

**Towards Enhancing Member Care for
Missionary Couples in Cross-Cultural Marriages**

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is a product of my own work. I declare also that the dissertation is available for photocopying, reference purposes and Inter-Library Loan.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
PREFACE.....	5
CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....	6
1.1 Purpose.....	6
1.2 Limitations.....	8
1.3 Personal Background.....	9
1.4 Defining Terminologies.....	10
1.4.1 Member Care.....	10
1.4.2 Culture.....	11
1.4.3 Marriage.....	12
1.4.4 Outline of the Dissertation.....	12
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review.....	14
2.1 Member Care.....	14
2.2 Culture.....	17
2.3 Cross-Cultural Marriages.....	20
CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology.....	24
3.1 Overview of the Survey.....	25
3.2 Overview of the Semi-Structured Interviews.....	28
CHAPTER 4: Findings and Analysis.....	32
4.1 Sending Agencies: Sharing Current Practice of Member Care.....	33
4.2 Missionary Couples in CCM: A Glimpse of their Experiences.....	37
4.2.1 The Challenges.....	37
4.2.2 The Benefits.....	48
4.3 Suggestions for Sending Agencies.....	52
4.4 Personal Reflections and Recommendations.....	55
CHAPTER 5: Conclusion.....	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	61
LIST OF FIGURES.....	65
LIST OF TABLES.....	65
APPENDICES.....	66

ABSTRACT

Towards Enhancing Member Care for Missionary Couples in Cross-Cultural Marriages

The goal of this dissertation is to present a description and an evaluation of the needs and complexities of missionary couples in cross-cultural marriages (CCM) in order to enhance the provision of member care offered to them by their sending agencies. The research revealed that there has been an increase in the number of missionary couples in CCM joining sending agencies, hence the need to raise awareness and make provision accordingly. Through an online survey and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, this paper will give an account of the report by organisations and interviews of eleven missionary couples in CCM. In all the cases one partner is from Britain and the other from a diversity of nations including Brazil, Canada, Chile, China/Malaysia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, New Zealand and The Netherlands. The participants were seen both together (the first two couples) and individually, for the remaining couples. The specific focus is to identify issues such as social, physical, emotional, professional and spiritual needs that are instigated by cultural disparities. Such differences affect each individual in the marriage, their relationship as married couples and also in the society where they live and serve. Missionary couples in CCM seek to make sense of the challenges and benefits, which range from cultural differences, sense of belonging and losses to cultural richness, wider perspective on life and multicultural families. This dissertation will share some lessons learned from the couples while outlining initial implications for member care providers presenting some suggestions as they seeking to assist, support and encourage such couples in their journey of a cross cultural lifestyle.

Keywords: member care, missionary couples, cross-cultural marriage, belonging, losses and gains

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PREFACE

In the last few decades a variety of resources have been available bringing awareness and offering a broader picture about the needs of missionaries. Churches and sending agencies have been challenged to not only support financially but especially engage personally with their workers and care for them holistically. Many resources are related to couples and families who leave their countries and then return “home” after serving “in a foreign country”. However it will always be true for cross-cultural couples that at least one of them will never be in their ‘home of origin’ no matter where they work or live.

While serving as a member care provider I have had the privilege of engaging with many missionary couples in CCM serving both overseas and in the United Kingdom. When interacting with these couples I realised that by understanding their cultural differences and needs, member care could be offered to them in a more meaningful way.

This dissertation seeks to understand how sending agencies can best engage, support and offer informed member care to missionary couples in CCM. As well as reviewing literature both on member care and cross-cultural marriage, I also made use of a survey with nine sending agencies and have interviewed eleven couples using a semi-structured interview approach. Although one partner in each couple was British and the number of couples was quite small, the findings give relevant information that will help those who are caring for missionary couples in CCM. My expectation is that the results of this research will offer a thought-provoking discussion about providing care for missionary couples in CCM who have made a decision to have a permanent cross-cultural life-long experience.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Purpose

I believe that if we are to see strong, resilient workers – including those in cross-cultural marriages – serving well, it is part of our role, as member care providers to learn about their needs. If we do so, we will be able to offer informed member care. The purpose of this dissertation is to bring awareness to member care providers regarding the specific needs of missionary couples in CCM and their families. This means ensuring that personnel and family are cared for holistically, being well equipped to serve effectively wherever God places them. Caring should be evident from the very beginning of the relationship with the agency and continue as personnel grow to become resilient individuals, couples and families.

