to see the world as another person sees it. It is not just a thought, that is, it is not a mere feeling, having a desire, or something that exists only in the mind, even though the disposition has its foundation in and from the mind; for it to be empathy, it must move from the domain of the mind to the sphere of action. As a skill, empathy is a selfless act and a desirable skill beneficial to ourselves, others and society, especially in a world full of differences, not only culturally, but also situational in terms of individual experience of the human condition. On this note, empathy points to the capacity to recognize emotions that are being experienced by another person. One may need to have a certain amount of empathy before being able to express accurate sympathy and compassion.

To say a person can empathize means the person can find value in what others might find odd, alien, weird, or implausible; perceive sensitively on the basis of prior
This kind of understanding of empathy implies an existential prerequisite, wherein there is a repertoire of knowledge born of past experience, especially, personal experience, to draw upon. From such a repertoire, a person who is empathetic has the ability to get “inside” another person’s feelings and worldview. For instance, if someone were to refer to experiences like grief, poverty, loneliness, abuse, racism, discrimination, or pain from a particular kind of sickness, and says, “You cannot possibly understand without having been there,” the implication would be that insight from experience is necessary for understanding.

As central to the most common colloquial use of the term understanding, empathy is the ability to walk in another’s shoes, and to escape one’s own emotional reactions in order to grasp another’s. “When we try to understand another person, people, or culture we strive for empathy. It is not simply an affective response or sympathy.” Rather, it is a real, practical, concrete, and been-there-done-that demonstration of understanding, with an effort to find what is meaningful and relevant. Such kind of empathic understanding cannot be stage-managed: not fronted, not phony, and not faked. That having been said, to ensure that there is authenticity in the show of empathy which demonstrates greater understanding, the organization of the curriculum has an important role to play. Thus, “students must have far more direct real or simulated experiences of them than most current textbooks-driven courses now allow.”

For Wiggins and McTighe, the expression of empathy entertains questions such as: “How does it seem to you? What do they see that I don’t? What do I need to experience if I am to understand? What was the artist or performer feeling, seeing, and
trying to make me feel and see? These and many more similar questions do not come easily. They can be learned. That is why, like cultural competence:

Empathy is a learned ability to grasp the world from someone else’s point of view. It is the discipline of using one’s imagination to see and feel as others see and feel. It is different from seeing in perspective, which is to see from a critical distance, to detach oneself to see more objectively. With empathy, we see from inside the person’s worldview, we embrace the insights that can be found in the subjective or aesthetic realm…Empathy is the deliberate act of finding what is plausible, sensible, or meaningful in the ideas and actions of others, even if they are puzzling or off-putting. Empathy can lead us not only to rethink a situation but to have a change of heart as we come to understand what formerly seemed odd and alien.

From what has been said so far about empathy – not only in today’s secular world but also its missions and missionary landscape for priestly ministry – the need is great for education or priestly training and ongoing formation to emphasize learning how to open-mindedly embrace ideas, experiences, and texts that might seem strange, unintelligible, off-putting, or just difficult to access. Such emphasis is essential if people must understand phenomena and their connections to what is more familiar. This calls for shunning habits that can block our understanding of another person’s understanding; and choosing to have respect for people different from ourselves. “Our respect for them causes us to be open-minded, to carefully consider their views when they are different from ours.”
Although there are books replete with an ocean of definitions and descriptions of empathy, let us examine or analyze just a few more ideas. According to Olson et al., movement toward empathy is seeing others as they see themselves, given their conditions, values, beliefs, and so forth. It is a disposition that goes beyond sympathy (ethnocentric thinking to ethno-relative thinking) to a full view that focuses on the other instead of the self.”\textsuperscript{592} Empathy properly belongs to and occupies the highest level at the concern scale.

To me, empathy is an honest demonstration of understanding by the similarly afflicted. Without such similar affliction, empathy is elusive. It remains a mere word that decoratively exists on paper; that’s often beautifully uttered by word of mouth; that sees only from a distance; that touches without feeling; and that perceives as possible what is impossible. Hence the observation by Weiler – writer, editor and critic at \textit{The New York Times}: “Nothing is impossible for the man who doesn’t have to do it himself.”\textsuperscript{593} But such a man becomes a fanatical empathizer if he knows the facts of the case. Such a fanatic fits the description by Finley Peter Dunne (an American humorist and writer, 1867-1936): “A fanatic is a man who does what he thinks the Lord would do if He knew the facts of the case.”\textsuperscript{594}

Very importantly, understanding requires detachment and reflection. It requires heartfelt solidarity with other people and their ideas.\textsuperscript{595} Therefore, true understanding is an empathic response that is demonstrated through sensitive perception of the situation of others. It is all about the honest attempt to see the other person’s side of things and to walk in his shoes—to feel his pain, enter into his emotion, and live in his moment. This
description of empathy not only points to the golden rule, but it also exhorts people to act on, live by, and always follow the golden rule in all areas of human interaction, not the least of which is cultural interaction, as well as in business transactions. Concerning the latter, Blake Mycoskie declares that "The heart of great proactive customer service is empathy." Explaining the assertion and equating empathy to the golden rule, Mycoskie illustrates the usefulness of empathy with a classic example. Thus, "If you ever enter a dispute with a customer, treat him or her as you would like to be treated. And when customers have special needs, make them feel as special as you would want to feel." Such way of life is capable of turning "a simple customer into a potential evangelist for the brand."

Ross talks about Ethnocultural Empathy, which he refers to as both emotional empathy that entails feeling and the expression of feeling, as well as the cognitive ability to take the perspective of the other by understanding the reasoning, goals, and actions of another person. Important as this facet of understanding might be, care must be taken in applying it to some fields, otherwise one becomes too compromising and risks personal safety and security. That is why in the military field, "Emotional empathy seems to be more important at lower levels of competence as an entry-level attitude and ability in order to move to higher levels competence." The higher levels bring one to cognitive empathy as an understanding of how others think and perceive the world so as to be able to predict behaviors.

The caution to be careful in applying empathy in cultural situations makes the case for contextualization as discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation. Arguably, there
are various ways in which context matters. For instance, in ethics, according to Gunnar Bjornsson:

…the context in which an action is performed might determine whether the action is morally right: though it is often wrong not to keep a promise, it might be permissible in certain contexts. More radically, proponents of moral relativism have argued that what is a reason for an action in one context is not guaranteed to be a reason in a different context: whether it is a reason against an act that it breaks a promise or inflicts pain might depend on the particulars of the situation.\textsuperscript{601}

Bjornsson’s take warrants the statement that just as it is the case in ethical contextualization, so it can be argued for cultural contextualization, especially in the exercise of empathy as a facet of understanding required in cultural competence. So, cultural empathy is more or less subject to the laws of contextualization. This implies that the application of empathy must take into consideration the following factors: place, time, situation or circumstance, and mission in view.

Empathy is so important that it should not just be an instinctive drive. Rather, it should be a habit: “A man’s nature.”\textsuperscript{602} Even though no one is born with a habit, according to Aristotle it can be acquired through constant and sustained practice. This is arguably true as Aristotle attests, “I tell you, friends, ‘tis practice long pursued, and this at last becomes a man’s nature.”\textsuperscript{603}

The need for the active exercise and concrete demonstration of empathy, which is a sign of compassion and a witness or testimony to one aspect of cultural competence, is
brought to a new level of higher expectation in the context of priestly service. This is because “the call to priestly life and ministry is an invitation to become a compassionate, loving heart, sacred with the presence of Jesus.”

This disposition and attitude is contained in what it means to develop a set of ministerial skills. It is about becoming a transformed person who is able to walk in the shoes of others by seeing, feeling and even understanding like they do. This also means becoming a person for others, a person of service. The *Program of Priestly Formation (5th ed.)*, developed by the USCCB highlights this capacity to relate to others as fundamental to a person who is called to be responsible for a parish community and to be a man of communion.

Furthermore, in order for this communal living to experience the light of compassion and empathy, there is a necessary ingredient that must be incorporated into the life of every priest—*active listening*. That is why priestly formation demands a discipline of active listening to one’s peers, mentors, parishioners, and all people.

It is against this backdrop that the words of Pope John Paul II remain a challenge to the compassionate and empathic ministry of priests: “We need heralds of the Gospel who are experts in humanity who have shared to the full the joys and sorrows of the day but who are at the same time contemplatives in love with God.”

All in all, a disclaimer is necessary to the effect that even though some people can manage to pick up empathy skills naturally (thanks to their life experience) without the aid of special lessons, instruction, training, or designated practice sections, it is not easy being empathic. In any case, in appraisal of understanding at this level—through empathy, as human or as a human disposition, Hodges and Klein write:
Knowing what someone else is thinking and feeling allows people to coordinate their activities, something that is useful and necessary in interpersonal interaction. Like any skill, empathy differs from person to person. We can probably all easily think of individuals in our life who anchor the extreme points on a scale of empathy: the cherished person who consistently continues to have our interest at heart at one end, and the insensitive lout at the other end. However, people who never show empathy or are unable to do so are rare and striking in their inability to fit into normal social interactions. At the same time, people who are extremely empathic are rare also, for good reason: Being constantly sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others would interfere with the ability to act one’s own thoughts and feelings.608

In the final analysis, arguably, the positive side of empathy far outweighs its downside. It provides obvious benefits at both the individual and societal level by allowing people from different cultural backgrounds and other differences to coordinate their behavior and prevent misunderstandings that lead to strife, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness.

**Self-knowledge**

In everyday language, self-knowledge has been taken to mean self-understanding or an understanding of yourself, which includes your abilities, capabilities, capacities, goals, and so on. In philosophy, self-knowledge commonly refers to knowledge of one’s particular mental state, including one’s beliefs, desires, and sensations.609 Sometimes the term is used to refer to knowledge about a persisting self, what is called ontological
nature, including identity, conditions, or character traits. This is quite different from knowledge of the world external to oneself, such as the thoughts of others. Compared to knowledge in other realms, in philosophy, the following are considered aspects of knowledge: (1) Knowledge of one’s own mental states is especially secure, epistemologically; (2) One uses a unique method to determine one’s own mental states; (3) One is uniquely positioned to regulate one’s own mental states; and (4) One’s pronouncement about one’s own mental states bear a special authority or presumption of truth.\textsuperscript{610}

In psychology, self-knowledge describes the information that an individual leans on, calls in, and draws upon when trying to find answers to questions about oneself: \textit{Who am I? What am I like? What is my belief and what informs it? Am I capable of doing this or that?} While seeking to develop answers to these questions through an honest self-examination, sincere introspection, and blunt journey into self, self-knowledge requires ongoing self-awareness and self-consciousness. As a component of the self, self-knowledge brings about self-concept, also called self-identity, self-perspective, and self-construction. It is a collection of beliefs about oneself,\textsuperscript{611} one’s properties, and the desire to seek such knowledge that guides the authentic development of the self-concept. Self-knowledge helps to inform us of our mental representation of ourselves, which contain attributes that we uniquely pair or associate with ourselves, and theories of whether these attributes are stable, or dynamic—changing. Also through self-knowledge, we come to be aware of our own nature, abilities, and limitations. Examples of self-knowledge are such things as gender roles and sexuality, racial identity, and other idiosyncrasies.
According to Wiggins and McTighe, to have self-knowledge is to be able to “perceive the personal style, prejudices, projections, and habits of mind that both shape and impede our own understanding; we are aware of what we do not understand and why understanding is so hard.” This definition implies the wisdom to know one’s limitations, ignorance, and how one’s patterns of thought and action inform, as well as prejudice understanding especially in cultural settings. On this note, Gadamer writes:

All understanding is ultimately self-understanding...A person who understands, understands himself...Understanding begins when something addresses us. This requires...the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices.

To proceed on acquiring self-knowledge as a fundamental facet of understanding others in their “totality,” pondering on some of these questions is a step in the right direction: “How does who I am shape my views? What are the limits of my understanding? What are my blind spots? What am I prone to misunderstanding because of prejudice, habit, or style?” These questions are very humbling and they call for or require humility to address them. To understand others and the world, we must first understand ourselves—who we are, what we are, and how we are, as well as the possibility of change through transformation and growth.

The maxim so familiar in philosophy as uttered by Socrates is appropriate here: [Man], “Know thyself.” This is the maxim of those who would really understand. In a sense, Socrates is the patron of understanding through self-knowledge. He challenges the capacity in us to daily and accurately self-assess and self-regulate in order to understand. Engaging in this exercise of self-reflection is what has been metacognition, which refers
to the self-knowledge about how we think, that is, how we process information, and why, as well as the relation between our preferred methods of learning and our understanding or lack of it.

In the context of cultural competence, self-knowledge is highly important so as to avoid prejudice, which would adversely affect how we see others, Wiggins and McTighe make the observation that “seeing prejudice as always wrong or harmful is also prejudice.” This is because such is also a predisposition, a mindset, and bigoted worldview. It has the potential of creating a negative perspective and blocks the chances of objectively assessing a situation to see the good side of it, no matter how harmful it might seem or look. In some sense, out of prejudice, could come something good for the individual and the society. So, open-mindedly interacting with people and reading text is a better way forward to gain understanding.

In the words of Wiggins and McTighe, this dissertation argues that:

Self-knowledge is a key factor of understanding because it demands that we self-consciously question our understandings to advance them. It asks us to have the discipline to seek and find the inevitable blind spots or oversights in our thinking and to have the courage to face the uncertainty and inconveniences lurking underneath effective habits, naïve confidence, strong beliefs, and worldviews that only seem complete and final.

Every so often, we are unconsciously blinded by personal biases in assessing or making judgments about others in given situations. Self-knowledge challenges us to show
metacognitive awareness; perceive the personal style, prejudices, projections, and habits of mind that both shape and impede our understanding.617

Practically speaking, a great attention to self-knowledge means that in all educational settings, particularly in the educational setting for the training of future priests, there is much to be done, by instilling this aspect of formation into the minds of young clergy throughout the curriculum. All too often, priests are not challenged to ask themselves some of the fundamental questions captured herein in seeking self-knowledge for self-understanding so as to understand others, other cultures, and the world at large. The need for greater metacognition couldn’t be more important in a vocation (the priestly vocation) that demands a lifetime commitment.

Stressing the importance of properly knowing oneself as a means of understanding, “In a speech given to the 2007 Pan-African Festival, Dr. Haki Madhubuti, poet, author and founder of the Third World Press, said that we live in a credential society, one in which we are concerned with material possession and self-accomplishment. He advised that it is more important to know yourself as ‘self-knowledge leads to self-definition’ and self-understanding. This self-knowledge can’t be gained unless we are willing to stretch and go beyond the surface.”618 But what does it mean to stretch? This question should cause us to ponder on who we are and how we see others. In context of cultural competence, pondering involves reaching out beyond self and extending to others. The end result of such pondering as a means of understanding stretching is enlightenment. So, self-knowledge brings about enlightenment to know and understand self and how that understanding defines one’s perception of others, especially
regarding differences—in the broadest sense. Because of the reluctance and unwillingness to stretch by opening minds and embracing differences, so as to be enlightened, Calloway tellingly notes:

We live in a time when not everyone is willing to open their minds and accept differences in others. Blinded by ethnocentric views and an inability to listen and pay attention to the struggles of others, we may never see the time that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., dreamed of when people are judged by the content of their character and not by the color of their skin.  

As a variable in the component of understanding, self-knowledge also points to the belief in one’s ability to be successful in particular endeavors within and across cultures. Such ability includes but is not limited to easily adjusting to a new culture and having the confidence to succeed in any action taken to improve cultural conditions. The ability may be related to trying many times to succeed, confident that success is possible, while controlling oneself during activity and related performance.

Preferring to reverse the order and call it “knowledge of self,” Olson et al, state that knowledge of self refers to understanding one’s own culture and place. It is also known as personal autonomy, which is an awareness of identity and includes taking responsibility for one’s actions and understanding one’s own beliefs and values. It can also be called personal strength, which refers to well-developed self-esteem and positive concept. It is “similar to the idea of integration, that is, a growing coherence and increased synthesis of personality.”
In an overview of the six facets of understanding Wiggins and McTighe write that “Understanding is always a matter of degree, typically followed by questions and lines of inquiry that arise from reflection, discussion, and use of ideas—including our attempts to understand understanding.” In this chapter, the work of Wiggins and McTighe has been the basis of a discourse on understanding because understanding is an essential aspect of cultural competence. This is the case in effective and relational interaction, not only with people of different cultures, but in understanding each individual person’s life experience, which includes but is not limited to: background, situation, circumstance, and what informs a decision or gives reason for someone acting or behaving in a particular way, at a given time, and place. Indeed, Bennett and Bennett write that “The real crux of creating a climate of respect for diversity is demonstrating understanding and appreciation for the different beliefs, behaviors, and values of varying subjective cultures. Such understanding and appreciation can provide access to the differing cultural experience of others and enable mutual adaptation.”

The idea of understanding emphasizes the importance of people’s subjective culture, which also is the key to comprehending the juncture between global and domestic diversity as well as “tolerating” individual idiosyncrasies or peculiarities. It is this understanding of the peculiarities of differences that allows us to respect the equal complexity and potential usefulness of each of our perspectives. That is why, calling it “global understanding,” Olson et al. use the concept as a measure of attitudes, such as interest about world cultures and “international developments, expression of sympathy, feelings of kinship about others, and degree of comfort in foreign situations.” In light
of this understanding of *understanding*, it would appear that to the degree that priests are expected to show more understanding by virtue of their calling, curriculum design in priestly training must identify the goal of understanding, even as it emphasizes teaching for understanding by the teachers or formators.

Indeed, this understanding of the concept of *understanding* that forms the basis for the chapters that follow.
Notes


539. Ibid.


543. ALPS: Teaching for Understanding, “What is Understanding?”


545. Ibid.


549. Wiggins and McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, 44.

550. Ibid., 46.


553. Ibid., 47.


561. Ibid.


563. Ibid.


565. Ibid., 51.


574. Walker and Soltis, *Curriculum and Aims*, 43.


577. Ibid., 53.

578. Ibid.

579. Ibid.


586. Ibid., 56.

587. Ibid.

588. Ibid., 57.

589. Ibid., 55.

590. Ibid., 56.

591. Ibid., 57.


594. Ibid., no.1,823.


597. Ibid.

598. Ibid.


600. Ibid., 15.


603. Ibid.

604. Sacred Heart School of Theology, “Priestly Formation Program,” 18.

605. Ibid.

606. Ibid., 19.


610. Ibid.


612. Wiggins and McTighe, Understanding by Design, 44.


615. Ibid., 59.

616. Ibid.


619. Ibid.


622. Ibid., 90.


CHAPTER IV
COMPONENTS OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cognizant of the multilayered nature of the concept of cultural competence, the analysis in this chapter takes a closer look at its components. In doing so, it unpacks some ideas that serve as essential determinants of cultural competence. In the meantime, notice that some definitions of cultural competence emphasize the knowledge and skills needed to interact with people of different cultures, others draw attention to awareness, while others focus on attitudes/disposition. These differences in emphasis make difficult answering the question of what really constitutes the components of cultural competence. This difficulty brings to the fore how difficult it is to work with a term that varies in definition, not so much about what it means, as with the conceptual nomenclatures used for its description, such as cultural sensitivity, cultural diversity, ethnic competence, cultural proficiency, intercultural competence, diversity competence, consciousness, and even multiculturalism, to mention just a few.

In an attempt to answer the question of the components, Diversity Training University International (DTUI) has identified four cognitive components that determine cultural competence: (a) Knowledge; (b) Awareness; (c) Attitude/Disposition; and (d) Skills.626 These components, as linearly listed herein, represent the key criteria for progressively demonstrating a more sophisticated level of cultural competence attainment. In serving as determinants of cultural competence, it should be understood that these components speak to knowledge about native or indigenous
culture—enculturation; knowledge of oneself—awareness; how that awareness translates into the disposition in relating with other people—attitudes; and finally, how the sum of that knowledge is put into practice in any place, especially in a cross-cultural context—skills. It is in light of the cross-cultural context that Bennett says that the components of cultural competence constitute the core of intercultural competence which is often viewed “as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.”

Within academic institutions, it is important to point out that the aim of these components, as essential criteria for intercultural knowledge and cultural competency, is to prepare students to live and work in an interconnected and interdependent world. This is so needed because despite the economic downturn, the drumbeat from external stakeholders and faculty to impart skills and attitudes for functioning in a global society is rising, with more institutions than ever elevating some variation of cultural competence, which produces “global citizenship” to the highest echelon of institutional values, implicitly or explicitly promised to all students.

In context, it is important to bear in mind that the examination of the components of cultural competence in this dissertation is aimed at using the knowledge of the concept in this regard to help in the development of a new curriculum that might enhance the training of young clergy entering the priesthood in Nigeria for service abroad. The importance of this knowledge cannot be overstated, especially in a world where, given the reality of the global redistribution of priests, more often than not, young clergy end up ministering many parts of the globe. This fact is clearly captured by Matthew Backholer:
“In the last few years, millions of Christians both young and old have embarked upon an expedition of a lifetime into the unknown – to serve, witness and experience another world.” Therefore, if young clergy must arrive in foreign mission lands armed with sufficient knowledge about their native culture—enculturation, have the mental readiness, disposition and malleable attitude to embrace a new culture and experience change in the process—acculturation, and be at home in whatever culture they find themselves at any given time by using the knowledge of the host culture for the work of evangelization—inculturation, then, the renewal or development of a new curriculum for young clergy entering the priesthood, not only in Nigeria, seems to be necessary. That said, the study now seeks to analyze the reported core components of cultural competence: knowledge, awareness, attitude/disposition and skills.