According to Global Member Care Network (GMCN) it is the responsibility of member care providers to seek the best ways of addressing the needs of missionaries, including those who are married¹. However my research and to some extent my own experience suggests that there is a gap in understanding the specific needs of missionary couples in CCM. Gardner believes that ‘understanding the complexities of cross-cultural marriages and being able to do marriage counselling in these situations is an unusual but necessary skill’[sic] (2015a, p122). In the survey, a member care provider wrote

I think that this is a really important area to study, and it would be great to have more materials or guidance. Increasingly, we are finding that a mission placement of up to two years are producing more and more cross-cultural relationships than before (R28²).

My aim in focussing on the member care of missionary couples in CCM, is to expand the awareness of their needs in order to provide them with more informed, consistent and relevant member care. When referring to missionary couples in CCM I mean those where one partner is born and/or raised in a different culture from the other spouse, more specifically, a marriage ‘between two people from different

¹ Global Member Care. Definition. More information: <http://www.globalmembercare.com/index.php?id=34>

² R28 is one of the respondents of the Survey. See 4.1, p34.

linguistic, religious, or ethnic groups or nations' (Breger & Hill, 1998, p.7). They may or may not be from the same country; however in this research the couples did not share the same nationality. I would add that it is a marriage in which both partners are required to sway 'between different realities, different worlds' (Grearson & Smith, 1995).

Cross-cultural marriage among missionaries is happening more frequently. To give an illustration, I compared the number of missionary couples in CCM that joined a sending agency³ within a period of five years. My research revealed that between the years 1990-1995, out of sixty couples who joined that agency five of them were in cross-cultural marriages. However, between 2010-2015, the same agency received nineteen couples of which seven were in cross-cultural marriage. This revealed a significant increase in the proportion of cross-culturally married couples. Sending agencies will profit in making an effort to understand and gain awareness of the needs of missionary couples in CCM. Gardner affirmed that

Cross-cultural marriages within mission is happening more and more, and consequently they will need more member care – informed member care. The issues such couples are likely to be quite different from couples from a same culture background, so current resources and popular thinking for traditional marriages is not likely to address the uniqueness a cross-cultural marriage experiences (2015b).

As a member care provider, I have come to the conclusion that the better missionary couples in CCM are understood by their sending churches and agencies, the more capable these organisations will be in encouraging them in their journey of dealing with multiple cross-cultural challenges. The sending churches and sending agencies will then be aware that individuals in cross-cultural marriages are not only learning the culture to which they have been called and sent to, but they are also constantly learning different aspects of their spouse's culture while, at the same time, discovering their own intrinsic cultural self (Romano, 2008). This means that by exposure to another culture we are also learning about our own cultures and aspects of it, which we did not know existed.

³ Name of sending agency has been omitted to comply with this research agreement.

1.2 Limitations

One limitation of my research is that the methodology chosen to collect data from the member care providers of the agencies was through an online survey. I am aware that a personal interview with each one of the member care providers would have supplied more accurate data. It would have allowed them an opportunity to explain their understanding of caring for missionary couples in CCM, while also being able to ask questions which might have emerged while answering the survey questions. However due to logistics factors and time constraints I had to opt for an online survey.

Another limiting factor was that among the seventy-six sending agencies contacted to be part of this online survey, twenty-nine started answering the survey, with only twenty-one of them actually finishing all the questions. Out of the twenty-one agencies, six of them offered permission for me to contact their cross-cultural married missionary couples to proceed to the second stage of this research, which was a semi-structured interview via Skype. The virtual approach was also a limiting factor, as greater depth of information could have been obtained if I had had the opportunity to meet the participants in person, which would have created a more relaxed and personal setting (Creswell, 2007, pp. 132–134)

A further limitation was the fact that it was not possible to interview the same number of cross-cultural couples from each agency, which restricted a fair comparison between the agencies represented.

Also, due to the availability of participants and time-zone constraints the size of my sample was relatively small. As a result, my findings cannot be generalized. However, I believe that it represents the experiences of the couples who were interviewed in this stage of their cross-cultural marriages, and their perceptions of member care offered by their respective sending agencies.

A final limitation of this research will be evident as I am biased on this subject. Firstly, I am in a cross-cultural marriage, living in a third country, a culture which is neither my husband's nor mine. Secondly, I am a member of a sending agency - one that took part in this research. Finally, I am part of the member care network team that offers care to missionary couples in CCM. Although neither my husband nor I answered the questions posed in the survey or in the semi-structured interviews, it is almost inevitable that my own views and experiences on this subject will be reflected within my writing and inherent perception.