**Knowledge**

In normal or ordinary conversation, we use knowledge to mean the facts, claims, feelings, or experiences known by a person or group of people. This definition underscores understanding of information and skills acquired through experience and education. It is a familiarity with someone or something, which can include facts, information, and descriptions. For example, the National Electronic Library for Health Glossary has this to say about knowledge:

Knowledge is derived from information but it is richer and more meaningful than information. It includes familiarity, awareness and understanding gained through experience or study, and results from making comparisons, identifying consequences, and making connections. Some experts include wisdom
and insight in their definitions of knowledge. In organizational terms, knowledge is generally thought of as being “know how,” “applied information,” “information with judgment” or “the capacity for effective action.”

According to Oxford dictionaries, “It can be implicit, as with practical skill or expertise, or explicit as with the understanding of a subject; it can be more or less formal or systematic.” So, knowledge is both practical, gained through experience or association; and theoretical, gained through formal education, such as the understanding of a subject and all that that understanding entails in relation to self—self-awareness or self-knowledge and in relation to others—attitude/disposition and skills.

In philosophy, the study of knowledge is called epistemology. As a branch of Western philosophy concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, epistemology literally means to reason about knowledge. It studies what makes up knowledge and considers the following: what kinds of things are knowable and can be known; what are the limits to what we can know; the possibility or impossibility of actually knowing everything; what do we take for granted in the knowing endeavor; what means, procedures, and processes are involved in knowing or trying to acquire knowledge. The study of knowledge is also called the “theory of knowledge.” This theory of knowledge, in the words of Rorty is “a theory distinct from the sciences because it is their foundation…Without this idea of a theory of knowledge, it is hard to imagine what philosophy could have been in the age of modern science.”

Even though much has been said and is being said in philosophy about epistemology and the theory of knowledge, the definition of knowledge is a matter of
ongoing debate. “The classical definition, described but not ultimately endorsed by Plato, specifies that a statement must meet three criteria in order to be considered knowledge: it must be justified, true, and believed.” In some sense, this definition of knowledge points to the importance of reliability, dependability, trustworthiness, and trueness.

Concerning all these, Pardi writes that “Many of us would probably say knowledge that something is true involves: Certainty – it’s hard if not impossible to deny; Evidence – it has be based on something; Practicality – it has to actually work in the real world; Broad agreement – lots of people have to agree it’s true.” Because of the difficulty in achieving all these criteria, not to mention the uphill task in the correct analysis of knowledge, Pardi states that “Knowledge is at the root of many challenges we face in a given day.” To that end, it comes with no surprise that much of the debate in philosophy and other fields has focused on analyzing the nature of knowledge and how it relates to similar notions such as truth, belief, and justification.

As a component of cultural competence, based on the analysis of knowledge, it is evident that the more knowledge we have about ourselves and particularly about people of different cultures, the more likely we are to avoid stepping on cultural toes, making cultural missteps, and treading on people’s dreams and ideals. Put another way, knowing how culture impacts problem solving, managing people, asking for help, and defining people’s ambitions, aspirations and dreams, etc. can keep us connected in cross-cultural interactions and make us effective in all service delivery, including priestly service. A knowing of this type takes care of the expectations in the familiar sayings: to be forewarned is to be forearmed; a stitch in time saves nine.
Knowledge is considered to be the highest rung on the ladder of the core components of cultural competence. It is a higher level of awareness in which people’s values and beliefs are consistent with their behaviors toward others of different cultures in accordance with what has been proven to be true. For instance, treating other people as subhuman or inferior in any way shows a lack of knowledge concerning the sameness and universal human equality of all humans. Unfortunately, social science research indicates that our values and beliefs about equality may be inconsistent with our behaviors, and ironically, we may be without such knowledge or unaware of it. A lack of knowledge makes the knowledge component an important part of our cultural competence development. It is against this backdrop that academic courses on diversity tend to understandably focus on the knowledge component. On this note, DTUI makes a pointed observation:

Offering learners scholarly insights into diversity and inclusion can bring their personal values and beliefs to surface. In diversity training, a good instructor will also cover the awareness and attitude components by providing exercises that drive home the major points made in the scholarly works. The problem is that the skills required to negotiate differences are too often left out of the mix. Even in a good intercultural communication course, so much theory may be presented that the course does not transfer to the students’ community or the workplace in any particular way.\textsuperscript{637}
This observation acknowledges a concern that needs to be addressed. And properly addressing it has many advantages on different fronts. Among the advantages and benefits is the ability to arrive at self-knowledge, self-awareness, or simply, awareness.

**Awareness**

Generally, cultural awareness is the ability to recognize the differences and understand the effects of culture on people’s values and behaviors. In the context of priestly service, this awareness means being cognizant of the cultural region for ministry and the connection or interrelationship between culture and religion. It implies an understanding of the need to take cultural region into consideration in the delivery of pastoral service. Hence, to say that knowledge of cultural factors is important for a given situation and why, is definitive of one’s mission to a region or country.

Awareness begins with the self, herein known as self-awareness or self-knowledge. In a large sense, awareness means “Individual understanding of self and others.” It demands an understanding of self and others so as to promote understanding of cultural differences. Hence, it is important to examine diversity-related values and beliefs in relation to self-awareness in order to recognize any deep-seated prejudices and stereotypes that can create barriers for learning and personal development. Many of us have blind spots when it comes to our beliefs and values; diversity education can be useful for uncovering them, especially in helping us to be objective about our own personality, including flaws. By implication, awareness addresses the question of whether people are aware of the differences between, not only the culture they come from, but also between themselves and the cultural groups in which they now live. Arguably,
because that awareness is limited, education in cultural competence helps to increase it, thereby making people become more conscious of individual differences. For instance, sharing an experience of increasing one’s cultural awareness, Rogers writes the responses of some of the participants in an interview, Marci, Shawn and Tory:

I didn’t understand any of these differences or assumptions at first. When I was first introduced or encountered the problem I didn’t have words for it and it wasn’t in any of my training.” So how did she and others become aware of differences? These participants developed a level of awareness in informal ways (e.g., as a side effect of exposure to different cultures and as a side effect of having an open and inquisitive disposition). Shawn and Troy illustrate thus: “I’ve always been aware of cultural differences, and part of that is where I come from. I come from a small country that is part of a bigger country...there is a much greater awareness, at least of the rest of the world, simply because we are a small country, and our whole history has been threatened by other people. Even still recently in living memory...[Troy says] “I’m just one of these guys that I learn from people, I respect everybody, my prior assumption is that it is really worth connecting with these persons.639

Strengthened by these examples and related experiences of increasing one’s cultural awareness and other claims of self-knowledge, the truth is that generally, people come to realize there is a lot they don’t know and need to know both “through more formal and intentional means.”640 However, becoming aware that there are differences between cultures and individuals, does not mean becoming automatically aware of what
all the important differences are or of all the ways in which people behave. But to live in that consciousness and stay open to the disposition to learn helps a great deal to reduce the tension in human interaction. And even though the process of becoming aware of cultural differences might be unique, “the general feeling that much more can be done to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity is unarguable.”

Ideally, as people become more conscious of their own implicit conceptual frameworks and value systems and more responsive to those of other cultures and the people therein, this seems likely to improve understanding and the quality and impact of human interaction. To what extent this has been investigated in the analysis of cultural competence has, to my knowledge, not been sufficiently explored.

As far as human beings are concerned, the question is not whether people are prejudiced; this is an implicit assumption. Rather, the concern is the extent, the degree of how prejudiced people are and how ready and willing they are to change. Thus, all people are born into a cultural milieu in which processes of socialization are used to “teach” them to be members of that cultural milieu with all its attendant beliefs, practices, and biases. In context of this work, awareness is a three-hold process – three-layered. First, it is awareness of one’s values and beliefs. Second, it is awareness of one’s culture and related backgrounds. Third, it is consciousness of how the two aspects of awareness just mentioned affect the person’s personal reactions to people who are different culturally, racially, ethnically, socially, economically and so on. For example, if through the process, a police officer comes to recognize that he profiles people who look like they are from
Nigeria as undocumented aliens, then, he has an increased cultural awareness of his reaction to this group of people – Nigerians.

According to DTUI, most diversity professionals overemphasize awareness-raising training in their work both for its importance and because they lack the depth of understanding needed to design, develop, and implement high impact cultural diversity education programs. This depth of understanding calls for self-awareness through a personal examination of one’s own biases and how those biases affect his or her attitudes toward others of different cultures. To achieve this purpose, some diversity trainers focus on “valuing diversity. While this approach is a step up from “awareness training,” it still lacks the impact needed to build knowledge and skills.642

Analytically speaking, awareness calls for soul-searching. It is another way of living up to the Socratic maxim: “The unexamined life is not worth living.”643 Palachuk, for instance, recalls that Socrates, at his trial for heresy. “was on trial for encouraging his students to challenge the accepted beliefs of the time and think for themselves.”644 On examining the options of life in prison and exile, aware of who he was and what he wanted to communicate to the world, based on his well-examined life, Socrates chose the alternative of death. He considered the “examined life” to be the only thing that could make an impact on people, make life useful, and result in a long-lasting legacy. Thus, if it weren’t possible to examine the world around him, discuss how to make it a better place, and take action, there was no point in living.645 In the same way, without the examined life by oneself of one’s own prejudices, there is no point in even thinking about or contributing in any way to the conversation on cultural competence. Therefore, the
importance of thinking for oneself through an examined life for self-discovery is an essential and fundamental path toward awareness.

Generally, on the all-important idea of examined life as a way of discovering our prejudices, unearthing our blind spots, and addressing them for the common good, Palachuk states that “When you set aside time to examine your life, you get to choose your destination; You get to set the goals; you get to determine the path; You get to decide how long it will take; You get to decide whether you’re on the right path or the wrong path. In other words, you begin to know yourself and take control of your life. You decide who you want to be and begin to become the person you want to be.”

**Attitude/Disposition**

Values and beliefs impact cross-cultural effectiveness because they convey the extent to which we are open to different views and opinions. The stronger we feel about our beliefs (and hold onto) our values; the more likely we will react emotionally when they collide with cultural differences. For example, people of color and white Americans tend to have different values and beliefs about diversity and equality; the differences are, in part, the result of uniquely different exposure to oppression and discrimination.

This quotation brings to light some important points about attitude. First, attitude is a person’s formed opinion and conscious view toward people, objects, or concepts. That is, the person is aware of the feelings he or she holds in given situation and a certain context. Second, the quotation suggests that there are different components that make up attitudes: (1) An emotional component: How the object, person, issue or event makes you
feel. (2) A cognitive component: Your thoughts and beliefs about the subject. (3) A behavioral component: How the attitude influences your behavior. Third, it enables the interpretation and understanding of attitude as a “personal disposition towards transformational experience.” But these are attributes of attitudes. How can we define the term? And how are attitudes formed?

Attitude is a currently way of thinking and feeling, typically reflected in a person’s behavior. It is also referred to as posture, position, stance, and mindset. Closely associated with attitude, disposition is sometimes considered a synonym and so used interchangeably with attitude. This is more so given the definition of attitude as a settled way of thinking or feeling—an inward feeling expressed by outward behavior. Consider how people typically project on the outside what they feel on the inside. This explanation places disposition as something that precedes attitude. In this sense, attitude can also be defined as a predisposition or a disposition, as well as a relational tendency to respond either positively or negatively toward people, certain ideas, objects, or situations.

Business dictionary online states that:

Attitude influences an individual’s choice of action, and responses to challenges, incentives, and rewards—together called stimuli. Four major components of attitude are (1) Affective: emotions or feelings. (2) Cognitive: belief or opinions held consciously. (3) Conative: inclination for action. (4) Evaluative: positive or negative response to stimuli.

Regarding how attitudes are formed, many opinions and possible explanations exist. One explanation is that an attitude forms directly as a result of experience. It may
emerge due to direct personal experience, or it may result from observation, or it may even be brought about by mere hearsay. It may also be the result of socialization. Thus, social roles and social norms can have a strong influence on attitudes. This is even more true when social roles and norms point to how people are expected to behave in a particular role or context. They involve family, community, school, religious, and society’s rules—dos and don’ts—for what behavior is considered appropriate or inappropriate, tolerated or not tolerated, allowed or not allowed, acceptable or unacceptable.

A given attitude in a person’s life in relation to others has an impact on behavior. For this reason, many business organizations have workshops on attitude aimed at addressing the attitudes of staff in relation to customers, so as to provide better customer service. So, it can be argued that attitudes are learned behaviors that become habits, then perceptions, and finally judgments.  

In a world that promotes the culture of empowerment, advocacy for empowerment talks about such empowerment as beginning with positive attitude. It stops short of saying attitude is everything. Little wonder the observation in “Success Magazine” that “One of the most important steps you can take toward achieving your greatest potential in life is to learn to monitor your attitude and its impact on your work performance, relationships and everyone around you.” Generally, positive attitudes have been said to bring about many benefits and dramatic effects: “more creativity, camaraderie with yourself, mind/body connection, successful aging,” better perception,
improved understanding, acceptance, confidence, and in context, effective service in cross-cultural situations.

Stressing the impact of attitude on behavior by using an example to impress or drive home the point, Cherry writes:

What’s your opinion about the death penalty? Which political party does a better job of running the country? Should prayer be allowed in schools? Should violence in television be regulated? Chances are that you probably have fairly strong opinions on these and similar questions. You’ve developed attitudes about such issues, and these attitudes influence your beliefs as well as your behavior. 653

Offering a definition of the term from the perspective of psychologists, Cherry states: “Psychologists define attitudes as a learned tendency to evaluate things in a certain way. This can include evaluation of people, issues, objects, events.” 654 Clearly, attitudes are an important study in the humanities, particularly within the field of social psychology and, in context, in the analysis of cultural competence. Basic questions to be asked in the study of attitudes are: What is an attitude? How does it develop? Is it a natural or learned disposition? Can it be controlled? If yes, how? If no, why not? Can it be changed?

Based on the focus of this dissertation and gleaning from the analysis so far on the components of cultural competence, it is appears that attitude is an increased awareness of cultural bias and beliefs through a careful examination of one’s own beliefs and values about cultural differences. To that end, and in view of an analysis of cultural competence, attitude calls for the disposition to remain open to new experiences with a sense of
interest and curiosity. Such interest and curiosity, though with a careful examination of what is important to one’s mission, paves the road to explore the exciting world of cultural differences. Such a disposition is akin to a writer’s sensibility characterized by a sense of excitement in which everything is new, and so he or she wants to explore and experience everything as much as possible.

Skills

“One can have the right attitude, considerable self-awareness, and a lot of knowledge about cultural differences, yet still lack the ability to effectively manage differences. If we have not learned skills or have had little opportunity to practice, our awareness and knowledge are insufficient to avoid and manage cross-cultural landmines." This online statement from DTUI underscores the importance of the opportunity to put into practice the other components of cultural competence, which are knowledge, awareness and attitude. Therefore, cultural competence is not only a theoretical idea. It is also a practical concept. Its practice calls for skills of effective cultural interaction both within one’s own culture and cross-culturally or interculturally. Very important in this analysis is the notion that the skills component suggests that an “individual potential for cross-cultural adaptability," is also necessary.

Note that as a component of cultural competence, skill is a component that speaks to being in situ. That is, being on site, location, or region of a different culture. Such situation affords an opportunity to put skill into action through the practical experience of navigating cultural gaps. Also, chances are that with the opportunity of having a real-life, practical experience of being there, preconceived ideas, already formed feelings, settled
opinions, established ways of thinking, untested perceptions, may be reconstructed and changed. In addition, putting skill into action in a concrete situation creates a moment for self-reflection, deep introspective examination, and ultimately, self-awareness. All of which brings about an increase in knowledge, in the broad sense of the word. And this supports the doing of something well in keeping with the simple definition of skill as the ability to do something well.

As an ability to do something well, skill is a demonstration of expertise in cross-cultural effectiveness. This implies much more than simply being able to live in different cultures. It involves, but is not limited to, such abilities as showing understanding—in all its facets, respecting people’s feelings and emotions in light of the different stages of cultural adjustment, and exhibiting the abilities and capabilities associated with cultural competence, as discussed in the pages following in this study. So, in some sense, skill can be said to be the real measure of cultural competence and the real test of a culturally competent person.

From a healthcare perspective, (which also makes sense in other areas of human interaction), Tirsdo has identified the following elements that make up the skills component of cultural competence: (1) Personal qualities that reflect genuineness, empathy, warmth, and a capacity to respond flexibly to a range of possible situations; (2) Acceptance of cultural differences between people; (3) Explicit understanding of the employee’s personal values, stereotypes, and biases about their own and other’s culture; (4) Techniques for learning and adapting to the personal and cultural patterns of customers and their impact on adherence to prescribed intervention strategies; (5)
Capacity to work with family members and friends or customers in communicating the nature of health and environmental conditions and recommended intervention strategies.657

From an international perspective, the contribution of Olson et al. on what should constitute skills in the cultural competence continuum, are relevant in the context of this discussion. They summarize skills to mean some of the following: (1) Technical skills to enhance the ability of students to learn about the world (i.e. research skills); (2) Critical- and comparative-thinking skills, including the ability to think creatively and integrate knowledge, rather than uncritical acceptance of knowledge; (3) Communication skills, including the ability to use another language effectively and interact with people from other cultures; (4) Coping and resiliency skills in unfamiliar and challenging situations.658

Suggestions are helpful in thinking about the practice of cultural competence to perfection. Skill seems the most important and it is an ongoing process, which benefits more from being there and carrying out the interaction with people of a different culture for a period of time. This timeliness of interaction with people in a different culture has been seen to be the ingredient for the building and development, first, of tolerance, then acceptance. This makes sense and the idea seems to enjoy a wide endorsement. For instance, I recall listening to a Christian radio program the other day and the pastor made this profoundly confirming statement in the context of cultural competence: Our level of tolerance is directly related to the amount of time we spend with others who are different from us. This implies that the longer time we spend with people of a different culture
chances are, the better it is that we will come to know and understand them more completely and so accept them for who they are. Hence, like learning and training, being with, interacting with, and relating to people results in performing actions better to achieve a desired outcome.

Generally, being able to identify all the skills you have, not only can open you up to more career options, but it can also help you determine if you have any skill or knowledge gaps that can be addressed with further training. The understanding of skill as a learned ability leads to a further appreciation of the description that suits the context of cultural competence. Thus, skill is “an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carry out complex activities, or job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills).”

Worthy of note is that as important as the skill component might be, primarily focusing on skills training is inadequate. Lack of awareness about personal biases and little knowledge or understanding of personal diversity related beliefs and values will make it difficult to use the skills with insight and flexibility. The result is that our efforts to connect with people of other cultures are not viewed as credible. Therefore, all four components of awareness, knowledge, attitude, and skills work hand in glove. And a cultural competence approach to diversity education and multiculturalism or multicultural training offers professionals an opportunity to look into and consider all four components.
It should be recalled that the four components of awareness, knowledge, attitude/disposition, and skills represent key features of each of the popular definitions of cultural competence as discussed in the definition and description section of this work. Hence, for the purpose of this research, it can be said that cultural competence comprises of and describes four components: (a) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; (b) Awareness of one’s own cultural worldview; (c) Attitude or Disposition toward cultural differences; and (d) Cross-cultural skills to live and navigate through cultural differences. Meeting the demands of these components results in the development of an ability to understand, communicate, and effectively interact with people across cultures.

Finally, in the analysis of this component, communication has been identified as the fundamental tool for developing cultural competent skills. As a tool by which people use to interact not only across cultures but also in all walks of life, communication draws heavily on psychology, anthropology, and sociology and this makes it inherently interdisciplinary. Although no one has a panacea for all the complexities of diversity, intercultural communication as a skill brings a particularly useful emphasis on the development and even sustenance of cultural competence.
Notes


635. Ibid.


640. Ibid., 248.

641. Ibid.

642. Diversity Training University International (DTUI), “Promoting competence and credentials.”


644. Ibid.

645. Ibid.

646. Ibid.

647. Diversity Training University International (DTUI), “Promoting competence & credentials.”


653. Cherry, “How Attitudes Form, Change and Shape Our Behavior.”

654. Ibid.


659. Careers New Zealand, “Figure out your skills,” accessed April 28, 2013, www.careers.govt.nz/plan-your...to.../figure-out-what-skills-you-have/.


662. Landis and Bhagat, Handbook of Intercultural Training, 150.
CHAPTER V

ABILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH CULTURAL COMPETENCE

What is the knowledge in terms of some expectations and some know-how that should be associated with a culturally competent person, particularly an international priest – to put it in perspective – who has had the opportunity and pastoral experience in a different culture through service abroad? Addressing this question is the main concern of this chapter. Looking ahead, there is the ongoing discussion that abilities or capacities serve as skillsets of cultural competence and so are, or should be associated with culturally competent people, as this dissertation argues. Here again comes another pressing question: what constitutes the skillsets? What are some of the expectations? How can they be brought about or realized? Are the abilities universal? As challenging as these questions may be, and notwithstanding the many answers and arguments they are capable of producing from the number of people who attempt to address them, what constitutes the expectations of cultural competence must be determined in some ways. That having been said, the best that can be done in talking about the associated abilities of cultural competence is to attempt to think about some areas of human endeavor that must benefit from such skills.

Undoubtedly, the skillsets that defined cultural competence differ based on the needs, objectives and goals of particular fields. However, there are some elements, in terms of expectations, that might be considered as cutting across all fields. Among other things, the foundational step is that culturally competent people must grow in the
realization of the existence of cultural diversity in the world; they must be aware of the needs of others; they have to admit the need for others; and they must strive to build a bridge of understanding other people. For instance, from a healthcare perspective, Tirsdo itemizes some of the following as important abilities that can allow one lay claim that he or she is culturally competent. Ability to:

(1) Communicate accurate information on behalf of culturally diverse customers and communities; (2) Discuss cultural differences and issues openly, and respond to culturally based cues; (3) Assess the meaning culture has for individuals; (4) Interpret the implications of evidence of problems as they are expressed by customers from different cultures; (5) Work effectively with an interpreter to obtain accurate information from a customer; (6) Evaluate new techniques, research, and knowledge regarding their application in working with culturally diverse customers; and (7) Secure an appropriate level of cooperation with strategies and services.

For the purpose of this study, some of the commonly discussed abilities associated with cultural competence are the following: (1) Effective communication; (2) Objective investigation of the host culture and other pressing cultural issues; (3) Recognition and respect for multiple cultural perspectives; and (4) Taking Action to improve cultural conditions. These abilities enable us to see how a person has lived in and passed through a culture and how that culture keeps living in and passing through that person. Such a person now stands out, not only as someone with outstanding book
knowledge, but even more so, as a person with great understanding and the drive needed to make a positive difference in wherever cultural environment he finds himself.

Effective Communication

First of all, communication has been described as a process that involves talking and writing to imparting knowledge or exchanging information or news. “Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may have linguistic or nonlinguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes.” Through communication, “Humans convey information through a variety of methods: speaking, telephones, emails, blogs, TV, art, hand gestures, facial expressions, body language, and even social context.”

As different from mere communication, effective communication draws on several interpersonal and intrapersonal skills:

These include speaking, listening, observation, questioning, processing, analyzing and evaluating. Recipients of a message must be able to identify the sender’s intent, take into account the message’s context, show understanding, resolve any misunderstandings, accurately decode the information and decide how to act on it. Such skills are essential to learning, forming healthy relationships, creating a sense of community and achieving success in the workplace.

Effective communication is a two-way street, involving the speaker and the listener or recipient. It is a dual responsibility of the speaker and the listener. In short, it is and should be a matter of mutually beneficial interlocution—discussion or conversation. “The essence of communication is the intelligibility to speak in such ways as to
understand and be understood. This is also called enunciation, defined as the articulation of speech regarded from the point of view of its intelligibility to the audience. More often than not, effective communication is a major source of frustration in a new and different culture. This does not only involve trying to cope with communicating in a foreign language, but it also involves getting used to the communication techniques and styles.\textsuperscript{668}

But since it is reasonable to argue that effective communication is more the responsibility of the one who is culturally competent, then, it makes sense to also argue that this aspect of cultural competence requires being on site—in a given region—for an extended period of time. This is very important if the speaker and recipient must “share a common language or means of understanding each other.”\textsuperscript{669} And in this case, understanding involves active meaning-making across various cultural contexts. Against this backdrop, effective communication is considered a requirement and a skill (ability, capability and capacity) associated with cultural competence. Because of its importance, it is even argued that this ability is among the many ways of assessing cultural competence. This explains why “Scholars who study communication analyze that development of communication skills in humans and theorize about how communication can be made more effective.”\textsuperscript{670}

With effective communication considered [as] a quintessence of cultural competence, it is expected that:

People with cultural competence must have the capacity to express both their own views and how diverse audiences may perceive different meanings from the same
information and how that impacts communication. This implies listening to others and using appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviors, languages, and strategies.\textsuperscript{671}

To emphasize, far from its limited understanding, communication includes, but is not limited to, language—verbal or non-verbal or gestures—which tends to vary from culture to culture. This (communication) tool also includes linguistic competence, which in an organizational setting is defined as “The capacity of an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively, and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences including persons of limited English proficiency, those who have low literacy skills or are not literate, individuals with disabilities, and those who are deaf or hard of hearing\textsuperscript{672} and of course, those who only speak a certain language—to whom services and support must be delivered in the preferred language and/or mode of delivery. This entails that written materials are translated, adapted, and/or provided in alternative formats, even if it requires an interpreter, based on the needs and preferences of the person and population served. To ensure quality and satisfaction, consumers should be or are expected to be engaged in the evaluation of language access and other communication services. Hence to achieve cultural competence, the organization must have policy, structures, practices, procedures, and dedicated resources to support this capacity of effective communication.

To strengthen the case for the linguistic aspect of communication, Goode states that “It is extremely difficult to be a culturally competent provider in an organization or system that does not support you with policy, structures, and resources.”\textsuperscript{673} Goode’s
statement points to the need for policies to advance and sustain cultural and linguistic competence of which, the National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) has documented as the most underdeveloped area of the many cultural competence efforts within health and mental health care systems. Policy is key because: *it sets the mission and vision of organizations and institutions*; *it supports the practitioners and professionals with resources to implement culturally and linguistically competent practice*; *it measures the success of practitioners and professionals along with the organization and institution in terms of how they serve diverse groups*; *it institutionalizes cultural and linguistic competence in the organization or institution, as the case may be.*

To increase the emphasis and draw attention to the benefit from policies as well as their sustainability, the NCCC has identified organizational policy as key to supporting culturally and linguistic competent practice and developed several policy briefs, guides, and checklists that discuss the importance of related policies, structures, procedures, and practices. Following is a checklist of questions provided by NCCC to facilitate the development of culturally and linguistically competent primary healthcare policies and structures. The beauty of this list of questions is that, the ideas can be borrowed, adapted and so extended to other human services fields, including educational or academic institutions. Thus:

Does the primary care system, organization or program or other human services institution—as the case may be—have the following ideas put in place to guide policies on cultural competence:
(1) A mission statement that articulates its principles, rationale and values for culturally and linguistically competent health care and other human services delivery? (2) Policies and procedures that support a practice model which incorporates culture in the delivery of services to culturally and linguistically diverse groups? (3) Structures to ensure the meaningful participation of consumers and communities in planning delivery and evaluation of services? (4) Procedures to review policy and procedures systematically to assess their relevance for the delivery of culturally competent services? (5) Policies and procedures for staff recruitment, hiring and retention that will achieve the goal of a diverse and culturally competent workforce? (6) Policies and resources to support ongoing professional development and in-service training (at all levels) for awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills in the area of cultural and linguistic competence? (7) Policies to ensure that new staff are provided with training, technical assistance and other supports necessary to work within culturally and linguistically diverse communities? (8) Position descriptions and personnel/performance measures that include skill sets related to cultural and linguistic competence? (9) Fiscal support and incentives for the improvement of cultural competence at the board, agency, program and staff levels? (11) Policies for and procedures to review periodically the current and emergent demographic trends for the given geographic where service is delivered? (12) Methods to identify and acquire knowledge about health beliefs and practices, as well as knowledge about differential learning of
emergent populations or new students in service delivery areas? (13) Policies and allocated resources for the provision of translation and interpretation services, and communication in alternative formats? (14) Policies and resources that support community outreach initiatives for those with limited English proficiency and/or population that are not literate or have low literacy skills? (15) Requirements that contracting procedures and proposals and/or request for services include culturally and linguistically competent practices?  

People often differ on many bases such as culture, geography, religion/faith, ideology, economic status, physical looks/appearances, and other factors/idiosyncrasies. To this end, culturally competent people must be able to thoughtfully, sensitively, and considerably differentiate among audiences and accordingly adapt to their peculiar situations in communication. Because we live in a world that is linguistically diverse and technology-driven, knowledge of other languages, proficiency with a variety of media and new technologies as well as the how [that is, the modus] to communicate, is another component in effectively communicating ideas cross-culturally. Being familiar and versed in these aspects can ameliorate communicative tensions and ultimately, cultural misunderstanding. Regarding the reality of new technologies and the different modus of communication they bring, Fantini writes:

In today’s world, globalization trends and new technologies have had dramatic effects on people around the globe. More people than ever before in the history of the world now have both direct and indirect contact with each other, and
increasingly, this contact includes people from a variety of diverse language and cultural backgrounds. This phenomenon has produced not only new communicative opportunities for everyone involved but significant new challenges as well. As a result, many people are finding that they need to develop new abilities to be able to communicate across their language-culture differences. This means not only making themselves understood—in their own tongue, the interlocutor’s tongue, or a third language not native to either part—but, perhaps more important, also learning new behaviors and interactional styles that go beyond those of their native systems. The expansion of one’s communicative repertoire is important, especially since acceptance is not usually achieved on one’s own terms but rather on the terms of one’s interlocutors or hosts. Moreover, communication and acceptance are more likely to be strained by offending behaviors and less so by the use of incorrect grammar. These insights, recognized some 50 years ago, in fact stimulated the development of the field of intercultural communication (Wright, 199, 11).677

The idea of being versed in different ways of communicating does not mean only the ability to verbally communicate with the local populace678; it also entails what is known as code-switching. Explaining this, Lakalea writes that “The concept of speaking, talking or sounding different from time to time is known as code switching. Heather Coffey, a PhD in culture, curriculum and change at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill defines code switching as ‘the practice of moving between variations of languages in different contexts.’ Columbia University English Professor Dr. Marc Lamont Hill states
that code switching is used ‘to provide some kind of either social distance or social proximity to the people with whom you’re speaking.’ Code switching is a challenge. But it is an important ability in cultural competence that should be learned and taught.

The challenge in teaching students the capacity to effectively communicate cross-culturally and across many related spectrums, including personal differences in communication, requires that instructors create multiple opportunities to practice and reflect on complex communication styles. “Students must learn to do more than focus on how and what to communicate to another person. They must also examine why, where, when, and to whom to communicate in meaningful ways.” In short, culturally competent people need to communicate at a higher level of sophistication wherein they are expected to effectively communicate and objectively articulate cultural points of views and related ideas.

It is in light of the importance of effective communication that fields of study have been established to address the subject and meet the requirements, demands, and expectations therein. The subject spans a broad, interesting and rich array of disciplines, including sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science, linguistics, entrepreneurship, history, literature, criticism, rhetoric and so on. Needless to say effective communication has large payoffs in business and advertising, film and theater, composition, foreign policy, and in education as a whole. In all this, communication is applicable and proves, not only very useful, but also foundational to success. Against this backdrop, it is a statement of fact to say that the curriculum of priestly training stands to benefit a great deal from the inclusion of a course or courses on effective communication.
Or if such already exists, stepping up the emphasis is a clarion call. In the meantime, based on personal experience and the available literature, it might be safe to borrow the observation by Fantini to the effect that:

Despite many years that have passed, however, many intercultural educators, while intensely concerned with perceptions, behaviors, and interactional strategies, continue to ignore the role that proficiency in the host language plays during an intercultural encounter, leaving this as the task of language teachers. And language teachers, conversely (culture notes aside), while intensely concerned with language, generally ignore behavioral and interactional aspects of communication, viewing themselves as “language” teachers, not teachers of “intercultural competence” (Sercu, 2006, Sercu et al., 2005). Yet, all three—language, behaviors, and interactional strategies—together form speech acts when dealing interculturally just as they do within one’s own culture, and all three are needed for intercultural communication.681

Fantini’s perspective makes effective communication—within one’s native culture and interculturally—the focus of cultural and intercultural competence assessment. Calling it an external assessment tool, Fantini presents a list of instruments that constitutes and measures effective communication: language acquisition, which includes foreign or second language development and proficiency and cross-cultural behavior through communication.682

Communication in all its facets is an indispensable aspect of cultural competence. The benefit of including a communication course in the curriculum of priestly training
that emphasizes language, behaviors and interactional strategies is that it can be tailored toward classes on hermeneutics, social interaction, and cultural studies, with the aim of aiding the achievement of cultural competence. In fact, given the fact and recognition of diversity, multiculturalism, globalization by the church, which all create the need for “The New Evangelization,” not to mention the trend in the global redistribution of priests, effective communication training and workshops should become more relevant and exciting than ever.

At the end of the day, just like “students who earn degrees in communication often hold highly influential positions as journalists, editors, university professors, public relations officers, marketing consultants, speech writers, filmmakers, motivational speakers and political campaign managers” the same is true about priests who can communicate effectively in the delivery of priestly services. Arguably, with this ability they can have the capability to make people reimagine, reassess and reconstruct preconceived cultural ideas and religious notions. To effectively communicate is to shape and reshape the world. But since communication is not the only tool or skill associated with cultural competence, the question is “What abilities are needed in addition to language, for successful intercultural interaction” that speak to cultural competence and the acquisition of which?

**Objective Investigation of the Host Culture and Other Pressing Cultural Issues: Collaboration**

Objective investigation is all about the question of reliability, trustworthiness, and/or dependability and even consistency—built on or based on facts, not so much on
truth. As defined by Merriam and Associates, “Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study were repeated, would it yield the same results?”

To this end, we can appreciate the description of objective information as something that is “observable: able to be seen, heard or touched, smelled, tasted, factual, able to be counted, able to be described, able to be imitated, the same from multiple reporters, as close to the truth as we can get, and helpful in decision making.”

It is about something that is real and actually exists. On the contrary, subjective information has the following characteristics, “opinion; judgment; assumption; belief; rumor; suspicion; varies: person-to-person; day-to-day; able to take on a life of its own; not the truth; sometimes completely false; destructive in decision making.”

On its part, objective language has been described as something that a person can honestly claim or say that he saw, counted, observed, did, etc. It is akin to a been there, done that kind of claim. On the opposite side, subjective language is one that dwells on and comes out of one’s thoughts, feelings, worldview, and so on. It is mostly couched with the intent to self-protect, self-indulge, self-promote, self-serve, and other related ideas aimed at personal satisfaction, fulfillment, and even complacency of a person. It’s a language best captured in the famous informal expression: me, myself and I. It goes without saying that, given the relational understanding of cultural competence, the applicative interpretation of this expression to this concept has far reaching implications and dangerous consequences to all in a cultural setting. To that end, to avoid any immediate tension and feature backlash in investigating and reporting, especially for public consumption, the ability to objectively investigate the host culture and other
pressing cultural issues is highly recommended in cultural competence, even as it is expected of a culturally competent person. Hence, Veronica Boix Mansilla and Anthony Jackson write that “Culturally competent people are able to identify an issue, generate a question, and explain the significance of locally, regionally, and cross-culturally focused research questions.”

In other words, culturally competent people must have the ability to objectively investigate both the native culture and the host culture, particularly the latter. And by extension, they should be able to apply that knowledge in investigating other pressing cultural issues. In order to bring this about, a culturally competent person asks and explores questions of critical cultural significance. For instance, questions such as these are relevant and fall within the purview of the analysis of cultural competence: What is the cultural significance of female circumcision and its impact on the practice of the “rite of passage” for women in some ethnic groups in Africa? How are the people of a given culture prepared to adapt to change? How does humor differ in the US and in Afghanistan? These questions are culturally significant. They address contextual human experiences and phenomena that have historical and cultural roots that concern and affect a large number of people in a given region. They shed light on the diversity of views and differences in perceiving a given practice by people in our multicultural world. It is through cultural competence that people can investigate more deeply into these questions, including the related, pressing cultural issues of our time and establish why they merit study.
Through careful framing of the questions and the patience needed for a thorough investigation, important problems like these become researchable. In the research, culturally competent people do not seek a pre-established right or wrong answer; rather they engage intellectually and emotionally in searching for and weighing informed responses. To do so, they identify, collect, and analyze credible information from a variety of sources, beginning with the local to the national and international. In this way, investigators can weigh and integrate evidence to create a coherent response and draw supportable and defensible conclusions—in writing an essay, publishing a book, designing a solution, proposing a scientific explanation, or creating a project to improve conditions. Furthermore, with ongoing investigation, they can reflect current social perspectives and cultural values. Not to mention that they have or should have the ability to direct and criticize public opinion, as well as the capability to shape mindset and reshape the world.

Along with forming good research questions comes yet another related or connected ability associated with cultural competence: conducting qualitative research in some of its traditions or approaches. As an educator or researcher, it is expected that a person with cultural competence skills should be an objective, unbiased, unprejudiced and seasoned inquirer, honest reporter, and an effective communicator of phenomenological research results, ethnographic research findings, case study research discoveries, and narrative analysis. Plus, he is seen as having the academic discipline and intellectual ability with the understanding thereto, to discover, generate, and develop a
grounded theory in qualitative research. Explaining these traditions or approaches, Merriam and Associates write:

…phenomenology focuses on the subjective experiences of the individual. Although all qualitative research is phenomenological in the sense that there is a focus on people’s experience, a phenomenological study seeks to understand the essence or structure of a phenomenon. This approach rejects the notion of a dichotomy between subject and object; that is, the reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual [p. 93]…An ethnographic study is the one that focuses on human society with the goal of describing and interpreting the culture of a group…Culture, the cornerstone of ethnography, has been studied from a number of perspectives. One common approach is to view culture as the knowledge people have acquired that in turn structures their worldview and their behavior [p. 236]…While some define case research in terms of the process of doing a case study (Yin, 1994), or in terms of the end product, other scholars define the case in terms of the unit of analysis. As Stake (2000, p. 435) suggests, case study is less of a methodological choice than “a choice of what is to be studied.” The “what” is a bounded system (Smith, 1978), a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. The case then has a finite quality about it either in terms of time (the evolution or history of a particular program), space (the case is located in a particular place), and/or components comprising the case (number of participants, for example) [p. 178]…Life narratives, or narrative analysis is a form of qualitative research
growing in popularity. Narratives are first-person accounts of experiences that are in story format having a beginning, middle, and end. Other terms for these stories of experiences are biography, life history, oral history, auto-ethnography autobiography [p. 286]…As with other forms of qualitative research, grounded theory is “the study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 522), the investigator is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and the mode of inquiry is inductive. The end product of grounded theory is the building of substantive theory—theory that emerges from or is “grounded” in the data. Theory is “inductively derived from the phenomenon it represents. That is, discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon.

Collaboration

When it comes to objective investigation of cultures and other pressing cultural issues, as well as the research abilities, according to the different traditions or approaches, one important and essential action in cultural competence is collaboration. Looking ahead, collaborative action is also an essential element in the analysis of the ability of taking action to improve cultural conditions, as unpacked in the pages following. Simply defined, collaboration is the action of working with someone or some people to produce or create something. It is a recursive process where two or more people, organizations or institutions work together to realize shared goals. According to Rouse, “Collaboration is a joint effort of multiple individuals or work group to accomplish a task or
Collaboration may be asynchronous, in which case those collaborating are not necessarily working together (and in communication) at the same time; in contrast, collaboration may be synchronous (this is known as real-time collaboration), in which collaborative partners are working together simultaneously and in communication as they work.”

In the area of culture, the term refers to an action of working with an insider (or insiders) who has (or have) a deeper knowledge of the culture in the effort to create, produce, write, and especially disseminate information about a given culture. This endeavor is best served by putting into action the act of critical thinking, critical listening, and critical readership. Collaboration calls not only for coordination, but most importantly, for cooperation between the researcher and the researched and requires an authentic connection with each other—among all the people involved in the project. And with authentic connection, comes accountability. In cultural competence, such collaboration is like empathy, which is one of the highest points on the hierarchy or totem pole of understanding, as herein discussed in the six facets of understanding.

Among other things, in real collaboration, there is constant conversation and effective communication. This helps in avoiding gaps, correcting wrong ideas, checking misinformation or reexamining misleading information, and reinvestigating facts before they are reported as cultural research findings. The importance of this cannot be overstated because cultural misrepresentation creates an uncomfortable feeling and is a dangerous idea with untold consequences. Again, with collaboration comes the advantage of enhancing the effectiveness of whatever services that are provided by using the
available resources to maximize results. Thus, in the face of scarce resources and
demanding needs, not only in secular affairs but also in ecclesiastical services, the need to
work together collaboratively is much needed today, more than ever before. It is against
this backdrop that in her one-stop or “Full-Service Schools” movement, Dryfoos believes
that full-service schools are a natural and logical way to develop effective collaboration
with community partners that will enhance the needed services for children and families,
especially regarding the perceived needs of at-risk families. From the collaborative
experience of or in the Full-Service Schools, one might say that it is unarguably true that
collaboration and coordination among school educators and human services providers are
the foundation, bedrock, pillars, and the cornerstones of effective and successful service
delivery. This extends to the context of priestly ministry in all cultures wherein imbibing
the culture of collaboration is sorely needed.

Important though collaboration might be in the abilities associated with cultural
competence, it must be recognized that the many important opportunities that might be
created for learning the deep cultures of people through collaboration, are not without
challenges. First of all, collaboration, whether in investigating or reporting, is time
consuming, difficult, and nerve-racking. Second, it requires many resources—material,
financial and information wise. Third is the challenge of interpreting materials from a
broad variety of sources—sources that often disagree. The fourth challenge is about the
“unstatic,” dynamic, and ever-changing nature of culture, which brings about the issue of
reliability. Thus, “Reliability is a problem in the social sciences simply because human
behavior is never static, nor is what many experience necessarily more reliable than what one experiences.”

Therefore, replication of cultural studies about people of a cultural region might not yield the same results, over time. But this does not totally discredit the results of any particular study; there can be numerous interpretations of the same data and phenomenon. “The more important question for qualitative researchers is whether the results are consistent with the data collected.” In light of all these challenges, people striving for cultural competence must understand that investigating cultures is not merely a fact-gathering exercise or simply an information-gathering activity, but rather a systematic effort to address a phenomenon that is dynamic, and so must be capable of generating meaningful research questions. And this research question is also capable of generating other research questions and so on.

Incidentally, because of the depth of cultures, the multilayered nature, and the long history, a lot of culturally significant research questions are not often addressed in textbooks. For instance, using my own side of the Nigerian culture (the Etung culture) as a case in point, a question about the belief in the traditional “Arim” festivity is not found in any textbook. For information purposes, the “Arim” festivity is an occasion where the community comes together under a certain tree and appeals to the god of fertility to hear the cry and yearning for children from barren women—while sharing food with little children who gather around. It should be understood that the tree in question is not worshipped; it only serves as a location for the occasion. Also, it makes sense to think that the little ones gathered for the occasion are thought to be an attraction to the unborn
in the spirit world, to welcome them into the physical world, since they’d not be alone; but would have the company of other children. Cultural practices such as the Arim festivity belong to the research questions in cultural competence discourse, even as they demand a collaborative investigation and objective reporting of the research findings.