1.3 Personal Background

My interest in the topic of cross-cultural marriage is not exclusively due to the fact that I have been in one for over fifteen years nor because I have been involved in full time cross-cultural ministry for half of my life. In reality, it was a result of being born and raised in Brazil, living abroad on three different continents, and having had the opportunity to meet countless missionary couples in CCM. Throughout many conversations I noticed that these couples were sharing similar ongoing experiences. Many were faced with the tension of having to fit in, or to conform, to their spouse's culture at the same time as fearing the loss of their own culture. These factors in many ways motivated me and deepened my interest and passion for member care of missionary couples in CCM.

I also observed that cross-cultural couples delighted in the fact that they were different, but struggled with the challenge of being in a relationship where not only natural and obvious personality differences count but also the element of culture plays a significant role. It became apparent, through hearing their stories and listening to their experiences, that to be a cross-cultural couple has its own challenges but, added to that, being in full-time service often ministering in a multi-cultural setting can be anything but smooth. Regardless of which country they came from, language they spoke or social background they had, when issues were raised relating to their cross-cultural challenges in marriage, many described how the cross-cultural nature of their marriage was misunderstood or simply ignored in their years of missionary service. Their losses and grief, and even joys and gains were not acknowledged or validated; or they were not viewed as socially acceptable

(Foyle, 2009). Perhaps these losses and grief may have surfaced due to the absence of empathy from those who has not lived in the same situation as they have or it may be even a simple lack of cultural awareness.

My desire to explore this topic was even stronger once I moved to England. Being a foreigner myself, it was and still is, easier for me to relate to those who also feel “outsiders”. I had the privilege of inviting other *émigrés* mothers to our house and inevitably cross-cultural issues became the centre of our conversation. These so-called “International Ladies Café” meetings encouraged me to explore deeper topics such as cultural differences, losses, gains, belonging and family affairs.

At the same time, one of the disciplines in my Masters in Member Care studies led me to reflect that the above issues were also true for cross-cultural married missionary couples around the world. As a part of a member care provider network, how could we best care for missionary couples in CCM? Was there a place for sending churches and sending agencies to offer member care in a more meaningful and practical way? This challenged me even further to research the topic of member care of missionary couples in CCM. It is my hope that member care providers will broaden their understanding and awareness of the issues faced by missionary couples in CCM and the impact they have on the everyday lives of spouses, their families and their team members who share different cultures and mind-sets.

1.4 Defining Terminologies

1.4.1 Member Care

Member care has become a prominent concern in more recent years among Christian workers. It does incorporate not only the spiritual aspect of missionaries’ lives but also their emotional, intellectual, relational, social and physical well-being. The purpose of member care ‘is to launch and sustain resilient individuals in successful ministry’ (Foyle, 2009, p.274). Therefore member care should be a deliberate effort to encourage workers to ‘become effective, moving them in an intentional direction, which is making them more effective in the context in which

they are called to serve' (Lindquist, 2001). As a Christian and a member care provider, I understand that member care is biblical, and it derives from the core of the Great Commandment to love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34). Love involves accepting, embracing, encouraging and promoting the other. In delivering informed member care, providers are creating opportunities for each individual to become resilient as they develop their gifts, skills and abilities (O'Donnell, 2002, p.14). Furthermore, they are fulfilling their call to care for those entrusted to them (Roembke, 2000), caring for each individual in their personal needs, with a good attitude and willing hearts (1 Peter 5:2).

1.4.2 Culture

According to Roembke, 'culture is the way life is organized to give meaning to a particular group of people in their environment' (2000, p.13). While the definition of culture can be complex, with different meanings and implications, it is nevertheless relevant to realise that it is not possible to separate culture and people, 'because people are cultural beings' affirms Eugene Nunnemacher (as cited in Roembke, 2000). Culture could be defined by the facts which "distinguish" one group from the other while associating a person with a specific group (Geertz, 2010). In other words, each culture creates its own pattern of behaviour and beliefs, which once learned will inevitably dictate ways of thinking, feeling and acting. This is known as a collective programming of the mind (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, pp.5–6). In a marriage where couples share different patterns of behaviour, 'culture plays an important role in the adventures and opportunities, challenges and losses' of the relationship (Fraser-Smith, 2013, p.277). My observation as a cross-cultural married wife is that when I learn more about my husband's culture I am able to catch a glimpse of the reason behind his actions. This learning can be in different forms. An effective one is by intentionally exposing yourself to each other's culture such 'as living in it for an extended length of time does deepen the understanding of that culture and develop strong and healthy communication in cross-cultural marriage' (ibid., 2016).