Not only for the fact of avoiding subjectivity in investigating and reporting, but also to emphasize the importance of objective information, there are academic disciplines devoted to promoting and ensuring the practice of the latter—objectivity. For instance, Ohio Department of Education has a module on “Student Learning Objective Information,” wherein it emphasizes long-term academic engagement and an investment in the lessons therein for better measurability and assessment of student knowledge. Penn State Learning Design Community Hub has what is called “Basic Information About Objectives,” which in some sense, speaks to the importance of objective information and how to acquire the “desirable knowledge, skills, or attitudes.”

Along this line of argument in the perspective of collaboration, there are volumes of literature (on collaboration) to aid and complement the effort toward partnership. For instance, the work of Corrigan, D. is telling: “The Changing Role of Schools and Higher Education Institutions with respect to Community-Based Interagency Collaboration and Interprofessional Partnerships.” Edwards, et al. write on Improving Inter-professional Collaboration: A Multi-Agency working for children’s wellbeing. In its online abstract, the book makes the point that “Inter-professional collaborations are invaluable
relationships which can prevent the social exclusion of children and young people and are now a common feature of welfare policies worldwide.” Furthermore, the book:

Gives examples from practitioners developing inter-professional practices and allows readers to reflect on their relevance for their own work; Emphasizes what needs to be learned for responsive inter-professional work and how that learning can be promoted; Examines how professional and organizational learning are intertwined; Suggests how organizations can provide conditions to support the enhanced forms of professional practices revealed in the study; Reveals the professional motives driving the practice as well as how they are founded and sustained.700

As teachers, or as teachers to be, who teach the church congregation and share lots of information, especially cultural information, objectivity in such information sharing and collaboration in service delivery is highly expected of all priests, especially international priests. This is even expected on a higher standard by virtue of their vocation or priestly calling. To that end, structures should be put in place during the formative years of priests to nurture and encourage this important ability of objective investigation of cultures and other pressing cultural issues through collaboration, no matter the challenges. The dividends of this are priceless.

**Recognition and Respect for Multiple Cultural Perspectives**

This ability, capacity, or capability examines the need to recognize, respect, and appreciate multiple cultural perspectives. The goal is one of recognizing cultural differences, respecting cultural uniqueness, facilitating intercultural interaction, and
learning about others. To exercise this ability demonstrates the required intellectual
humility that is an essential characteristic associated with the acquisition of cultural
competence, wherein a person becomes consciously aware and openly acknowledges that
he or she is not an encyclopedia, does not know it all, and he/she may be wrong.
Furthermore, such recognition and respect is an empowerment of other people to
appreciate their cultural backgrounds that might have given them the worldview they
have or the perspective they currently hold about people, ideas, issues, phenomena and
experiences. The results of the attitude captured in this ability are many, among which is
the experience of the beauty of and riches in diversity. Making the point, the Ohio State
Counseling Consultant Service, on its website states:

We believe that all humans are bonded not only by universal longings for justice,
peace, growth, and community, but also, paradoxically, by our diversity. The
range of human diversity we [recognize, respect], value includes, but is not
limited to, age, disability status, ethnicity, gender, language, nationality, physical
appearance, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Our
diversity enlivens, challenges, and ultimately strengthens the human community,
thereby enhancing our ability to survive and thrive.701

As intimately associated with cultural competence, the ability to recognize and
respect multiple cultural perspectives communicates the message and encourages a
viewing of each individual as unique and as being able to contribute something positive
to the company, organization, or institution. It recognizes that each person on a team has
talent and ideas that can make a difference and contribute for better growth. “When
different points of view come together on a project, the end result will be more well thought out and detailed than if only one group of similar individuals works on it.”

Due to the necessity to build respect in the culturally diverse world as seen in the workplace, classroom, and neighborhood, many materials have been published to aid, encourage, guide, and assist in the process of acquiring this ability. Emphasis in the related literature is on the benefit of appreciating and respecting diversity. Thus, it is observed and stated in context of the classroom that “Teacher regard for the cultures represented in the classroom builds a respectful, trusting climate—one where literature can function to bring very different people to common ground.”

A contextual analysis of this ability logically leads to the accountable or understandable assertion that:

Culturally competent people are able to recognize and express their own perspective on situations, events, issues, experiences, or phenomena and identify the influences on that perspective, as well as examine perspectives of other people, groups, or schools of thought and identify the influences on those perspectives.

An important association with cultural competence is recognizing that just like one has his own perspective and is free to express it in a given situation, another person may hold a particular perspective—one that others may not share. This must be understood. Some examples of such perspectives are how economic conditions may inform individual’s expectations for their lives; how culture may dictate world’s perception; how religion may inform people’s sense of neighbor and responsibility, to mention a few. Deploying their knowledge of culture, history and current events,
culturally competent people are able to compare their own perspectives with those of others. “And when needed, they can integrate these various viewpoints to synthesize a new one”—the kind of comprehensive perspective vital to addressing complex cultural and global issues. In fact, even to produce coherent arguments despite disagreements in perspectives, culturally competent educators, students, and researchers must not only offer their own evidence—their own perspectives—but must also consider counterarguments for two or more perspectives on an issue. This is an unbiased stance, which can create an opportunity to revisit one’s former or original perspectives, critically, and perhaps, gratefully. On the whole, building strong, evidence-based arguments from multiple perspectives in all fields of inquiry is a tasking ability and difficult skill to acquire, but a most valuable and necessary one in today’s multicultural setting.

In spite of the opportunities indwelling this capacity, it must be noted that it comes with some challenges. Thus, besides the delicate process by which people develop their beliefs and perspectives about themselves and then, about others through dialogue, ongoing interaction and study, the challenge of recognizing and respecting multiple cultural perspectives is twofold: first, overcoming social stereotypes and second, developing cross-cultural or intercultural understanding. On the part of educators, it should be pointed out that to be successful nurturers of cultural competence in their students so that they respect multiple cultural perspectives, they (teachers) must understand the delicate tensions involved in studying other people’s cultural worldviews. They must reflect on their own perspectives and offer students ample practice in doing the same—in informed and respectful ways.
Taking Action to Improve Cultural Conditions

Associated with cultural competence is the capacity to identify and create opportunities for personal or collaborative action to address situations, events, issues, or phenomena in ways that improve conditions.\(^{710}\)

Arguably, of all the abilities associated with cultural competence, none is as impactful, and important as taking action to improve cultural conditions—one’s own cultural conditions and those of others. Culturally competent people are not and should not be content with being bystanders, observers, and doers of nothing. They are people who take initiatives and are active participants in cultural affairs and in other experiences that improve conditions. Therefore, action defines and sets them apart. Such action comes in many ways, including use of the pen in writing to document experiences with the intent to inform, educate and empower. For this action of objective writing to happen, the driving force demands calling upon one of the six facets of understanding, empathy, in a radical and revolutionary sense of the word, for the good of the given situation and the people experiencing it. That is why Jane Fonda—an American actress, writer, political activist, former fashion model, and fitness guru—said on Oprah Winfrey show that “Empathy is revolutionary.” It gets you going and forces you to want to do something about a situation to improve it by making it better, of course.

It should be made crystal clear that the kind of empathy talked about in this study is not the kind that unreasonably compromises, or worst of all, allows what is inherently bad to exist in another culture simply because that kind of behavior is acceptable or overlooked in a person’s native culture. Little wonder that when a director of an
acculturation program for foreign-born priests was asked about one of the problems with such priests, his response is a clear case of putting empathy where it belongs. Thus, he’s said to have responded: “I would say misuse of money and women, particularly for the Africans. Just because culturally they look at women very, very differently, and so we have to understand that. But they also have to understand that that is not acceptable in this culture.”

This thoughtful response makes understanding a two-way street. This is important in the understanding of cultural competence.

Galvanized by empathy, taking action to improve cultural conditions is so important because, for the most part, people are measured more by their actions and not so much by their ideas and ideologies, thoughts and feelings, or intentions. Hence, the apt caveat by Ernest Hemingway: “Never mistake motion for action.”

Culturally competent people do more than just experience other cultures, collect knowledge about the world and gloat in telling stories. Rather, like avant garde or vanguards, they are creatively active in the innovation and application of new concepts and techniques in a given field, even as they are good in application and adaptation of creative ideas in other fields. They seek to make a positive lasting difference in the world, beginning with the local environment, in context, their native culture. Furthermore, they do not postpone their useful and “much needed” contributions for ‘until when I grow up, or “Later, when I’m successful.”

This way of thinking leads to action happening by inaction. Impressing the urgency of taking action, Fishman et al. paint this compelling picture of a familiar experience of young graduates: “You’re young, ambitious, entering the field of your dreams; you’re on your own, the competition is fierce – and then you see
your chances: the big story, the big role, the big discovery…What chances would you take?714 The answer: take the risk by taking action. As risk-takers and believers in their dreams, thanks to hard work, culturally competent people act immediately; they do not put off action until they have the money or the time to do it. “Rather they see and create opportunities to act today—in their neighborhoods or on the global stage,”715 believing that their dreams would come true, even as they remain unrelenting and working hard. They are not content with merely having excellent ideas that are not followed with action. Such is an ineffectual and unproductive way of living. It is not a flourishing life and [it is] far from bringing satisfaction and fulfillment. The inaction neither brings nor makes any difference in a cultural setting. According to Schwartz, “Excellent ideas are not enough. An only fair idea acted upon, and developed, is 100 percent better than a terrific idea that dies because it isn’t followed up.”716

Furthermore, culturally competent people “don’t fall into the trap of thinking, ‘When my boss recognizes my talent, then I will start doing my best work, or, As soon as I get another job, then I will be happy. Or perhaps, When my children grow up, then I can pursue my dreams’”717 This way of thinking is like waiting for the “perfect” and “right” time. And, as experience shows, “The time is never right”718 of which Mycoskie rightly observes, “One of the key fears that we all have is fear that this is the wrong time to start whatever our project is and we should wait until the ‘time is right.’”719 But we forget that the time is always right to do the right thing particularly taking action for something that matters. The point is that if you wait for the timing to be right before you make a move—take action—you may never take action at all. Buttressing the point, Mycoskie recalls:
Tim Ferris, author of the bestselling *The 4-Hour Workweek*, has this to say about timing: ‘For all the most important things, the timing always sucks. Waiting for a good time to quit your job? The stars will never align and the traffic lights of life will never be green at the same time. The universe doesn’t conspire against you, but it doesn’t go out of its way to line up all the pins either. Conditions are never perfect. “Someday” is a disease that will take your dreams to the grave with you…. If it’s important to you and you want to do it “eventually,” just do it and correct course along the way.’

On the note of waiting for the “perfect” time to take action, Schwartz points out that “Perfection is highly desirable. But nothing man-made or man-designed is, or can be, absolutely perfect. So to wait for the perfect set of conditions is to wait forever.” That having been said, culturally competent people make up their minds to do something about their ideas. They are not afraid. They know that every day thousands of people bury good ideas because they are either afraid to act on them or waiting for the perfect condition. To avoid falling into this stasis, they take action, knowing that conditions will never be perfect. At the end of the day, whatever is the outcome of their action, they stand behind the philosophical statement that “A good idea if not acted upon produces terrible psychological pain. But a good idea acted upon brings enormous mental satisfaction.”

Along with bringing about change and making positive contributions to cultural situations, it is believed that the test of a culturally competent person is not the ability to eliminate all problems by taking action, but rather the ability to find solutions to
difficulties when he encounters them. Every venture presents risks, problems and uncertainties.

The important idea of taking action and acting “today” is a philosophy of life that is worth imbibing because, we are people of the present who live in the here and now—and not just future citizens. Little wonder, while he was sitting in a Birmingham jail, Martin Luther King Jr., wrote an open letter to several clergymen. “For years now I heard the word, ‘Wait!’ It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity,’ …‘This Wait!’ has almost always meant ‘Never.’”

To recapitulate: It is against the backdrop of shunning procrastination and embracing the philosophy of the fierce urgency of doing something now that culturally competent people are not afraid to take risk. As risk-takers, alone or in collaboration to be “part of something bigger” and long lasting, ethically and creatively, they envision and weigh options for action based on evidence, insight, and self-confidence. “They can assess the potential impact of their plans, taking into account varied perspectives and potential consequences for others. And they demonstrate courage—in acting and in reflecting on their actions.” That is why “capacity is a state of mind. How much we can do depends on how much we think we can do. When you really believe you can do more, your mind thinks creatively and shows you the way.” Therefore, culturally competent people see that they are active participants in local cultures and world events, with the power to create ideas, influence opinions and contribute to improvements. It should be noted that taking action to improve cultural conditions must not and does not mean being an originator of an idea for action. It can mean something as important as contributing to
the work many others are doing—or have begun. It’s about finding a cause that matters and the person concerned, believes in its benefits and has a passion for it.

Taking action to improve cultural conditions is arduous and has lots of challenges. First of all, it demands the gathering of real-world experiences. Second, it requires finding a template as a point of reference: where can you find a similar project? Who started it? Did it succeed? How is it sustained? What’s its impact on the community and the culture as a whole? Third, because of the need to hear other people’s opinions and get their views—even though they may not have the final say or offer the last word—the importance of talking things over with a select few cannot be overemphasized. And this, too, is a challenge: whom can you trust? Who is interested in your idea? On this note, it is advisable to run away from toxic people or idea killers. “Instead, surround yourself with others who are positive, who support you and want you to succeed.” Corroboratively, Giuliani impresses this point in a related context with no-nonsense advice: “Surround yourself with great people.” Having done this himself as mayor of New York City, he confesses: “Looking back, I believe that the skill I developed better than any other was surrounding myself with great people. The group in place on September 11 proved to be exceptionally strong—especially since so much of what we had to do in the light of the disaster had no precedent.”

The importance of surrounding yourself with people who are positive and supportive of your intent to take action for a worthy cause is one of those times to heed the advice from people who share your values, vision and dreams, even if it means such
people massaging your ego. This idea has a lot of boosts from life experience and many writers write about or allude to it. For instance, in his book, Mycoskie writes:

Having a group of enthusiastic people around you, all busy working toward the success of your enterprise, gives you confidence, makes you feel legitimate, and, ultimately, helps make whatever idea you are trying to create a reality.730

Sometimes, even when determined to move forward and make a difference, finding people of common interest can be difficult, especially to people who are keeping it close to their chest—secret—as they contemplate an idea for [taking] action. The difficulty, notwithstanding, it’s good to be quiet, thoughtful and very careful about everything. While you have amazing ideas and plenty of passion to drive you forward, it is not easy gaining the trust and support of people who matter, people who you need to believe in your dreams. Given this situation, in the alternative, it is suggested or advised—born of experience—that surrounding oneself with inspirational quotations from relevant and related books you’ve read is a helpful means of staking the fire and sustaining the momentum. Again, Mycoskie advises: “How? Quotes. Quotes from people who have seen their way through fear and failure and still risen. Surround yourself with these powerful words… ‘Change your thoughts and you change your world’ — Norman Vincent Peale; ‘Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up’ — Thomas Edison; ‘Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm’ — Winston Churchill. Thus, this way of helping oneself to stay on task, in spite of the fear of the unknown and failure, has played a huge role in getting people past their own fears and insecurities throughout their
careers and ventures. Writing about his own journey of taking action, Mycoskie discloses:

In addition to surrounding myself with short quotes, I read biographies…My favorite books have always been biographies of successful entrepreneurs and other inspiring people. For example, when I started my cable-television business, I made a point to read the biography and autobiography of every figure in the business I could find, like that of Ted Turner, who founded CNN. When I started TOMS, I read about Richard Branson (founder of Virgin), Yvon Chouinard (founder of Patagonia), Mary Kay (founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics), Herb Kelleher (CEO of Southwest Airlines), Howard Schutlz (CEO of Starbucks), and others whose businesses were devoted to both profit and large mission…Learning how someone else is already doing the thing you want to do, or a version of it, can eliminate fear—every path is easy to follow when you see someone else’s footsteps already on it.\textsuperscript{732}

As stated previously, collaboration is an essential element in taking action. Since this idea has already been analyzed in this study under the ability to \textit{investigate the host culture and other pressing cultural issues}, suffice an example of a practical and typical story about taking action to improve conditions [even if not strictly cultural], that brings to the fore the dividends of collaboration:

Eighth-grade students at the Aki Kurose Middle School in Seattle have been studying the impact of global food crises on communities around the world—including their own. Through the Bridges of Understanding (BU) afterschool
program, students analyze digital stories by children in India and South Africa, exchanging ideas about rising food prices and community work. Determined to address this global problem by contributing locally, students created two edible gardens at their school. Vegetables were donated to the local food bank, and students produced their own digital story to share.733

This story leaves the reader with some lessons: First, it shows how collaboration/partnership and sharing of ideas by people of different cultures could be used in mitigating global problems from a local setting. Second, it sought to borrow ideas by gathering insights from more experienced people in order to advance a cause for the common good. Thanks to the observation made in the story that: “Once in the forum, a teacher in rural India expressed his appreciation in learning about food banks for the first time…Students seized the opportunity to explain how food banks work…”734

Third, the story highlights the importance of thinking big but beginning small—right from where you are, in this context, from one’s home and within local conditions. The latter lesson buttresses the importance and affirms the imperative in the universal urging to think globally and act locally to improve cultural conditions. Improving cultural conditions is a broadly conceived idea. It speaks to doing something about whatever those conditions might be with a focus on one or two conditions, since it might be impossible to solve all human problems, in this case, all cultural issues. It also points to beginning with the idea of creating a local solution to a global challenge. It’s best not to regard your next step of translating ideas into action as a gigantic project that would solve all problems and tremendously improve conditions. “Think about it as a small step on a
This is not to discourage thinking big. However, as good as thinking big may sound:

it’s a common mistake shared by lots of people starting a business…By starting small, you can work through your story, try out your idea, and test your mettle.

There’s a Japanese concept known as kaisen, which says that small improvements made every day will lead to a massive improvement overall.

Working through your story, trying out your idea, and testing your mettle as one takes action also entails two more things: seeking advice either by meeting personally and talking with people or communicating via the Internet—networking, it is called. To say that seeking as much advice as one can is equally important, is to belabor the obvious as one undertakes the journey to the unknown. “You can often get great advice from all kinds of people if you just ask. Yes, some people probably won’t talk to you, no matter how intelligent you approach them. But you’d be surprised how many are more than happy to help,” especially if the people involved share a common interest. Thus, it’s been found that people like to give advice to those with whom they empathize or in whom they see a version of themselves. Supporting the point, Mycoskie thus shares from experience: “So many times I’ve seen young women reach out to successful female entrepreneurs and get terrific advice because the latter identify with a version of themselves in former times.”

Speaking about networking through the Internet, it is a fact that one can use the Internet, to reach almost anyone to request advice and ask for help. In the past, you had to cold-call, set up meetings, arrange for transportation, deal with logistics, and so on. Now
you can write an email and in minutes receive great advice. All this is thanks to “social network,” a concept that Averil E. McClelland extensively analyzes in her dissertation, “An Analysis of the Concept of Social Network with Implications for the Study of Education.”

Social Network as a Resource for Taking Action

In McClelland’s dissertation (1986), Freeman and Peterson define a network as: “…an interconnected or interrelated group of individuals or institutional representatives formed to encourage communication among individuals who generally have no way to communicate directly, and to provide services that individual institutions cannot sustain on their own.” On the other hand, or by extension, social network, as a metaphor “refers to the social nature of human experience in general” wherein and through which people, via cyberspace, can converse, offer, and exchange ideas on a number of issues concerning life and all things surrounding the human condition as a whole. It is against this backdrop that in stating the obvious about cyberspace as a new frontier where something new and different is sweeping around the world, Inaku K. Egere (2012), curiously “wonders why many people are yet to accept the cyberspace as an authentic media for evangelization.”

As made possible by social media, which is in turn mediated through the web or cyberspace, social network barely existed a decade ago; today these sites are a force to reckon with—they can’t be ignored. Academia.edu, aNobii, Bebo, Classmates.com, Eons.com, Experience Project, Flickr, Facebook, LinkedIn, four-square, Gather.com, Gays.com, Goodreads, Google+, Gowalla, Instagram, LibraryThing, Myspace, Pinterest,
Playlist.com, SocialVibe, Twitter, and a host of new social networking websites every day allow people to interact easily and freely on general and specific interests. “The best thing about social media is that you don’t need money to benefit from them fully. They are the great leveling factors between companies with resources and those without.”

Altogether, they provide information on projects and share ideas that can encourage the taking of action regarding personal initiatives.

Among the many salient points in her work, McClelland brings to the fore some outstanding ideas in the concept of social network in regard to seeking assistance for action. Writing on the concept [of social network] as a strategy for action McClelland focuses on the phenomenon as an instrumental action. Thus:

Emphasis on instrumental action in social networks may be categorized in three ways. First, there are studies of help-seeking behavior. Granovetter, for example, has studied the ways in which individuals utilize network links to find a job; Lee has looked at linkages involved in seeking an abortion; and Lin has investigated processes of occupational status attainment in which individuals gain access to several types of social resources. [Furthermore]…some studies concern action within a network directed toward the provision of help. In these studies, an individual’s social network provides the mechanism for therapeutic intervention in problem situations or in mental illness. McKinlay, for example, investigated the network of relatives and friends who help a person decide to seek professional help. Similarly, Attneave describes the use of social network in an American Indian tribe to solve the problem of a misbehaving six year old child; and Collins
reports of the use of social networks as a means of providing nonprofessional day
care services for children.\textsuperscript{743}

Against the backdrop of the prevalence of social networks in our age—a
phenomenon that has become a model of society—in taking action to improve conditions,
a culturally competent person must avail himself of and take “advantage of the network
linkages and resources.”\textsuperscript{744} This is advisable and necessary if he must introduce
innovation and produce change, and ensure growth. This makes sense because “to the
characteristics of social networks per se has been added the notion that such
characteristics may serve as resources for action, and that they resemble, or complement,
new social conditions.”\textsuperscript{745} From what’s been said so far, it is arguably clear that
“Deliberately creating networks often have one or more of the following goals: the
diffusion of new information or innovation, the exchange of information or scarce
resources, and the encouragement of social support among network members.”\textsuperscript{746} All of
this leads to taking action for a cause, in context, to improve cultural conditions.

Enough cannot be said about the need to take action. In wrapping up the case for
now, this study acknowledges that as human beings, we all have dreams. The difference
is in realizing them. So, for the culturally competent, “it’s not about having dreams; it’s
about reaching them.”\textsuperscript{747} Even though the tragedy lies in having no dreams or goals to
reach, taking action to reach those goals is the most important of all the abilities that are
associated with cultural competence. So take action!
In light of some obvious inhibitions along the way of taking action, such as financial issues, connections, self-confidence, and even the motivation to get started, Mycoskie’s words of inspiration are appropriate. He writes:

You don’t have to have a lot of money, a complicated business plan, or a great deal of experience to start something. Start small, and maybe you’ll stay small, which is fine. Or maybe you’ll get bigger…You don’t have to start something with a goal of saving world. You don’t have to create a Falling Whistles or invent a FEED bag. If whatever you do helps just one person, you’ve done something wonderful…The most important step of all is the first step. Start something! What if that idea you have in the back of your head is a really good one, one that might end up helping tens of thousands of people? You owe it to the world to act. Or maybe it will help only a few people: the same advice applies. If you don’t do it you’re missing out on something big, and so are the people who could have been helped…The first step to start the journey is simply to put on your shoes—that’s all. Then tie your shoelaces. Just because the first step is a very simple one doesn’t mean that it can’t lead someday to something profound. Not only is taking that first step less difficult than you might imagine, but it may change your life in wonderful ways. Once you start helping others, you will notice this change—you will feel less sad, less stressed, and more purposeful…If it isn’t clear already, I firmly believe that every person alive can make this world a better place. I also believe that we are all equipped to help one another. Just as we all have five
senses, we are all born with the ability to improve another person’s life [and cultural conditions].

Mycoskie challenges all culturally competent people to take action and start something that matters. And the time is to take action is now. It’s like asking us individually to think about whatever plans have been running through our minds. Let those ideas move from the back to the front of your mind. Take the time to write them down in your journal or network by calling a friend or a relative to discuss and hone them. Mycoskie exhorts: “Get your idea out in the open. Decide that you can do this. Tell yourself you’re not going to let this thought go unnoticed. Then I want you to take the next step. Start something that matters.” It is against the practicality of the analysis of this ability of taking action to improve cultural conditions that this dissertation strongly makes the case for impressing such idea on the minds of young men entering the seminary to train for the priesthood and all priests. Thus, priests must be helped by their training to see that they are expected to make a contribution to their culture, church, society, and the general improvement of the human condition and related situation, not only at the spirit level, but also in something visible, concrete, touchable, seeable, and “real.” This is a legacy that truly lasts and that can hardly be forgotten by people. So for priests, too, actions taken to improve cultural conditions, and by implication, people’s lives, are not just what constitute memories, they are a testament to cultural competence.
Notes


667. Ibid.


669. Fleming, “What is Communication?”

670. Ibid.


672. Goode and Jones, “Conceptual Frameworks/Models, Guiding Values and Principles.”


674. Ibid.


676. Mansilla and Jackson, Educating for Global Competence, 39.


682. Ibid., 466.

683. Fleming, “What is Communication?”


687. Ibid.


689. Ibid., 21.


695. Ibid.


705. Ibid.

706. Ibid.

707. Ibid., 30.

708. Ibid., 36.

709. Ibid., 37.
710. Ibid., 45.


714. Ibid.


719. Ibid.

720. Ibid., 65-66.


722. Ibid., 221.


724. Ibid.


729. Ibid.
731. Ibid., 60.
732. Ibid., 61.
734. Ibid., 41.
736. Ibid.
737. Ibid., 63.
738. Ibid., 64-65.
740. Ibid., 66.
744. Ibid., 54.
745. Ibid., 67.
746. Ibid., 55.
749. Ibid., 185.
CHAPTER VI
IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Implications

Cultural Competence in the Church vis-à-vis Priestly Training:
Emphases in the Literature

Analysis of the concept of cultural competence and the selected literature reveals issues of concern to educators and institutions, particularly the church as an institution that has the responsibility for training priests. Such concern should lead to a revisit of current academic curriculum and related pastoral preparation for the ministry of the priesthood, especially for service abroad. As a concept of analysis, the examination of which suggests that attention be focused on a more expansive and holistic view than it is known before now or as it currently obtains. Thus, because the exercise of the priestly ministry is not exclusively within the church “but also a social experience,” understanding obtained from the holistic approach to cultural competence, including the many definitions and various descriptions, often has significance for understanding a larger part of human experience in terms of “needs, attitudes, and values of the society in which they occur.” In the applicative words of McClelland, suffice it say that as evident in the definition of cultural competence in select fields, “this study reveals, however, that the use of the term as a concept of analysis is only one way of several ways it can be utilized and that each has its roots in different theoretical frameworks and

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Indeed, because the term, cultural competence, has a variety of meanings, usage is not only contextual, but also ambiguous. This may serve to distort perceptions or even prevent the full understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Like social network, the term cultural competence is also used metaphorically and as a model or way to talk about and expect good social behavior. “This also may be suggestive for educational scholars.” As a metaphor, the term reflects the existence of diversity, differences, and individualism, and requires the awareness and recognition of this by all peoples. According to McClelland, citing Foshay:

Typically, however, the power of a metaphor lies in its nuances of meaning, nuances which are rooted in the history and definition of the word. Foshay argues that such nuances are often latent, and therefore unconsidered. Thus, they lead thought in subtle but unrecognized ways. Moreover, words often have more than one meaning, and confusion sometimes results from an unclarified mixture of definitions.

Based on this metaphoric nature, the latent, unfolding, and evolving meanings of cultural competence often have a peculiar effect on its usage. Like social network, “In educational discourses, for example, the term may be both descriptive and prescriptive.” In the former (descriptive), it unpacks in a variety of ways what the concept means by assigning a quality, such as respect, honor, tolerance, acceptance, inclusiveness and so on. While in the latter (prescriptive), it tells what the concept expects of people in human interaction. In this prescriptive sense, the term appears like a law, a method, a norm or a standard of behavior with enforceable rules and regulations.
On this note, one thinks of prescriptive norms which, in context, are central to inter and intra-group differentiation and includes the attitudes and beliefs. Examples of prescriptive norms are statements such as “kids should go to school to get an education” and “honor your father and your mother.”

Today, the church faces great challenges as it participates in the experience of globalization, immigration, and the shift in the sites of vocation boom—from the global north to the global south. These are realities and facts, and not metaphors. Hence, evidently and experientially, they lead to changing neighborhoods and more mixed church congregations, which necessitates new methods of evangelization, particularly in the exercise of the priestly ministry. To enhance the chance of success through effective ministry, the church must institutionalize the importance of cultural competence in priestly training and service, especially service abroad where there are different cultures. This means adopting a comprehensive training program that would ensure that priests sent abroad for service “possess the appropriate level of cultural competency to be successful in the field.”

Based on the examined curricula for the training of priests, the question of whether or not a solid theory of cultural competence exists, however, must currently be answered in the negative. Even though it is the case that culture and missions-related themes could be found and may be discerned in the literature that makes up cultural awareness training, a more direct approach and more serious treatment of the concept, as well as an innovative disposition toward the subject, is sorely needed without any delay or constraints. There should be a “home” for cultural competence in the church with its
foundation rooted in the manner in which priests are trained in seminaries and related areas of ongoing formation. This would enable the forming of what may be called a community of culturally competent priests in a culture-conscious church. In such a community, no one is a “stranger;” rather, everyone is a member of the community and many communities, despite the cultural differences.

Unlike from a network perspective wherein “to be a member of many communities may be a positive as well as a negative experience,” the idea of culturally competent communities could be said to be devoid of negative experiences. To a large degree, it serves to alter marginality in the sense of being a “stranger” – one without a home. In the paraphrased words of McClelland: While this view should not be construed as an excused for ignoring the all-too real existentialist problem of alienation, as broadly conceived, it does make the question of alienation a “choice” and an empirical or observable one rather than theory based on pure logic or an a priori assumption about human dwellings in contemporary society.

In trying to instill the idea of a culture-conscious church that could lead to the production of a culturally competent generation of priests, it would be like building castle in the air, or having a pie in the sky, or being in illusion, if one does not recognize the existence of power struggle, control and related tyrannies as are found even in the church. All this makes the implementation of change difficult and protracted. Of this McClelland observes: “Clearly, issues of control, community, choice and change are intimately related to one another and can be isolated for inquiry only with great difficulty.” As a way forward, therefore, Mitchell’s dependence theory is memorable. Thus: “…an
important consideration in assessing or trying to implement change in an organizational structure is the degree to which the change in question ramifications throughout the organization." Making good on this idea demands the coming together of the powers-that-be in the church to think together, reason as a community, and share a common concern that would lead to innovation, change, and reform. All of this should be guided by the wisdom in the saying: what happens there should matter here.

Unarguably, like in schools, experience and considerable research demonstrate that change and/or reform in the church can also be limited to single situations or circumstances. In support of this assertion, the church is a witness to uncountable situations and circumstances where priests on service abroad have “fallen from grace” due to cultural missteps. If these realities do not call for a round-table discussion on how to address cultural issues by prioritizing the training in cultural competence, in the words of McClelland, “then return to the classroom – for both teachers and students -- may simply signify a return to a situation in which innovation is no longer appropriate.”

Especially in the church, given present-day realities and the adamant position of the church on some issues, such as women empowerment, imposed clerical celibacy and related lifestyle, Eucharistic participation by single mothers, and so on, innovation, change, and reform are matters of crises in much contemporary church discourse. And discussions on these issues have long been associated with, and indeed, may be taboos and endemic to church deliberations by the powers-that-be. However, because educational reform and pastoral re-strategizing in the context of cultural competence are
hugely matters that belong to [or should belong to] a democratic society, stifling reform in these areas is tantamount to stifling institutional growth and human development.

As gleaned from this dissertation, under the argument for curriculum development and renewal, the emphasis herein is not fortuitous. Thus, true innovation, sustainable change, and beneficial reform belong to the seminaries and other houses of formation. Schools, therefore, have the major responsibility for educating young men for the priesthood in the ways of the society—cognizant of the circumstance of time and the evolving human experience, however, without being “trendy.” Such responsibility to train and produce culturally competent priests extends beyond the walls of the classroom and the premises of the school. The church community, particularly the hierarchy, has a role to play by continuing to instill cultural competence skills through actions and deeds. In fact, it is argued that the community has a greater role to play, because actions speak louder than words. This continuous education is what Dewey calls schooling in a democratic society. Hence, Joseph K. Hart, adopting a Deweyan view of the relation between education in school and education in the community in a democratic society, writes in a sense that can be applied in context of the training of priest in cultural competence:

The democratic problem in education is not primarily in training children; it is the problem of making a community within which children cannot help growing up to be democratic, intelligent, disciplined to freedom, reverent of the good of life, [respectful of others, appreciative of cultures], and eager to share in the task of the age. A school cannot produce this result; noting, but a community can do so.
In light of the idea of shared responsibility and continuous education of children—in context, the training and ongoing formation of priests—McClelland observes and writes:

Given the notion that one must focus on the interplay of educational influences and experiences in the lives of individuals, organizations, communities, and the society as a whole, and given an appreciation of the capacity of these for change (innovation and reform), the aims of schooling in a democratic society would, according to Dewey, thus involve constant reexamination, reformulation, and regeneration.  

Thus, in a sense, innovation, change, and reform in the education of priests can be considered a constant process. And given the undeniable need for culturally competent priests, the task requires as many voices, resources as possible, needless saying it calls for a great commitment both on the part of lecturers (formators) in the seminary and the community, made up of bishops, diocesans, parishioners and the society at large. All hands must be on deck, with all the energy as can be mustered to foster this action and promote the good cause.

**Global Distribution and Redistribution of Priests:**
**Looking Back and Thinking Forward**

Until just a couple of years ago, the manner in which priests are trained for ministry abroad leaves much to be desired since it has been severely deficient in one aspect: *cultural competence*. In spite of the fact of the “missions” component and missionary experience of the church for “two-thousand years,” within which documents addressing the global distribution of priests have been written, arguably, the church
continues to either neglect or treat with levity the significance of cultural competence.

While attention is being drawn to and progress is being made in recent years, there is still need for an effective plan to concretely address the issue of cultural differences and how to navigate the slippery grounds. In the plan, the need for cultural appreciation, respect, language training and collaboration cannot be overstated.

Consistent with this implication, it is advisable that sending-bishops and receiving-bishops should have a new vision for priests who go to minister in a different culture: a vision which highlights the importance and requires a high level of cultural competency. Such priests would need to understand the significance of this knowledge and “its effects on their ability to accomplish their mission.” Just like “Lack of knowledge about the diversity of meaning of the concept of social network can have a significant effect on planning and outcomes,” even more so, lack of the needed skills to navigate through cultures can unintentionally alienate people, including but not limited to, members of the congregation, other Christians, “civilians,” and a host of others.

Therefore, cultural competence among priests can either aid or inhibit effective ministry. That is why priests who have worked or are working in foreign cultures say that cultural competence, which gives the ability to effective service, is critical to ministerial success.

The need for cultural competence is not only for priests on service abroad. It is also an important knowledge for priests serving at home—even within their own native cultures. In fact, such familiar environment constitutes the foundation for cultural competence. This is because priests are vanguards and/or bearers of a different culture: Christianity; which they bring to their own people who have a culture that has lasted for
generations. To this end, on priests lies the no-easy task of seeking understanding and reconciling the various “opposing” cultural elements of the old and new religious cultures: traditional and Christian religions. In order to effectively bring about the understanding, reconciliation and the building of bridges, the need for priests to know their own native cultures cannot be over emphasized. This is cultural competence in the foundational dimension. And it is called, *enculturation*.

The Catholic Church is one religion that attends to the most culturally diverse people in the world, compared to other religions. Wherever it is located, it opens its doors and welcomes people from many countries, races. This people come together, hoping to hear the good news preached to them and wanting to have a communal connection or personal relationship with God. Despite this diversity, made so by people coming from different backgrounds and many other differences and uniqueness, the church, ironically, does not seem to place much emphasis on understanding where each person is coming from culturally and all what not. It can be said that cultural competence is not a quality highly sought after by the church.

To get the church up to speed in this much sought-after skill, especially in pursuance of “The New Evangelization” (TNE), it is important to make the point that while cultural competence can help avoid stepping on people’s toes and creating new enemies, it also contributes to gaining a sound understanding of people that can lead to winning more new converts. In a military context, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel William Wunderle highlights this point in his study of cultural awareness in the U.S. armed forces:
Understanding an adversary requires more than intelligence from three-letter agencies and satellite photos; it requires an understanding of their interests, habits, intentions, beliefs, social organizations, and political symbols — in other words, their culture. An American soldier can liken culture to a minefield: dangerous ground that, if not breached, must be navigated with caution, understanding, and respect.\footnote{767}

By application, Wunderle’s observation belongs to the missionary work of the church in terms of sending out priests to minister in foreign cultures. Making good on it, the primal vision of new arrivals in a different culture, articulated by Max Warren in commenting on the book entitled, with \textit{The Primal Vision}, a series by John V. Taylor, comes handy. In the general introduction to the series, Warren writes:

> Our first task in approaching other people, another culture and another religion is to take off our shoes, for the place is holy, else we find ourselves treading on men’s dreams” \footnote{768} [and ideals]. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival.

Corroborating this vision, the Christian anthropological thought of the German Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner is noteworthy. In one of his essays on “Trinitarian Theology,” Rahner writes of the \textit{indwelling of the grace of God in all peoples and so in all cultures}. This notion of the self-communication of God and uncreated grace indwelling in the human heart is also a theme Rahner reflects on in another of his writings entitled, “Some Implications of the Scholastic Concept of Uncreated Grace.”\footnote{769}

Affirming this thought, Robert Greene warningly writes that, “Cultures have norms that
reflect centuries of shared beliefs and ideals. Do not expect to scoff at such things with impunity.”

Unarguably, guided by this primal vision, priestly training for service abroad based on an understanding of the people’s culture and its impact on ministerial course of action is much more likely to result in satisfactory performance and successful priestly service. And this training is sorely needed given the trend in the global redistribution of priests. Suggestively, the preferred way to go about the training is through the paths of *enculturation, acculturation, and inculturation*.

**Enculturation**

The saying is true that a person without the knowledge of his past is like a tree without roots. In the context of this study, it can be said that a person without the knowledge of his native culture is like gathering knowledge of other cultures without a base, without a reference point, and without a sense of where one comes from. Thus, lack of knowledge about the cultural history of where a person comes from, speaks to a void that stands in the way or even breaks the chain of knowledge acquisition. So it follows that Olson et al., write that the training for international/intercultural competencies must include “Knowledge of one’s own culture and history.” It is against this backdrop that in the specific analysis of *knowledge* as one of the components of cultural competence, the starting point should be knowledge about one’s native or indigenous culture. Such knowledge is brought about through enculturation – in both informal and formal education. Lack of cultural enculturation may hamper a person from reaching his full potential as a culturally competent person since he lacks a solid base or has no base at all.
Enculturation is generally understood as the gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of one’s native culture or of a culture of a group. This dissertation focuses on the acquisition of cultural knowledge about the former—one’s native culture. Hence, a preferred definition of enculturation is one given by Zimmerman et al. as cited in Whitbeck et al. Thus, “Enculturation refers to the degrees to which individuals embedded in their cultures as manifested by practicing the traditional culture and self-reported cultural identity.” Generally, it is the process by which people learn the requirements of their surrounding culture and acquire values and behaviors appropriate or necessary in that culture for acceptability and survival. According to Grusec and Hastings, “As part of this process, the influences that limit, direct, or shape the individual (whether deliberately or not) include parents, other adults, and peers. If successful, enculturation results in competence in language, values and rituals of the culture.” Cushner et al. simply defined enculturation as “The process of raising a child to be a member of a particular culture or culture group.”

In his book, *Window on humanity: A concise introduction to anthropology*, Conrad Kottak (2005) more extensively describes enculturation as: the process where the culture that is currently established teaches an individual the acceptable norms and values of the culture or society where the individual lives. The individual can become an acceptable member and fulfill the needed functions and roles of the group. Most importantly the individual knows and establishes a context of boundaries and acceptable behavior that dictates what is acceptable and not acceptable within the framework of that society. It teaches the
individual their role within society as well as what is accepted behavior within
that society and lifestyle. Enculturation can be both conscious and
unconscious…There are three ways a person learns a culture. Direct teaching of a
culture is done, this is what happens when you don’t pay attention, mostly by the
parents, when a person is told do something because it is right and not to do
something because it is wrong. For example, when children ask for something,
they are constantly asked, “What do you say?” and the child is expected to
remember to say “please.” The second conscious way a person learns a culture is
to watch others around them and to emulate their behavior…Enculturation also
happens unconsciously, through events and behaviors that prevail in their
culture.  

Besides making the point that all kinds of enculturation, whether conscious,
unconscious or through any other ways, happen simultaneously and all the time, Kottak’s
description suggests the following ideas: enculturation helps to mould a person into an
acceptable member of society; it gives a sense of belonging; and it is a lifelong process
that helps to unify people. Very importantly, the description takes the term, enculturation,
beyond the boundary of one’s native culture to other cultural environments that a person
has contact with in his lifetime. To that end, enculturation is sometimes referred to as
acculturation. Hence, it could also be said to be about learning the culture of the people of
a region other than one’s own as long as one is living in that region at any given time.
However, this is an elastic and all-too broad a definition. Thanks to a more focused and
“restricted” definition of the concept as captured in the distinction that “Acculturation
refers to how an individual is influenced by a secondary culture whereas enculturation refers to the process of learning about one’s cultural group.”

Closely related or also adapted from the previous description of the term is the definition of enculturation by Brown, which sounds all-inclusive. It states: “Enculturation is the process whereby an established culture teaches an individual by repetition its accepted norms and values, so that the individual can become an accepted member of the society and find their suitable role. Most importantly, it establishes a context of boundaries and correctness that dictates what is and is not permissible within that society’s framework.” Put another way, “It is the process of learning that takes the person and teaches him or her the ways of life of their people or country. It is a life-long process, affecting not only the child, but the adult too.” For the most part, “Enculturation is learned through communication in the form of speech, words, and gestures. The six things of culture that are learned are: technological, economic, political, interactive, ideological, and worldview.” What stands out in Warren’s definition is the importance of enculturation as a base for creating a worldview through which people filter their knowledge of other cultures. Thus through enculturation, an individual consciously and unconsciously learns one’s own culture and that knowledge is foundational in the ongoing configuration and reconfiguration of worldviews.

Writing about enculturation both as a process and as acculturation, Landis et al. view it as learning “to relate to our social environment and its culture, that universe of information and operative linguistic and nonlinguistic communication rituals that give coherence, continuity, and distinction to a communal way of life…Through continuous
interaction with the various aspects of the cultural environment, our internal systems undergo a process of changes as we integrate culturally acceptable concepts, attitudes, and actions. We thus become fit to live in the company of others around us who share a similar image of reality and self.  