1.4.3 Marriage

Marriage from a biblical view point, is described as the act of leaving father and mother, and being united in 'one flesh' (Genesis 2:24). It involves submission, sacrifice and love (Eph 5:22-33; I Co 13:4-7). It is the union between two committed people that reflects the Lord's covenant relationship with His church, becoming one body in Christ (Piper, 2012). Arguably different cultures have their own unique way of defining marriage (Augsburger, 1986, p.176). However most cultures will use some form of religious, cultural, legal and practical aspects of marriage (Breger & Hill, 1998). In my opinion, marriage is a union to become one and is the most intimate relationship that a man and a woman can experience. God's plan was, and still is, a relationship between a man and a woman to experience a love that is intended to last a lifetime as it is declared by couples 'to love and to cherish, till death do us part' (Augsburger, 1986; Lee & Lee, 2009).

In this dissertation, when referring to marriage, I mean a covenant relationship of two individuals (a man and a woman) who have made the commitment to spend their lives together as husband and wife. There is no doubt that both mono-cultural and cross-cultural couples face challenges such as differences of gender, social class, race, personality, family background or even generational gaps. As a matter of fact, when two different cultures are in a marriage relationship, there are other added issues which will bring tension to the relationship (Williams, 2012, p.12). In the literature review I will discuss these topics.

1.4.4 Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation explores cross-cultural marriage concepts and challenges and is divided into five chapters. In this first chapter I have presented the purpose and limitations of this research including my personal background as a cross-cultural married missionary living abroad and finishes with a short definition of the terminologies which will be used throughout this dissertation.

In chapter two I will present a literature review considering views previously expressed by researchers on member care, culture and cross-cultural marriages.

Firstly with a broader view of member care, and then more specifically in relationship to marriage and families. The latter will include issues also faced by third culture kids - TCK (children who have been raised away from their parents' home country).

Following that, in chapter three I will explain the methodological approach I have chosen while exploring some of the results collected during the research, which included a survey, desk research and semi-structured interviews.

In chapter four, I will explore and discuss the findings of my own research while also analysing them. While interacting with the literature I will interweave the voices of the subjects of my studies, using their own experiences to bring the issues of cultural differences, losses, gains and family matters into the context of member care.

In the conclusion of this dissertation, I will return to the main purpose set out in the introduction which is to understand the needs of missionary couples in CCM in order to offer a more informed member care. I will also suggest the potential contributions this dissertation makes to the studies of member care, weighing up of some recommendations and considerations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

To gain an insight into some aspects of a cross-cultural marriage relationship this chapter will present an overview of the literature that focuses on some of the implications of cross-cultural marriages. It will include an overview of literature on the topics of member care, culture and cross-cultural marriage aiming to relate them to the challenges and benefits of cross-cultural marriage.

2.1 Member Care

Member care, as mentioned earlier, focuses on the theme of equipping, resourcing, and supporting personnel in a holistic way: spiritually, physically, emotionally, intellectually and relationally. My understanding and practice of member care derives mostly from Kelly O'Donnell and David Pollock, 'A Best Practice Model of Member Care' which describes five specific spheres of member care: Master care, self and mutual care, sender care, specialist care and network care. Those spheres are relevant to cross-cultural workers and thus to missionary couples in CCM. The authors bring an awareness of the responsibility of each individual to rely upon God – the Master – who is the heart and ultimate source of caring. Following this are self-care and mutual care, 'the backbone' where missionaries are responsible to monitor their well-being by giving and seeking help. Outside care comes from sending churches and sending agencies through pro-actively ensuring that care and personal growth are taking place, this could also come in the form of specialist care (O'Donnell, 2002, pp. 17–18).

It is argued that member care implies restoration and is usually in place after some 'disaster'. However it reaches beyond supporting broken people when they are in crisis as it is a platform to support workers and 'enable them to fulfil their calling with the wholeness of being that God intends' (Spruyt & Schudel, 2012, p. 2). This concept does concur with the opinion that member care 'is a response to the need that everyone has for warmth, nurture, support and caring. This need is heightened

during times of personal stress and social chaos' (Clinebell, 2011, p. 46). Therefore, I believe that cross-cultural workers can become resilient as they are cared for and nourished in a relevant way being proactive from their first involvement with the sending agency/sending church until their time of retirement or ending their service with the organisation.