The process of enculturation is influenced strongly by home and family, and strengthened by formal education about the native, primary or one’s own culture. It is through formal education about one’s own culture that the knowledge about “cultural commons” is acquired. In describing “cultural commons” Bowers chooses the way of examples. Thus, “Most examples of the cultural and environmental commons encompass those aspects of the daily life that had not yet been privatized and monetized. Another feature of the commons, as practiced in many cultures, is the reliance upon local decision making and an awareness that current practices should not diminish the prospects of future generations.” Given the lack of knowledge of cultural commons and the failure of formal educational institutions to teach it, Bowers observes that young and old people as well as most students and teachers participate in their “cultural commons” at a taken-for-granted level of awareness. “The result is that many people lack the language for naming those aspects of the commons they participate in. In not being able to identify what they depend upon and experience at a taken-for-granted level of awareness,” one is left to wonder how they would acquire the knowledge of other cultures at a deeper level of understanding and with cultural appreciation. In a related context, Daniel Jenkins rightly observes: “If a man cannot love his own kith and kin whom he sees, how can he love the international community…whom he does not see?”
With enculturation – knowledge of one’s own culture – as the foundation and starting point for examining cultural competence, it is safe to say that individuals can be confident to know about other cultures and the people therein. This is because they know where they come from or are coming from, culturally. And the benefits are numerous. Thus, the more knowledge we have about our native culture and then, other cultures, the more likely we are able to avoid stepping on cultural toes, involving in cultural missteps, and trampling on people’s dreams. Put another way, knowing how culture impacts problem solving, managing people, asking for help, including defining people’s ambitions, aspirations and dreams, etc., can keep us connected in cross-cultural interactions. This knowledge requires that people’s values and beliefs are consistent with their behaviors toward others of different cultures in accordance with what has been proven to be true. One such truth is the fact about the universal sameness and equality of all humans. This truth with the knowledge therein as acquired through enculturation, demands equal treatment, respect, and value of human beings in all cultures of the world.

**Acculturation**

As an important component of cultural competence, the proper domain of attitude, can be said to be in the context of intercultural experience. This means the experience of a different culture, which is generally known as *acculturation*, and the disposition an individual has in embracing that new culture. Unlike enculturation that is argued in this dissertation as concerned with learning one’s own native culture, acculturation is concerned with entering a new culture and learning aspects of a culture other than one’s own – particularly those aspects which will enable the individual to survive in that culture.
and render effective service. However, “In many ways, entering a new culture is like starting an enculturation process all over again.” In that new culture due to the new experiences “We may be forced to suspend or even abandon our identification with the cultural patterns that have symbolized who we are and what we are.” This usually brings about inner conflicts, confusion and other culture shocks that make us susceptible to external influence and compel us to learn the new cultural system. “This activity of learning is the essence of acculturation, the acquisition of the host cultural practices in wide-ranging areas, particularly in areas of direct or indirect relevance to our daily functioning.”

Acculturation has been defined in many ways and so it has different theoretical perspectives. Hazuda et al. describe acculturation as “a process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group. Although acculturation is usually in the direction of a minority group adopting habits and language patterns of the dominant group, acculturation can be reciprocal—that is, the dominant group also adopts patterns typical of the minority group.” In essence, as a form of socialization, it is the process of learning and adopting the behavior patterns of a new culture that is brought about in the meeting between cultures. Such meeting often brings about cultural and psychological change. This change is not without acculturation stress resulting from cultural differences found between the host culture and the person’s culture of origin, “which can impact the adaptation of individuals or groups undergoing acculturation.”

In all the iterations on acculturation, by way of preference and for the purpose of this study, acculturation means a process that helps priests on service abroad to be
capable of effective ministry in places where they are assigned and to advance the mission of the church while remaining true to themselves. This should happen in both directions—the priest and the people of the host culture. The experience in both directions is particularly needed in situations of foreign-born priests serving the people at large as against serving their own immigrant communities. Thus, in the former [at large] foreign-born priests “come to serve the native people of this land,” and in the latter [immigrant communities], they “come to serve their own people who have migrated to this country.”

According to Rev. Elizondo, [a University of Notre Dame professor and founder of the Mexican-American Cultural Center with a parish in San Antonio] “it is the teaching of our church that priests and religious should accompany migrants on their journeys to new lands.” This study zeroes in on priests going for service abroad to serve the community at large, even as they interact with and get involved in other works in the secular society.

When it comes to the preparation regarding sending priests for service abroad, for instance to America, acculturation is touted and emphasized as one of the essential and non-negotiable steps. Endorsing this idea, the report contained in a 1999 book, Guidelines for Receiving Pastoral Ministers in the United States, recommends that as an orientation program for the priests, acculturation lasting several days should take place in the country of origin and be devoted to providing information about American society. After the priest arrives in the United States, he should be given two to three months for final adjustment, during
which time the diocese should help him develop a personal support network of both native and foreign clergy, and he should enroll in classes in spoken English. He should be assigned a mentor for a period of at least three years. Twelve to eighteen months after arrival, another training program should be offered, covering the history of the American church, ministry in a multicultural church, the role of lay ministers, and other topics.”

“Acculturation is not a process in which new cultural elements are simply added to prior internal conditions. As new learning occurs, deculturation, or unlearning of the old cultural elements, has to occur, at least in the sense that new responses are adopted in situations that previously would have evoked old ones.” In this process of learning and unlearning, we may undergo an internal transformation, which could be called transculturation or neoculturation. It has been suggested that this reality of transculturation speaks to the additive fact about acculturation. Thus, “Several authors have noted the additive element in biculturality and multiculturality, suggesting that the acculturation process need not substitute new cultural values for old. Rather, acculturation may add new behaviors and constructs that allow for cultural-frame-of-reference shifting. Saltzmann’s 150 percent person represents just such a culturally expanded individual.”

In entering a new culture, individuals differ in how they experience the culture based on their respective dispositions as informed by one’s values and beliefs – including mission and interest – which impact cross-cultural effectiveness. This is because such considerations convey the extent to which we are open to different views and opinions.
Thus, the stronger we feel about our beliefs and values; the more likely we will react emotionally when they collide with cultural differences. For example, people of color and white Americans tend to have different values and beliefs about diversity and equality; the differences are, in part, the result of uniquely different exposure to oppression and discrimination.\(^7\)

**Inculturation**

A critical reflection on the history of missions and cross-cultural missionary work, and more urgently, in view of the current trend in the “The New Evangelization,” the discussion on inculturation to seek an improved understanding is always fresh. This explains why the Second Vatican Council’s *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* – *Ad Gentes*, dwells extensively on the subject and encourages the implementation of inculturation.

Succinctly stated, *Ad Gentes* – *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church*, focuses on the factors involved in mission work in and within cultures. It calls for the continued development of missionary acculturation and inculturation, as well as the promotion of the ecumenism. It does this by encouraging missionaries to live with the people they are attempting to evangelize and convert in order to absorb their ways and culture. It encourages the coordination of mission work through agencies and the cooperation with the indigenous people, other groups and related organizations within the Catholic Church and other denominations. In order that the agents of evangelization may be able to enter into the culture, and not remain *strangers*, so as to bear more fruitful
witness to Christ, attention is drawn to the requirement and practice of inculturation by
the church. Thus:

let them be joined to those men by esteem and love; let them acknowledge
themselves to be members of the group of men among whom they live; let them
share in cultural and social life by the various undertakings and enterprise of
human living; let them be familiar with their national and religious traditions; let
them gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden
among their fellows. 798

In a sense, inculturation calls for a close unity of missionaries, in this case, priests,
with men and women of cultures in their life and work. It demands collaboration and
encourages participation in cultural activities so as to gain better knowledge of what’s
going on and better understanding of a particular cultural practice or activity. Seeking
such knowledge and understanding should be done with due regard for the philosophy
and wisdom of the people. This way, “it will be seen in what ways their customs, views
on life, and social order, can be reconciled with the manner of living taught by divine
revelation.” 799 Furthermore, it (inculturation) calls for feeling at home with the people in
any cultural region, as well as not being judgmental of other religions and Christian
denominations. In fact, in the latter, “the ecumenical spirit should be nurtured…
[because] The testimony of a good life will more easily have its effect if it is given in
unison with other Christian communities, according to the norms of the Decree on
Ecumenism.” 800 This should be a common requirement of the training of priests. To that
end, the Council Fathers exhort:
In their philosophical and theological studies, let them consider the points of contact which mediate between the traditions and religion of their homeland on the one hand and the Christian religion on the other. Likewise, priestly training should have an eye to the pastoral needs of that region; and the students should learn the history, aim, and method of the Church’s missionary activity, and the special social, economic, and cultural conditions of their own people. Let them be educated in the ecumenical spirit, and duly prepared for fraternal dialogue with non–Christians.\textsuperscript{801}

This position of the Council Fathers highlights some of the “preparatory” steps and essential elements of inculturation. Arguably, the work of planting the church through evangelization, in a given human community, reaches a certain goal and a higher level of success when the native congregation of the faithful is already rooted in social life and somewhat conformed to the local culture. There is a certain firmness and stability due to a level of affirmation of the local culture, as well as incorporation of the same — at least some aspects — into the culture of the Christian religion.

Far from giving the impression that inculturation only focuses on the meeting of the Christian faith culture and local traditional religious cultures, Inaku draws attention to a wider understanding of the concept, to include the modern technology in the dimension of cyberspace or social network. Making the case for how essential cyberspace is, he links evangelization and inculturation to the global phenomenon, we call the Internet or cyberspace. He “supposes that any attempt to neglect technology in the ambient of
inculturation will mean losing an essential ingredient for mission-based ‘marketing’ in the modern world.\textsuperscript{802} Making the point, he states:

> Digitalization as a new culture has expanded its infrastructures so much so that a new world of opportunities and challenges are [sic] created especially for those who would be part of the cyber culture which is ‘neither a fad nor science fiction.’ The typology of this landscape includes the preaching of the Gospel through the use of a variety of digital audio and or graphic interfaces that will nourish those who explore it. The landscape in the strict sense of the word is without geographical typographies. It is rather a communication space – a virtual galaxy in which “people will spend even more their lives teaching, learning, meeting colleagues, organizing their work, home, and leisure lives, carrying on idle or serious conversations, and searching for religious meaning and experiences.” [Babin and Zukowski, \textit{The Gospel}, 168].\textsuperscript{803}

In inculturation properly belongs the call “Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture,” which is the title of a 1999 document by the Vatican Pontifical Council for Culture. Faced with the burden of history and the challenges of our times, the church shares some convictions and practical suggestions, which, “are the result of several exchanges on a renewed pastoral approach to culture; thanks particularly to fruitful collaboration with Bishops, as diocesan pastors, and their co-workers in this field of apostolic work as a privileged point of encounter with Christ’ message. For all culture, is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person. The heart of every culture is its approach to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God.”\textsuperscript{804}
As it is well-known, the Gospel has always been preached in regions where people are and have been living for generations. Even, today, as the Gospel gradually comes into contact with cultural worlds both those which once lay beyond the Christian influence and which have been influenced by Christianity for generations, “there are new tasks of inculturation.”

In this context, inculturation speaks to the careful work and great task of grafting the faith onto these cultures in order to revitalize and energize them. It is against this backdrop that in this collaborative document (“Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture”), the following practical guidelines are set with the intention of concretely realizing the aims, objectives, and goals of inculturation: The Church is the messenger of Christ, the Redeemer of man. She keeps in mind the cultural dimension of the person and of human communities; In order to reveal himself, from the rich panoply of age-long cultures born of human genius, God chose for himself a People whose original culture he penetrated, purified and made fertile; Evangelization as such consists in the explicit proclamation of the mystery of Christ’s salvation and of his message [within cultures that are already in existence].

An important and more direct guideline for effective evangelization through the path of inculturation is the acknowledgment in the document of a further problem that is strongly felt these days, which is the demand for the evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the message of faith. Keeping in tune with the objective demands of faith and the mission to evangelize, the church takes account of the very essential fact that meeting of faith and culture is a meeting of things which might not be of the same order, but are part and parcel of human activities. To that end, “The inculturation of faith and
the evangelization of culture go together as an inseparable pair…” \(^{807}\) In this inseparability is a two-way street in which the Gospel penetrates the very life of cultures and vice versa. Resultantly, the former (Gospel) becomes incarnate in the latter (cultures), overcoming those cultural elements that are incompatible with the faith, Christian living, and ethical, humane, wholesome way of life. Because of the sensitive and delicate nature, and confusing explanations which produce varied understanding of inculturation, this particular guideline must be taken seriously, handled carefully, reflectively managed, constructively addressed, and “carried out with profound investigative techniques.” \(^{808}\) And it takes cultural competence to walk this iffy path of inculturation, as well as demonstrate the understanding needed as a requirement for the endeavor. No thanks that, using Nigeria as a case in point, Inaku observes that “The religious landscape in Nigeria characterized by Pentecostalism, ‘spiritism,’ fanaticism, ‘gospelization,’ and secularization demonstrates the complex challenge facing Catholic theologians especially in the area of inculturation and contextualization.” \(^{809}\)

Other guidelines resulting from the document (“Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture”) are stated thus: In service to the proclamation of the Good News and thus to man’s destiny in God’s plan, the pastoral approach to culture emanates from the mission of the Church in our times. This is as a result of the renewed awareness of its demand, which is not only as expressed by the Second Vatican Council and Synods of Bishops, but also due to the fact that people from different regions of the world are increasingly becoming appreciative and protective of their cultures — customs, traditions, and
practices.\textsuperscript{810} Capturing the value of inculturation, which should define the renewed movement in “The New Evangelization,” the Council Fathers write:

\begin{quote}
\textit{An inculturated evangelization thanks to concerted pastoral efforts} enables the Christian community to receive, celebrate, live and translate its faith into its own culture, in “compatibility with the Gospel and in communion with the universal Church” (\textit{Redemptoris Missio}, 54). At the same time, it affirms the absolute newness of Revelation in Jesus Christ and the need for conversion which is manifestly the result of meeting the Savior.\textsuperscript{811}
\end{quote}

\textbf{Contextualization: The Centrality and Importance of Context in Cultural Competence}

With cultural competence being somewhat of an amorphous concept and susceptible to an ocean of interpretations, understandings, and applications, the centrality of context, in discussing the concept is highly important. Attention to this helps to maintain the focus, keep the discussion within boundaries and target a given or particular audience. Like some other concepts used to study educational issues, attention to the concept of cultural competence implies that researchers should attend to a particular context in which the concept equally applies. Arguably, this dissertation attempts to respect contextualization.

Emphasizing centrality and importance contextualization, McClelland writes that “the importance of context has been stressed repeatedly by scholars such as Cremin, Getzels, Leichter, and Bernier. In addition, increasing attention to contextual issues appears to be part of a general tendency in the social sciences…The term “context,” however, is an ambiguous one with a variety of applications.”\textsuperscript{812} For example, as a social...
phenomenon, culture can be referenced in family, community, village or religious contexts. Similarly, people of a given group that share the same religious contexts may express their beliefs in a supernatural being in different contexts.

Stressing the point of the centrality of context as a way of speaking to a particular audience who share common characteristics and in which certain familiar patterns can be observed, using the social milieu, McClelland states that “One component of all social context is the pattern of relationships among participants in the situation, the meaning which they attribute to these relations, and the behavior which both follows from and helps to create contextual meaning.” Based on this observation, as this study attests, analysis of relevant literature on cultural competence reveals that discussions on the concept respects contextual boundaries in particular ways. However, cultural context in cultural competence discourse may not be completely explained by the immediate or given situation. In fact, it may not even be entirely a subjective matter, since it is somewhat prescriptive as the exercise of which involves the “other” or “another” person. Therefore, to a large degree, the analyst of the concept is forced to and must describe the shape and content of relationships associated with each and all members in the situation under investigation. In this case, that means the discussion on cultural competence must exist in the context of priests and members of the church, particularly in the region or country of service. Thus, in the study of cultural competence, contexts are viewed in terms of interactional phenomena which, for the most part, are region-bound, that is, operating within the immediate locale, the given situation and the experience therein. It is a skill that is best exercised in situ – that is, in position, on site, or in a particular situation.
The idea of “particularity” is important because “one must be careful of glib generalizations.”\textsuperscript{814} For example, what may be culturally acceptable in a given Nigerian culture, such as avoiding eye contact in conversations with senior people, may not be the case in others, like in the American culture. Explaining and understanding the cultural context in this manner may have significance for navigating cultural slippery roads, and may suggest alternative educational strategies and interventions when need be.

**Understanding Understanding: The Foundation of Cultural Competence**

Understanding *understanding* is foundationally essential to the comprehension and exercise of cultural competence. As analyzed by Wiggins and McTighe, to distinguish understanding from knowledge, the former should be understood in the six facets of *explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy* and *self-knowledge*. Therefore, cultural competence requires of a culturally competent person to be able to clearly *explain* a situation; objectively *interpret* and present reports based on findings; properly *apply* ideas to corresponding, similar or related contexts; give the right *perspective* on issues; *empathically* walk in someone else’s shoes or see through someone else’s eyes; and truly know oneself through self-awareness or *self-knowledge*. It is against this backdrop that this study underscores *understanding* as an interactional relationship that is a continuum and an ongoing expectation in the demonstration of cultural competence. Thus, understanding might have a beginning, but it has no end and should never be stopped. It forms the foundation and bedrock of cultural competence as an effective way of human interaction. Thus, according to Ward it is only:
When you understand another person then you can relate to that person and know what is going on inside them. We need to relate new knowledge to what we know, and where appropriate, to ourselves. Understanding also implies that we can notice how some things are similar and how they are unlike other things. Therefore there are degrees of understanding: The ability to duplicate the information; the ability to know the meaning of something; the ability to know the nature of something; the ability to skillfully perform tasks in the area, the ability to know the significance and importance of things; the ability to make judgments, decisions and evaluations in the area. 

As a way of pointing out some implications for future and ongoing research in the analysis of understanding, it is important to note a caveat or to warn about over simplification and harping too much on cultural competence in addressing problems and issues of cultural differences. Doing so, especially in an over demonstration of understanding, by showing excess sympathy, points to the danger of going native and compromising one’s mission to a foreign culture, particularly in a cross-cultural missionary context. Therefore, in some cases, “Extrapolation of results to practical situations should be very cautious.”

However, in spite of the warning to be careful in “unscrutinized” extrapolating and over employing of understanding in exercising cultural competence, the point must be made that the gains and benefits of cultural competence outweigh their contraries in all fields, professions, and areas of human interaction. To this end, this study advocates that cultural competence should be included in the academic curriculum of all who aspire to
be missionaries—be they ordained clergy, professed women religious, and laypeople in all Christian religions of the world.

“The New Evangelization” in the Era of Cultural Competence

Just like the subject of “homeland security,” or “national security,” is sure to get the attention of world leaders, so does the concept of “The New Evangelization” of sure to always be of interest to the church. This phrase is repeated frequently so much so that it seems to lose its true meaning and diminishes its real effect. Almost every current pope talks and writes about the new evangelization: what it means; how to go about it in terms of method; the agents of implementation; what changes have taken place; what new realities must be confronted, and a host of related concerns. Given the facts, this dissertation is a contribution to the conversation, wherein cultural competence is put forward as worthy of being at the center of every talk about “The New Evangelization,” even to be understood as “a prophetic and revolutionary calling.”

To recapitulate, with evangelization being a regular and, in fact, primary activity of the church, the new evangelization must aim to reach out, not only to cultures that have not yet received the Gospel, but also to those that have received it, to reinvigorate, strengthen, clear doubts, and convince. It must also continue to reach out to all people regardless of whatever differences there may be, to share “the joy of the Gospel.” This idea of constantly reaching out to all peoples sometimes raises the question about the purpose of the new evangelization.

Based on this study, the fundamental task of the new evangelization is to institutionalize cultural competence in the training of priests and to exercise it in the
practical work of evangelization. This is done by understanding cultures, building bridges, restoring hope, fighting against any kind of process that promotes alienation, instilling in one and all an equal sense of belonging to and equally being loved by God. Given this purpose, “A new evangelization is acutely needed in our time, in which so many people thirst terribly for the joy of being loved and of loving definitively.”

**Components of Cultural Competence: The Need for Advancement**

Gallegos et al. write on “The Need for Advancement in the Conceptualization of Cultural Competence.” In response to that need for advancement, this dissertation opines that the conceptualization of the elements of cultural components, which are knowledge, awareness, attitudes and skills, could benefit from a broader examination, wherein the components are examined in the following light: (A) **Knowledge**: Knowledge of native culture—Enculturation; (B) **Awareness**: Knowledge of oneself in relation to others—Enculturation and Acculturation; (C) **Attitude**: Disposition in appreciating one’s native culture and embracing a new culture with curiosity and allowing a mutual influence—Acculturation; and (D) **Skills**: Practicing cultural competence in situ “now” and continuously, wherever a person, in this case, a priest, finds himself—inculturation.

When it comes to the relationship between enculturation and cultural competence, there is obviously a link that seems like a necessary marriage. The lack of knowledge concerning the former (enculturation) amounts to what is called “cultural rootlessness,” which also has additional causes. Thus, for a foundational approach to cultural competence, enculturation is a much needed knowledge for all who want to be seen as international priests and global citizens. Because enculturation provides
“individual members with structural guidelines for how to think and how to live, as well as supporting beliefs about what makes life meaningful,” in the context of the exercise of the priestly service, priests on service abroad have so much to gain. With the knowledge of their native culture — traditionally and religiously — they can be more confident to live courageously and are more apt to respect multiple cultural worldviews. As an overriding idea concerning this concept, it suffices to state that enculturation gives the study of cultural competence a foundation and serves as a foundational approach. That is, it forms the starting point; it establishes a solid base; it accounts for a background as a reference point that explains where one is culturally coming from; and it acts as a support, not only for moving forward, but also for falling back to lean on, in a manner of talking.

Awareness as one of the components of cultural competence contributes to impressing the idea that the main focus and primary emphasis of cultural competence is on behavior toward other people both of one’s own culture and of a different culture, based on how one thinks and feels. “No behavior exists separately from thought and emotion.” This is a necessary unity that is called the cultural mindset and skillset. The mindset refers to one’s awareness of operating in a cultural context. This usually entails knowledge of oneself as made possible and shaped by “some conscious knowledge of one’s own culture (cultural self-awareness), some frameworks of creating useful cultural contrasts (e.g. communication styles, cultural values), and a clear understanding about how to use cultural generalizations without stereotyping. The mindset (or, better, ‘heartset’) also includes the maintenance of attitudes such as curiosity
and tolerance of ambiguity, which act as motivations for seeking out cultural differences.\textsuperscript{825}

As awareness helps in being aware of one’s prejudices which are mostly brought about by a person’s experience and historical background, attitude as a component of cultural competence challenges that fact of awareness in relation to how an individual relates to other cultures and the people therein. Therefore, attitude is an increased awareness of cultural bias and beliefs through a careful examination of one’s own beliefs and values about cultural differences. It calls for the disposition to remain open to that careful examination with an immeasurable sense of interest and curiosity in order to explore the exciting world of diversity and cultural differences. Put another way, Olson et al., state that attitude calls for self-awareness and self-esteem about one’s own identity and culture including the demand for openness to learning and a positive orientation to new opportunities, ideas, and ways of thinking.\textsuperscript{826} This “learning attitude is a willingness to be flexible, positive, and dynamic to learn from others and engage others.”\textsuperscript{827}

On its part, the skills component focuses on practicing cultural competence to perfection \textit{in situ}. It is an ongoing process. It starts with communication and is sustained by communication. Hence, communication is identified as the fundamental tool for developing cultural competence skills. As a tool by which people use to interact not only across cultures but also in all walks of life, not the least of which is the priestly ministry, the skill of “intercultural communication draws heavily on psychology, anthropology, and sociology, it is inherently interdisciplinary.”\textsuperscript{282} True to its nature, “intercultural communication as a skill brings a particularly useful emphasis on the development of
intercultural competence,"²⁸⁹ for the benefit of all, especially for priests who, in comparison, minister in environments with more people from diverse communication backgrounds.

**Effective Communication in Cultural Competence: An Essential Skill**

Of all the skills needed for cultural competence, language training is unrivaled. As simple as it may sound, being culturally competent is very complex. But with the ability to engage in effective communication, the complexity and intricacy are reduced to a large degree. All too often, priests have been sent abroad to cultures where a different language is spoken without any language training and only a cursory understanding of the standards dos and don’ts among the people of the host culture.

Language skills are the most essential in the toolkit of cultural competence. On this, Karcanes states that “Cultural awareness training without language training is ineffective.”³⁸⁰ Thus, language training more than just facilitates, it is also a key ingredient of cultural competence and a starting point of cultural appreciation and respect, as well as the beginning of a likeness by the people of a different culture. That is why, knowing even a few words is an indication to the people that a priest wants to be close to them. And such is welcomed and encouraged with whatever supported that is needed to achieve effective communication for an effective and fruitful ministry.

**Acculturation in Cultural Competence: The Dimension of History**

In impressing the essential of acculturation in cultural competence through the dimension of knowledge of history, Healey Jr., writes:
Most approaches to cultural awareness are rooted in local history. Learning the historical precedent for the current cultural climate in a specific region or country is critical to gaining an understanding of the people of that region…Closely tied to the history of a particular region and a critical component of cultural awareness is knowledge of the local social relationships and hierarchies. This knowledge includes a basic understanding of the major cultural differences between tribes, groups, factions and organizations…Religious beliefs and ideologies are the central components of many foreign cultures.831

Since this study situates itself in the larger picture of religion and religious studies, suffice it to emphasize that, “religion has varying effects on the values and attitudes of the population, gaining an understanding of religion’s role in local society is crucial to understanding and effectively working with and among the local populace.”832 Citing examples of cases that call for taking seriously historical religious beliefs, Healey observes that “The French army’s experience in Africa proved that basic understanding of religious beliefs and superstitions are paramount to successful operations there”833 [And] the ongoing deadly clashes between Sunni and Shiite Muslims in Iraq illustrate the significance of religious beliefs among that population and their effect on U.S. military operations.834

All in all, because of the importance of history, complete lack of knowledge in this dimension could potentially bring about a priest finding himself having more difficulties in exercising his ministry in a foreign land. Therefore, it belabors the obvious to say that the recognition of these components of acculturation necessitates the putting in
place of an acculturation program in the home of the priests before departure. This is an important preparation that serves like proactive approach. Such program that dwells on knowledge about the cultural heritage and history of the region and country in view—to be visited and worked in—can help priests put what they see there in context, enabling informed decisions and possibly leading to effective service. Failure to prepare has a direct impact on priestly service, which can be devastating, even as it has had untold consequences, and might have undesirable results.

**Ecumenism and Inculturation: Benefits from Cultural Competence**

The Catholic Church relentlessly seeks ecumenism, which refers to the initiative aimed at greater Christian unity or cooperation. But this effort has had a lot of bumps along the way — preventing the realization of what could be called authentic ecumenism. To ameliorate the tension between the different religious groups and the various sects or Christian denominations in between, this study suggests an educational investment in cultural competence. Such an investment would make a huge contribution to paving the way and advancing the cause of effective and productive ecumenism because cultural competence does not just seek knowledge; very importantly, it seeks understanding. And “Ecumenism is a vital mission of the Church that needs to be understood more fully and correctly, especially as we enter this ostensibly pivotal third millennium.”

Concerning the subject of inculturation, this research presents the concept as what might be called a bridge-building metaphor. It describes how an increased sensitivity to cultural cum religious differences can, not only influence perceptions, but also, and most importantly, build bridges to go back and forth on the path of the religious experience.
This can be very enriching and refreshing, even as it provides a learning opportunity. Because the learning and mutually beneficial relationship does not seem to be happening as expected, clearly, more research and effort need to be done to achieve the goal of inculturation and the empowerment of all cultures so that faith can become culture.

It is because inculturation is all about “building on, not breaking with the past.” that the in a document entitled, Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture, “Pontifical Council for Culture” addresses the following ideas: Faith and Culture: Some Guidelines; Challenges and Opportunities; Concrete Proposals, and Conclusion. In acknowledging the existence of cultures and the new cultural situations, which create new fields and methods of evangelization, the documents states:

From the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures (Fides et Ratio, 70), for “it is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture” (Gaudium et Spes 53). In this way, the Good News which is Christ’s Gospel for all men and the whole human person, “both child and parent of the culture in which they are immersed” (Fides et Ratio, 71), reaches them in their own culture, which absorbs their manner of living the faith and is in turn gradually shaped by it. “Today, as the Gospel gradually comes in contact with cultural worlds which once lay beyond Christian influence, they are new tasks of inculturation” (Ibid, 72). At the same time, some traditionally Christian cultures or cultures imbued with thousand-year-old religious traditions are being shattered. Thus, it is not only a question of grafting the faith into these cultures, but also of
revitalizing a de-Christianized world whose only Christian references are of a cultural nature. On the threshold of the Third Millennium, the Church throughout the world is faced with new cultural situations, new fields of evangelization. Inculturation points to using what was there—such as language—to create something new that still associates with the deepest roots of the people’s culture. To make the point clearer, supreme chaplain of the Knights of Columbus, Archbishop William E. Lori states the church’s intent to inculcate by making the church at home with people’s cultures and vice versa, particularly in language. Thus:

Many remember the years just after the Second Vatican Council, but few people actually read the council’s 16 documents. All too often, the importance of the council was reduced to one little phrase, “the changes.” One change that everyone noticed was that, beginning in 1969, Mass was no longer regularly celebrated in Latin, but rather in one’s native tongue.

So, inculturation involves what Rogers describes as Identifying Gaps and Building Bridges. This “concept of building bridges seems to be associated with being more aware of and open to the possibility that your own conception of things…is not the only view that exists and is valid.” Therefore, the trick is in finding where the key differences in the current situation is from different cultures, in context, the local religion and Christianity, and then bridging those gaps. Although it is quite natural to give in to the temptation or take the easy way out of unreflectively focusing on all of the superficial differences between religions, and so feel frustrated over where to start, there is a more “tolerant” path to take, thanks to cultural competent skills.
The most important bridges to build are at those points of religious experiences where people do not fully understand what is going on and so might tend to disregard and devalue other practices that are different from theirs. This misunderstanding is not necessarily because of unintelligence, but due to lack of effort to understand something that is situated in a foreign concept that other people are not used to. So, the better way going forward is in determining what questions need to be asked in order to identify the gaps and build bridges across religious differences, the creeds professed and the practices therein.

By all means, the foregoing ideas on inculturation speak to the spirit of the times in which the church becomes more open to the world, more accessible, more accommodating and more accepting of all cultures. This is so as against mystifying everything and condemning all that was there that defines the people before the advent of Christianity. Such condemnation is arguably against the spirit of effective evangelization and is a far cry from practice of cultural competence. To subscribe to such change is to launch a culture war against the deepest roots of people. Positions against such culture wars have been variously articulated and the contrary advocated for. Thus, speaking of the original vision of the Order of the Knights of Columbus by its founder Father McGivney, the Order agrees that, though a lot “has changed with time so as to meet new needs and varying conditions — but always those changes have been in continuity with our deepest roots.”

It is in light of the understanding of inculturation as building on” that a statement ascribed to Thomas Aquinas that “builds on nature” can be appreciated. Thus, the
supernatural does not negate or destroy the natural world. Rather, grace sacrifices, purifies, transforms elevates and renews nature.” Thus, the grace of God does not destroy human nature as lived out in human culture; rather, it builds on and works with such nature to create something new, something transformed, something beautiful. In light of this thinking, inculturation then fits the definition of meaning:

…the insertion of Christianity into a culture, but not in a way to push the culture aside – as happened so frequently during the colonial period. Often, Christian message was identified with a particular culture, be it Spanish, Anglo-Celtic, Dutch or whatever. Ideally there should be interaction between the local culture and the Christian faith in such a way as to respect the culture. This means that in many ways the cultural ways of doing things will be able to be part of their Christianity. Some customs however might be excluded, or need transforming, because they conflict with Christian values. This step of deciding which values are compatible with Christianity requires careful discernment.

The Concept of “The Stranger”: A Compelling Perspective for Culturally Competent Priests

Arguably, by implication the holistic approach to cultural competence as suggested in this study might properly guide the formation, assure the cultivation and breeding, and eventually ensure the production of a new generation of priests that better understand cultures and the people therein, and so become part of the people—winning their trust and confidence. Such priests are no longer to be seen as mere insiders who are in reality cultural outsiders. Rather, they become “strangers,” that are seen in light of the unity of, being in transit and fixated—never “owning a soil” but living in one, so to
speak. The present reality today of priests who go on service abroad arriving “on the scene already ordained, a stranger in a strange land,”\textsuperscript{844} which creates a lot of uneasiness, can be cushioned through cultural competence wherein a “stranger” becomes a “person at home” in a different culture.

The term “stranger” as implored and meant to be understood in this dissertation enjoys the sociological form of its description by Georg Simmel as someone who is wandering but yet fixated. Thus:

The stranger is thus being discussed here, not in the sense often touched upon in the past, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the potential wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself.\textsuperscript{845}

Simmel makes the point that “This position of the stranger stands out more sharply if he settles down in the place of his activity, instead of leaving it again.”\textsuperscript{846}

Fortunately or unfortunately, priests can hardly fulfill this requirement of a stranger because they are constantly in motion in response to the demands of mission and other arrangements. Hence, to priests belongs the figurative description of the stranger as by nature no “owner of soil”— soil not only in the physical, but also in the figurative sense
of a life-substance which is fixed, if not in point in space, at least in an ideal point of the social environment.

The characterization of a priest as no “owner of soil” and not belonging to any spatial cultural domain “gives him the specific character of mobility,” where he is near and yet in a distance. Therefore, in him “embodies that synthesis of nearness and distance which constitutes the formal position of the stranger. For the fundamental mobile person comes in contact, at one time or another, with every individual, but is not organically connected, through established ties of kinship, locality, and occupation, with any single one.”

In line with Simmel’s concept of a stranger, it is only appropriate to see the priest as “not radically committed to the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group,” otherwise, he becomes subjective and goes “native” by beginning to overempathize with a specific culture, which might compromise his mission to that culture. Rather, his “non-commitment” allows him to approach the culture “with the specific attitude of ‘objectivity.’” But objectivity does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement.

True to his calling, a culturally competent priest, who is no longer a “stranger” easily wins not only the welcome and admiration but also the trust of the people in any culture he finds himself. This is more feasible if, upon arrival, he loses himself in “that” culture. A point Blake Mycoskie makes very passionately when he talks about his connection with Argentina in order to connect at a deeper level with the people. He
writes: “When I returned to Argentina, my main mission was to lose myself in its cultures. I spend my days learning the national dance (the tango), playing the national sports (polo), and, of course, drinking the national wine (Malbec). I also get used to wearing the national shoe: the *alpargata*, a soft, casual canvass worn by almost everyone in the country, from polo players to farmers to students. I saw this incredible versatile shoe everywhere: in the cities, on the farms, in the nightclubs.”

From this position of losing himself in a culture as against staying stiff, a priest “often receives the most surprising openness—confidences which sometimes have the character of a confessional and which would be carefully withheld from a more closely related person” Given the fact of confessional openness it goes without saying that at the end of the day, arguably, he—the priest as a “stranger”—becomes more aware of the day-to-day life of the people than the cultural insiders themselves.

Because he belongs to no one intra-group (family, association), Simmel opines that the stranger’s objectivity in looking at things and in his interpretation of realities “may also be defined as freedom: the objective individual is bound by no commitments which could prejudice his perception, understanding, and evaluation of the given.” Despite some dangerous possibilities such as misinformation by the stranger and use of the stranger by “enemy cultures,” the culturally competent stranger, in this context, a priest “is freer, practically and theoretically; he surveys conditions with less prejudice; his criteria for them are more general and more objective ideals; he is not tied down to his action by habit, piety, and precedent.” Besides, ownership cannot be claimed of him by a person, family, association, or group within the larger culture. Ideally, all peoples are
generally connected to him by a common connection as exists between the “stranger” and the indigenes. It is this commonness that functions as their unifying basis.\textsuperscript{855} To the extent to which the common features are general, his objectivity and freedom are strengthened.

Generally, not only as it applies to real strangers and priests as missionaries in a foreign land, in a sense we are all strangers not so much as individuals since we belong to and share a common humanity, but “strangers of a particular type,”\textsuperscript{856} defined by nearness and distance, in transit and fixated. Therefore, “In spite of being inorganically appended to it, the stranger is yet an organic member of the group,”\textsuperscript{857} and remains so, even as he provides a link and serves as a connection between the group and the outside world. In the final analysis, loosely stated, a “stranger” can be said to be a “global citizen,” a cultural disseminator, and a culture transporter [exporter and importer], and above all, a culturally competent person.

In what can be said to be an embrace or endorsement of the stranger concept, in the dimension of welcoming the stranger, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has developed a way of cushioning the process of making the “stranger among us” become one of us. On November 15, 2000, the US Bishops issued a document entitled, “Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity.” The document addresses the following ideas: \textit{An Immigrant Church, Then and Now: The immigrant church today, Who are the immigrants? The migration for survival, Undocumented immigrants, Immigrant families and their communities, The new immigration and the Church; The Calling of the Church: A tradition of welcome and}
pastoral care; A Call to Conversion: Forgetful of our heritage, Competition of resources, Cultural fears, Institutional obstacles; A Call to Communion: Coming to understand others as they first form of hospitality, Intercultural communication, Language for ministry, Ministry in a multicultural church; The Call to Solidarity; Conclusion: A Call to a New Evangelization.858

Another very telling implication of this study is that the theoretical knowledge of cultural competence has the potential of helping to reduce culture shock in the stranger, in this case, the priest sent for service abroad. Thus, by arriving in the new cultural environment already with what to expect or prepared to expect the unexpected, the priest-stranger is mentally adjusted and ready to take on the new experiences thrown at him from the culture.

Brief Critical Appraisal of Western Christian Missionaries to Africa vis-à-vis Cultural Competence: Understanding

The analysis of the concept of cultural competence in this study and its implications for the formation of priests in the twenty-first century for service abroad, necessitates a brief critical appraisal of the works and worldview of the early nineteenth century Western Christian missionaries to Africa vis-à-vis the knowledge or more precisely, the exercise of cultural competence. No thanks that research lacking in the application of the rules of evidence to factors such as internal validity, adherence to reporting standards, conclusions and generalizability859 have been published in works with ungenerous take on African religious culture. This reality is responsible for the writing of books as rejoinders that challenge the initial accounts. Popular among African writers/authors devoted to and championing the cause of African Traditional Religions
(ATR) are some of the following: John S. Mbiti, an Anglican priest from Kenya, writes on *Introduction to African religion*, *African religions and philosophy*; Laurenti Magesa, *African religion: The moral traditions of abundant life*; Jacob K. Olupona, *African spirituality: Forms, meanings and expressions*; and the legendary work by a famous Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe, *Things fall apart*, as well as many articles—published and unpublished. The works of and by these authors have become necessary due to the lack of understanding and, therefore, lack of cultural competence by some missionaries.

Arguably:

For centuries, African traditional religions have been subjected to the same misrepresentation, underestimation and basic stigmatization which have reserved – and continue to be reserved – for the societies, cultures and actors of Sub-Saharan Africa in general. This stigmatization involves a structured process which occurs at various levels…The misrepresentation of Africa as a country devoid of its own profound spiritual dimension or of a religion worthy of its name…an inextricable tangle of often cruel and bloody ancestral rites…In many ways, all this has actually resulted in African religions simply not being considered to be religious at all.  

It is in light of quotations such as this [one] that this study attempts to use the understanding of the meaning of cultural competence to make a critical appraisal by assessing the perception of the Christian missionaries regarding African religious culture.

Based on the definition of culture as well as the meaning and importance of cultural competence, the one question that needs to be raised for reflection is this: Did the
missionaries really understand the African culture with its religion? Arguably, the ethnocentrism of the missionaries was evident throughout their work of evangelization in African, even to the point of “denigration” and “generalization.” For instance, they referred to priests of the African Traditional Religions (ATR) as “Juju priests” — a term that is arguably derogatory with negative connotations. In addition, the “calling” of priests of ATR was not considered a “vocation” as the term is defined and understood today. Needless to mention references like “juju houses” instead of “chapels.” Again, objects used for protection by members of ATR are called “charms” and “amulets,” instead of “rosaries,” “scapulars” and “sacramental.” Furthermore, the systems of observances connected therewith are tagged “fetish” and “idolatry” instead of “adoration,” “worship” and “holy hours.” All these show a lack of cultural competence which ultimately stood in the way of the mutually beneficial exercise of inculturation.

What about importation of traditional religious practices from native religious experience to the new religious culture—Christianity? This has been described as continuity. On this note, how can one forget that what is known today in the Catholic Church as “Apparition” was an experience that first existed in the animist religion—in this context—African Traditional Religion (ATR)? In the former it is called “bilocation.” But the missionaries called it “evil spirit” or “ghostly wanderers on earth” while calling similar experience in the Catholic Church as “Apparition.” On this note, Edward B. Tylor writes:

As a general rule, people are apt to consider it impossible for a man to be in two places at once, and indeed a saying to that effect has become a popular saw. But
the rule is so far from being universally accepted, that the word “bilocation” has been (re) invented to express the miraculous faculty possessed by certain Saints of the Roman Church, of being in two places at once; like St. Alfonso di Liguori, who had the useful power of preaching his sermon in church while he was confessing penitents at home.\textsuperscript{861}

The deities of the ATR are not treated any kinder or fairer. They suffer a bigoted view and so goes the misrepresentation as “no gods,” but the work of human hands. Hence, they are incapable of interceding and acting on behalf of man in relation to God. It is important to point out that in general, so long as Africans are also in search of a deity, their religious rituals have rich spiritual traditions that are not mumbo jumbo—confusing, meaningless or nonsense rituals. In fact, one can describe African traditional religionists “as ‘natural Christians’ because they had no other ‘sect,’ or false faith, and believed that they could become Christians if they had instruction.”\textsuperscript{862}

In the final analysis, it suffices to say that in order to give the religious culture of a people a generous interpretation, and a kinder and fairer look at the deities of world religions, the education in cultural competence for all missionaries cannot be overlooked. And particularly for the training of future priests in the twenty-first century, the training in cultural competence is a fundamental option, if for nothing else, so as not to repeat the mistakes of the past and to adopt St. Paul’s method of evangelize, wherein he did not condemn the Athenians for worshipping and building an altar to an “Unknown god.” Rather, he practiced a perfect inculturation which resulted to an effective evangelization in Athens.\# [Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 17, verses 16 to 34].
Conclusions

The volumes of the literature reviewed for this study make the case that cultural competence matters in priestly service, even as it does in other fields and walks of life. In both of these areas the description and expectation are more or less matters of distinction and not so much of difference. Even though the concept is more complex than do’s and don’ts, the fact is [that] better training in the skill has significant impact in improving ministerial service and in the holistic transformative growth of the human person. Against this backdrop, there is the need to make cultural competence a matter of priority in the academic curriculum of priestly training.

Central agenda of this dissertation, so to speak, is that the church should institutionalize the importance of cultural competence in the training of future priests, and make it an ongoing formation for priests, especially for service abroad. This assertion benefits from many arguments even as there is a lot of evidence making the case that much needs to be done on this front in the training and the educational system of priests.

Without merely stating the problem, in addition to addressing some implications, this study makes some suggestions on how to fully tap into and realize the goal of institutionalizing the importance of cultural competence and producing culturally competent priests who appreciate their native culture and respect that of others. Particularly, the need to respect other cultures and appreciate multiple cultural perspectives is thanks to a world that is not only shrinking, but one that is experiencing global migration of people who are fanatically sensitive to cultural issues and are
reluctant to overlook cultural missteps or easily move past related trespasses, no matter how unintentional or acting out of ignorance the misstep might be.