Throughout the years a wealth of literature regarding caring for cross-cultural missionaries has emerged and with it a range of studies on a broader aspects of member care (Pirolo, 1991; O'Donnell, 1992; 2002, 2011; O'Donnell & O'Donnell, 2013; Roembke, 2000; Foyle, 2009; Gardner, 2015a). Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss them, it is relevant to mention that results of ReMap 1 and 2⁴ (Taylor, 1997; Hay et al., 2007) not only brought forward useful information regarding attrition and retention of missionaries in the field but also inspired others regarding the subject of member care.

Most of the literature provides practical advice for specific situations or people groups. For instance, caring for families and their children (Knell, 2001; Miller, 2004; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Bushong, 2013), caring for single missionaries (Hawker & Herbert, 2013), caring for those returning to their passport country (Pirolo, 2000; Storti, 2001; Jordan, 2001; Pascoe, 2006; Knell, 2007, Young, 2015), those who faced crises or traumatic experiences (Dodds, 2002; Rosik, 2002; Carr, 2006; Schaefer & Schaefer, 2016) and caring for couples in mission (Kenny, 2015). Whereas all the above topics are pertinent and valuable to missionary workers it seems that little has been written regarding how best sending agencies and sending churches could support and care for those couples that are in a cross-cultural marriage.

In my observation the member care resources available are generally focused on an individual or a family who are in a foreign country for a period of time but who will usually return to their passport country. For instance Alexis Kenny's book *Married in Mission: A handbook for couples in cross-cultural service* does present practical and stimulating ideas to guide couples into serving overseas and also brings the cross-cultural dimension into consideration. However, the author seems to conclude that

⁴ ReMap – Reducing Missionary Attrition Project.

once in a marriage relationship, 'each couple creates their own micro-culture' (Kenny, 2015, p. 6). While this can be partially true and applied to most marriages, I would argue that in a cross-cultural marriage each spouse will carry with them their own cultures. Each spouse will carry their own set of principles (which are most likely foreign to their spouses) and will behave 'strangely' about many things (Romano, 2008). Arguments usually go beyond how to set a table or in which hand to hold a fork (if any). Times of tension will bring deeper issues to the surface.

Furthermore, when a couple is in a cross-cultural marriage, one of the spouses will never be able to live within their own culture without causing the other to be far from his/her 'home'. Missionary couples in CCM that are serving in a third culture will face a 'stress of a three-way pull'. This concept was explained by Roembke as the dilemma of not only having to deal with their own cultural marriage differences but also having to adapt to a third culture (2000, p.144). In many cases such situations can make their relationship vulnerable and in need of more attention (Koteskey, 2010). There are many 'small' yet significant stages of a cross-cultural marriage which will bring tensions and uncertainty. In addition, the type of member care mostly designed by Westerners, a simple one-size-fits-all, will not be relevant to all missionary couples in CCM who represent a wide range of nationalities. Lingenfelter & Mayers (2003) explore regarding the sensitivity and awareness when ministering to different cultures. Also in the book *Doing Member Care Well* (O'Donnell, 2002) a variety of illustrations are found regarding the disparities in expectations in member care from the perspective of other cultures.

Dugan Romano in her book '*Intercultural Marriage: Promises and Pitfalls*', affirms that couples in a cross-cultural marriage move from an environment where their beliefs and behaviour are accepted, into a place where they are constantly being questioned or challenged about the way they behave. Romano adds that 'each spouse first has to learn a lot about himself or herself as an individual...they don't know where culture leaves off and the person begins' (2008, p.xv). For this reason, I argue that the component of 'culture', in marriage does matter, and in the next section I will explore some cultural aspects that impact on missionary couples in CCM.

2.2 Culture

Culture has been defined in a number of definitions and one of which resonate with my understanding is that 'culture is a share system of meanings. It dictates what we pay attention to, how we act and what we value' (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 13). In essence it 'incorporates all the behaviour that is not inherited but transmitted from generation to generation' (Nida, 1977, p. 28). Culture includes not only a discussion about different ways of behaving or reasoning, but also about recognising and respecting each other. Awareness of culture can bring the opportunity to respect those differences. Some believe that culture has layers: the outer layer, the middle layer and the core (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p.21-23). Others affirm that 'culture consists of the unwritten rules of a social game' (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 6). Charles Hill argue that 'cultures do not stand still; they evolve over time, albeit slowly. What was a reasonable characterization in the 1960s and 1970s may not be so today' (2008, p.100).