As an educational issue that is fittingly situated within the larger picture of the human condition, and that constitutes a worry in the ministerial effectiveness of priests, this dissertation disclaims that, notwithstanding the complete understanding of the concept; despite an individual meeting all the abilities associated with cultural competence, what remains to be said is that the analysis of the concept is not a panacea to all culture related problems. Thus, even though the study makes the claim of having a lot of ideas on cultural competence that might help in navigating the dicey and intricate landmine of cultural differences, it cannot claim to have said the last word.

Far from sounding pessimistic, the point must be made, however, that due to the complexity of the concept of cultural competence, not only that the full and complete meaning of the analysis is a difficult task, the unanimous acceptance of its definition, description, interpretation, understanding and application might be a far cry. Dare it to say that even in the church and among priests, to expect that all would have a common interest on this subject, or all would agree about what needs to be done and how, is not only being over confidence, but such stance amounts to demonstrating both a serious misunderstanding of the nature of cultural competence and the divergence of human interest. So, there will always be tension – the tension of diversity, superiority, and syncretism or inculturation.

As a way of focusing on the subject, and intent on amplifying the debate on the need for cultural competence for priests in the 21st century — given the trend in the global
redistribution of priests — the fact is some priests would find themselves in new territories and in different cultures. This study is intended to assist in that timely and timeless endeavor of preparation for effective service. And it is hoped that these pages hold a treasure trove of great ideas that might make a useful contribution to the literature on training priests, particularly for service abroad — for a truly culturally competent priest is a gift to the church, wherever he may be. To emphasize, it cannot be said enough that foundational to effective navigating of cultures and fundamental to human interaction and relationship in all cultures and walks of life is the central, definitive, and indispensable concept of cultural competence.

**Suggestions/Recommendations**

In embracing the idea of the global redistribution of priests by responding positively to the invitation contained in the encyclical *fidei donum*, it is worth reiterating in context that, “As the Catholic Church in America brings in more and more international priests to serve in the United States, debate is spreading about if and how this should be done. Criticisms, proposals, and suggestions are being heard on all sides of the issues, and they commonly call for more research and information.” 863 This dissertation is another response to the call for more research and information gathering.

Having said this, since in their book *International Priests in America*, Hoge and Okure merely state “the issues as clearly and fairly as possible without attempting to settle them,” 864 this study dares to suggest and propose a way of answering the questions and settling the issues. It strongly supports the idea of bringing in international priests to America, and redistributing priests all over the world — from places of relative surplus to
places of worrisome shortages or lack thereof. Although this line of action might be seen “only as a partial alleviation,” it is feasible in the immediate future and should be seen as an important step on the agenda of making up for priest shortages. And so the practice of global redistribution of priests is highly recommended.

In respect to America, this dissertation’s argument for bringing in international priests agrees with the following three reasons: “First, America needs them to serve immigrant parishes. Second, we need them to fill in the gaps in our priest shortage. Third, they help universalize and revitalize American Catholicism.”

However, while making a strong case that supports the movement of priests from nation to nation, which among other things, [also] helps to cultivate, nurture and inculcate cultural competence skills, contrary opinions are not blindsided or overlooked. Most compelling among the contrary views are the following four as stated by people: “First, there are too many problems with them, mainly in language and culture. Second, bringing priests to America is an irrational deployment of priestly resources in the world. Third, it postpones a much-needed restructuring of parish leadership such as the empowerment of women through ordination of women and accepting viri probati – that is, tested married men into the ministerial priesthood. And fourth, it postpones lay efforts to recruit vocations here.”

It is in light of these contrary views or concerns that this dissertation proposes the training in cultural competence as one way of addressing some of the concerns. Thus, put more directly, the study attempts to answer the question of how the training of priest should be done in order to continue with the trend in the global redistribution of priests.
This is to be achieved through an educational investment in cultural competence, which should reflect in the school curriculum of priestly training as well as an ongoing formation in the life of priests.

However, good as the trend in the global redistribution of priests may be, there is need for the exercise of caution, especially so as to avoid the unwholesome culture of brain drain. To fully comprehend today’s movement of priests from nation to nation, the brain drain effect deserves an explanation. As a concept, brain drain came to world-wide attention in the 1960s and 1970s, when newly independent nations were sending thousands of young persons to Europe and North America for advanced training. Many of these people did not return home. Salaries, opportunities, research grants, and access to the latest technology were so much better in the wealthy nations that the professionals stayed on, even when their governments tried hard to lure them back."868

Arguably, today’s trend in “The movement of priests from poor nations to rich nations would seem to be one facet of the global brain drain.”869 Of this worrisome and exploitative culture, Christine Schenk writes that “For us to import priests from Africa or Latin America is just another way of exploiting the developing world. There are some authoritative documents that discourage the church of the first world from ‘importing’ priests.”870

It is based on the exploitative culture of brain drain that this dissertation recommends that instead of *incardination*, [which allows a *fidei donum* priest or a priest on loan to break ties with his home diocese to become a priest no longer on loan but a]
member of the indigenous clergy of the host diocese through a process of *excardination*, a preference is made for a resurgence and continuity of the age-long missionary practice of *fidei donum*, in the strict sense of the word – as originally intended by the church. The strict practice of *fidei donum* is particularly important if a culturally competent priest must have the closeness or must be in proximity to exercise one of the most important capabilities of cultural competence, which is taking action to improve conditions, beginning from the local environment, in this case, a priest’s own native home. Today, many foreign-born priests come from countries, dioceses, villages, and places that are in dire need of improved conditions in more than one way. Hence, for a priest to be become a “victim” of brain drain is a great disservice to his homeland, home diocese, and native culture.

In any case, in spite of the suggestion of shunning *excardination* in preference to strict adherence to the rules of *fidei donum*, the insight of Pope Paul VI on this matter is worthy of consideration. In *Presbyterorum Ordinis*: Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, he writes:

> Present norms of incardination and excardination should be so revised that, while this ancient institution still remains intact, they will better correspond to today’s pastoral needs. Where a real apostolic spirit requires it, not only should a better distribution of priests be brought about but there should also be favored such particular pastoral works as are necessary in any region or nation anywhere on earth. To accomplish this purpose there should be set up international seminaries, special personal dioceses or prelatures (vicariates), and so forth, by means of
which, according to their particular statutes and always saving the right of bishops, priests may be trained and incardinated for the good of the whole Church.”

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the return of a priest to his home diocese after many years of service abroad affords a priceless opportunity to practically bring to bear the intercultural or cross-cultural experience on one’s own home country, in one’s home diocese, and among one’s local people. “Sadly” evidence abounds where many fidei donum priests refuse—for no just cause—to return to their home dioceses, even when they are recalled by their home bishops for an important assignment. Making the point, Aniedi reports that, although “some come for a limited, usually three- to five-year period, as the result of the agreements made between their bishops and the U.S. bishops in need of priests,” others decide to stay in America when their studies are completed, and make the transition to being priests of US dioceses. Arguably, this experience is a kind of brain drain.

The Vatican is no stranger to the news of some fidei donum priests abandoning their roots, which has an adverse effect coming full circle in the complete understanding of the concept of cultural competence, especially in its practice and exercise. Concerned about this trend, it comes as no surprise that “In 2001, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Vatican’s missionary arm, issued a document titled, ‘Instruction on the Sending Abroad of Diocesan Priests from Mission Territories.’ It warned that priests sent to study in Europe or in the States often put down
roots, in part because they’re attracted by the high living conditions, in part because bishops in the north see them as a way of relieving shortages of their own clergy.”

Thus, the document issued by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, counters the growing trend of priests moving from the developing nations to Europe or North America for further studies or for special ministerial service, then to remain there and never go home. The reasons why priests from developing nations wanted to go abroad were well known and clearly stated in the document. Priests are motivated, in part, to move to wealthy nations for the economic opportunities there. The result is that too many priests move to Europe or North America to study, then make themselves available to the local bishops and soon overextend their stay, hoping to remain permanently, [sometimes even at the request of the benefiting bishop]. A certain number of them defy the commands of their home bishops to return to their native country. The sending bishops, due to the long distances and poor communication, in effect lose control of those priests.”

Cardinal Jozef Tomko, prefect of the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples, said that such line of action of priests “never” returning for good to their home dioceses is damaging to roots. Using India as a case in point, Tomko said, the country “doesn’t have enough priests to take care of its 17 million Catholics, yet at that time there were 39 priests from India working in one Italian diocese alone. Overall, Tomko said, there were 1,800 foreign priests in Italy, with more than 800 working in direct pastoral care. Many new dioceses could be created in mission territories with such a number of diocesan priests, Tomko complained.”
On another note, it is worth stating that the missionary culture of global redistribution of priests is better served when there is equal division of labor, both in volume and dignity. Based on some behind-the-scenes talks or off-camera conversations, the story is that most international priests from the developing countries who are serving abroad in the developed West are saddled with too much pastoral work in comparison to what the indigenous priests do, not to mention the “undignifying” and “infra dig” nature of some assignments. On this note, situations are reported where “international priests are easily relegated to boondock parishes that the American priests don’t want.”

Warning against such occurrence as not being in tune with the spirit of fidei donum, in a 2006 interview with John L. Allen Jr., Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria, John Onaiyekan states:

What we don’t want is to get into a Gastarbeiter situation, where a European priest feels overwhelmed having to say three Masses on Sunday, and so he wants a black man to say them. Surely this is not where the church wants to go, getting poor people to do jobs that the rich don’t want to do, as today happens in other walks of life."

However, unembarrassed and keeping it honest regarding the economic reason for sending priests from the global south to the global north:

Onaiyekan understands why his brother bishops permit their priests to go abroad – because it generates revenue. An African priest serving in the States typically returns some share of his salary to his local church; plus he has the opportunity to raise funds during annual missionary appeals and to promote sister parish relationships. Onaiyekan argues, however, that Western Catholics who want to
support Africa ought to find ways of doing so that don’t fuel a ‘brain drain’ among their clergy.\footnote{879}

Now, when a foreign-born priest is sent abroad, against the backdrop of the fact that it takes a significant amount of time to become culturally competent, it is necessary that such priest should remain in a particular place—be it a parish or any other pastoral placement—for a long period of time rather than move him around every so often. This suggestion is for making a case for long-term instead of short-term placement. And it is case that shares the same sentiments expressed by most American parishioners. Thus: “Which serves the Catholic Church in the United States better—long-term international priests ministering here their entire careers or short-term international priests cycling in and out? All agreed: long-term is better.”\footnote{880} It is not enough that a priest is left in one place for a long time. While he is there, orientation is needed over a period of time than is now being offered. This can be for “maybe a year, probably with an initial educational session, then periodic meetings or consultations”\footnote{881} to cushion culture shock when it hits—because it must.

The idea of being in one place for an extended period of time is a more concrete step toward acquiring cultural competence. It provides a practical approach to learning and exercising the skill \textit{in situ}. It allows for what Healey calls the “three-step approach to cultural awareness, which requires the development of language skills, the study of the particular culture’s history and practical contextual application through immersion in the culture for an extended period of time.”\footnote{1131} In military language, Hernandez describes such
long-term placement as “Developing Cultural Understanding in Stability Operations: A
Three Step Process.”

More directly and pointedly: What about the current situation in the training of
priests in terms of the existing curriculum? Is what is there enough? Can more still be
done to prepare culturally competent priests? A review of the curriculum in this study,
arguably, reveals that what is currently there falls short as a venue for cultural
competence training. Of the courses examined from different seminaries across the globe,
not one listed cultural competence as a training objective in its curriculum. This situation
compels the suggestion for the current curriculum to undergo significant revision,
updating and prioritizing. Because of the need to begin early, it might be a good idea to
begin creating cultural awareness and related competence from the minor seminaries—
the equivalent of high school. This entails including a course on cultural competence in
the academic curriculum, with emphasis on enculturation, acculturation, and
inculturation. At this level, there should be the emphasis that culture matters in life, even
as the progress is made from cultural awareness to developing cultural competency.

The important issue of inculturation needs more attention when discussing
cultural competence. Thus, for the benefit of cultural competence, regardless of the
uniformity of the Catholic Church, the question of how much uniformity and how much
local inculturation, with how and when the latter is best, is relevant. Although
inculturation is a touchy and unending issue, even as signals from the Vatican are wary
about it, it is recommended that at the very best, seminarians and priests “today need to
learn to recognize and analyze, as well as apply cultural differences so that they will be
able to move from culture to culture, making Catholic life spiritually nourishing in whatever setting they find themselves. Cultural specifics should be seen as integral, not extraneous, to liturgy and devotional life.”

Buttressing the point in the suggestion for more attention and better treatment of inculturation, the unified voices of the Nigerian bishops, under the aegis of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) is loud and clear. In its recommendation section of the regional or national program of priestly formation, “The Nigerian Priests in the Third Millennium, while reechoing Pope John Paul II Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa, to form future priests in the true cultural values of their country,” the bishops write:

Having examined the socio-cultural-anthropological dimension of priestly life and ministry in the Nigerian context, we urge the following: -There is a great need for inculturation, which, when deeply understood, is another name for conversion. The Nuntius of the 1994 African Synod called on Africans to evangelize, “the cultural roots of their persons and of their communities.” Inculturation is a total transformation of primordial values which shape the individual’s attitudes and judgments, decisions and choices, behavior and relationships. – Nigerian priests should examine the values they inherited from their people in the light of the Gospel, and seek authentic and dynamic ways of re-expressing the priestly ideals. In this way, they will be able to influence and transform their people and culture, as well as offer to the universal Church new ways of responding to God’s call. – Each cultural group in Nigeria is urged to undertake a periodic self-examination,
in order to clarify the identity and mission of its priests… Priestly training should root candidates in their cultural heritage. The split between faith and culture would be reduced if faith could be made to seek understanding and expression more in the philosophy and wisdom of the African people than in Greek and ancient categories. Inculturation of the liturgy, pastoral ministry, Church law, and so on will depend largely on this hermeneutics. – Seminary formation should enable African priests to lead a truly priestly life and at the same time be men of their people…Consolidating the positive traditional values in our heritage may be an effective way to address the negative impact of colonialism.

When a foreign-born priest arrives in a different cultural setting for pastoral ministry, one of the much talked about ideas in the acquisition of cultural competence is the idea of acculturation. It best serves the purpose to remind that acculturation is not and should neither be total assimilation nor a one-way street; it is a mutual process. It can be likened to a social contract of which Rudolph W. Giuliani writes that, “the social contract is a two-way street.”

To put it in perspective, according to Dr. Seung Ai Yang, [Associate professor of Sacred Scripture at the St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota], acculturating international priests does not mean teaching “them to think and behave just like ‘American’ Catholics.” Doing so “is not only unfeasible but also unethical. It is unfeasible because…one’s patterns of thought and behavior are cumulatively shaped by one’s cultural location through a long shared history and traditions. The cultural locations of international priests and American Catholics are quite different. It is unethical because it often requires international priests
to deny who they are and to abandon the ‘home’ traditions that have nourished them. This is actually a hidden expression of cultural imperialism patronizing the international priests. To avoid this unbecoming experience, generally, acculturation should be a way of helping both the international priests and the people of the host culture to understand each other so as to work together effectively. Therefore, acculturation should be a mutual process with a mutually beneficial outcome.

In addition, the borrowing of ideas is an educational exercise that more often than not leads to improvement of an institution, facilitates maturation of ideas, and ultimately makes better the human condition in many ways. Undoubtedly, people grow by acquiring truth and meaning from education and from the shared concrete life experiences of others. “One of the earliest examples of educational borrowing occurred in A.D. 607, when a Japanese court sent a mission to China to study the Empire’s education system. According to Kobayashi, one outcome of this visit was the establishment of Japan’s first national school system.” This practice speaks to and affirms the famous saying couched in the lines of: what happens there should matter here.

Against the backdrop of the culture of educational borrowing with its dividends, it is not and would not be a bad idea if the church could learn something of cultural competence by borrowing ideas from other fields and professions that would lead to putting structures in place to promote the phenomenon in all dioceses. There is nothing wrong with organizations and institutions cribbing from each other and tailoring strategies that would be effective in their own areas of service delivery. For instance,
Healey writes that one of the outcomes of the discussions and debates on the importance of cultural awareness in the army in combat operations is that:

The Marine Corps and other branches of the U.S. military have made great strides over the past two years in the cultural awareness training of its forces supporting the Long War. The Commanding General of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) has designated cultural awareness training a top priority. Former Marine Corps Commandant General Hagee directed that cultural awareness be integrated into the Marine Corp’s professional military education curriculum and all formal schools. The Marine Corps established its CAOCL in Quantico, VA in 2005 to train Marines in cultural awareness in preparation for supporting the Long War. The U.S. Army has recently established the TRADOC Culture Center at the University of Military Intelligence in Fort Huachuca, AZ with a similar charter.891

Suggestively, therefore, the church can also benefit from borrowing and adapting through adaptation in order to improve the work on the curriculum of priestly formation. Thus, in the military setting, the curriculum for cultural awareness is structured according to the following three modules: 1) Introduction to Operational Culture, 2) Operational Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 3) Operational Culture in the Middle East. “Each module consists of five themes: 1) Political Structures and Leadership, 2) Social Organization and Law, 3) Culture and Local Economics, 4) Culture Belief Systems, and 5) Culture and Environment.”892 By way of borrowing, adaptation and application, the
church could structure the course on cultural competence under these three modules and expand the conversation as much as possible: 1) Enculturation, 2) Acculturation, and 3) Inculturation.

From this suggestion, it is possible to think that the church has never been interested in cultural awareness, and so has never had any course in the curriculum for priestly training which talks about the importance of culture. Nothing could be further from the truth. The church has had a long history of interest in culture that is why some curricula have major course like *Faith &Culture* and *Missiology*. In a nutshell, these two courses address mainly the idea of being merely aware that other faiths and cultures exist out there and the need to be open to the possibility of being sent on mission to minister in a different culture, respectively. Hence, what is different in this study is in the emphasis on the acquisition of cultural competence skills for effective service while on mission to a foreign culture.

It is not always the case that what is, is enough and sufficient. It is also true that all things can always benefit from new ideas. And due to the fact that striving to attain perfection is an ongoing human endeavor, the full attainment of cultural competence can always be improved upon through the continuous revamping and updating of the existing structures. No matter how impressive the cultural competence training program is in place today in institutions compared to what existed before now, “impressive does not necessarily equate adequate.” Therefore, there is always room for improvement, particularly when it comes to the training of priests in the twenty-first century and beyond to be culturally competent and to attain the status of global citizenship.
On the heels of the idea of improvement and the need to update the curriculum, one source that can inform such line of action is writing and publishing. To bring this about, this study recommends and encourages that priests who have had a cross-cultural ministerial experience should talk and write about their personal and individual experiences. These should and would constitute a great resource for problem solving and planning. Publishing such eyewitness –been there done that – accounts has the potential of giving specific cultural information about particular regions or countries, as well as highlighting the significance of cultural competence, leading to incorporating the lessons learned into the curriculum for the training of priests.

Another area that might benefit from a suggestion is the emphasis on the idea of developing regional programs of priestly formation. Thus, although this study applauds the said program developed by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), calling it a prototype, the implementation of the laudable ideas calls for more action than mere words on paper. Perhaps, in line with the pedagogical culture-centric approach developed by the Umoja community in Chicago, the program of priestly formation in Nigeria and other regions can use the “Ten Ideas on Simultaneous Culture-Centric Approaches from Teaching Umoja.” The ideas are listed thus: 1. Reflect cultural images, relevance, and continuity; 2. Provide and model resistance and survival strategies; 3. Involve parents and community in program development; 4. Reclaim, validate, and maintain the home language; 5. Develop cross-literacy, loan second language, and negotiate culture of the classroom; 6. Establish “critical mass” and consider intra-group cultural and linguistic variance; 7. Promote “everyday” culturally relevant pedagogy; 8.
Prepare culturally and linguistically relevant teachers; 9. Address barriers to providing culturally relevant learning environments; and 10. Encourage development of tri-literacy and transformational education. This study recommends the borrowing of some of these ten ideas of a culture-centric approach and doing some adaptation for planning the curriculum for the training of priests for effective priestly service – both at home and abroad.
Notes


751. Ibid.

752. Ibid.

753. Ibid., 220.


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771. Olson, Green, & Hill, A handbook for Advancing Comprehensive internationalization, 88.


778. Ibid.
779. Ibid.

780. Landis, Bennett, and Bennett, A Handbook of Intercultural Training, 340.


782. Ibid.


785. Landis, Bennett, and Bennett, A Handbook of Intercultural Training, 340.

786. Ibid.

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792. Ibid.

793. Ibid.

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795. Landis, Bennett, and Bennett, A Handbook of Intercultural Training, 340.


799. Ibid., no. 22.

800. Ibid., nos. 14 and 36.

801. Ibid., nos. 19-20.


803. Ibid., 7.


805. Ibid.

806. Ibid., nos. 2-4.

807. Ibid., no. 5.


809. Ibid., 4.


811. Ibid.


813. Ibid., 241.

814. Ibid., 242.


817. Nodar, “What are the Characteristics of the New Evangelization?”

819. Ibid., 30.


821. Poupard and Praem, “Toward A Pastoral Approach to Culture,” no. 8


823. Landis, Bennett, and Bennett, A Handbook of Intercultural Training, 149.

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874. Allen, Jr., “Global Priest Shortages, Faith and Reason in the U. K. and a Loss in Ohio.”


876. Ibid., 106.

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878. Allen, Jr., “Global Priest Shortages, Faith and Reason in the U. K. and a Loss in Ohio.”

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881. ibid., 89.


884. Ibid.


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