In my opinion, on the one hand some aspects of culture are in a process of ever-changing mutation, for example technology has changed the way people communicate. Generational changes, history, perceptions and expectations mean that culture is constantly evolving (Lewis, 2006). On the other hand, there are deep seated aspects of culture which will be as ingrained, especially in terms of 'what is regarded as natural by us that may be unnatural in the eyes of others' (Nida, 1977, p.36). It should be noted that the concept of "them" and "us" is quite natural. Having that in mind, although we may never understand 'the other' fully, by gaining awareness of different cultures we may be able 'to lessen the communication gap between ourselves and our partners [them]'

 (Lewis, 2006, p.580).

Culture has been illustrated as an iceberg. We can see the effect, the surface, however the deep cultural values are hidden from view, because they are below water level. I believe a marriage relationship creates that opportunity to really get close to the 'deep culture values' of someone else and learn to respect it. Edward Hall writes that 'one of the most effective ways to learn about oneself is by taking seriously the cultures of others. It forces you to pay attention to those details of life which differentiate them from you' (1973, p.30). This underlines the fact that

understanding the needs of missionary couples in CCM, and the (different) facets of their cultures is very pertinent. Taking in consideration the complexity of culture should assist member care providers in their task of supporting missionary couples in CCM.

Lewis warns his readers against the 'phenomenon of cultural myopia' which he explains as being that time when 'ethnocentrism blinds us to the salient features of our own cultural make-up, while making us see other cultures as deviations from our correct system'. (2006, p.580). The disparities in communication between different cultures is one of the causes of the unavoidable conflicts between them affirms Lewis. Therefore tensions between missionary couples in CCM and the multi-cultural teams in which they work, cannot be excluded, but should be expected. Conflict should not be seen as negative or destructive but as an opportunity to learn and grow. Truus Wierda gives a very concise explanation stating that 'growth comes by facing conflicts and dealing with them in the right way' (1989, p.3). With this frame of mind, dealing with challenges and conflict, not avoiding them, is the most effective way to grow in any relationship, especially in a cross-cultural marriage. It is important to be aware that conflicts which are not dealt with can, sooner or later, bring disharmony to the relationship.

The film industry has often used humour and drama to portray issues faced by those who are in a cross-cultural marriage (Appendix 5). For instance, the film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Zwick, 2002) relates the dilemma faced by a woman of Greek origin who is in love with an American man. The main characters and their contrasting families share different cultures. Similarly couples who are in a cross-cultural marriage face the same perplexity. Despite their love for each other they are faced with cultural gaps where the struggles and differences are visible. Such differences are not only between the couple themselves (Breger & Hill, 1998; Zwick, 2002; Romano, 2008; Shelling & Fraser-Smith, 2008; Fraser-Smith, 2015) but they will also have an impact on the wider and deeper sphere of their lives.

Breger & Hill note that issues such as 'gender roles, child-rearing, mores, language and general lifestyle' (1998, p.19) are some but not all of the spheres which bring tension to the relationship of missionary couples in CCM. Likewise, Gardner

believes that 'it is quite possible that gender roles and expectations will be an area of potential misunderstanding' (2015b) for missionary couples in CCM. In addition, there are not only 'the *external* challenges of prejudice and rejection by family or community, but they must also tackle the *internal* challenges related to their complex cultural differences' affirm Shelling and Fraser-Smith (2008, p.xi).

Despite the many divergences that a cross-cultural marriage involves it should not be perceived and viewed as problematic (Breger & Hill, 1998, p.x) or be defined by its many 'differences' (Johnson & Warren, 1993 cited in Breger & Hill,1998). There are countless joys that should be celebrated. For instance, when couples who participated in this research were asked to describe their cross-cultural marriages, it was encouraging to hear that words such as 'exciting', 'joyful', 'pleasant' and 'full of choices' were mostly used. This concurs with what Jessie Grearson & Lauren Smith (1995) found when they collected a series of essays from those in cross-cultural relationships. The authors remarked that such couples 'find themselves choosing not to choose between their own cultures of origin; instead, they move among cultures, between struggles and harmony' (p.xiv). The authors explain that having that choice of replacing "this *or* that" with "this *and* that" is one of the ways of enriching the marriage. In my opinion, this approach could be valid and will work in most relationships.

Nonetheless, couples might also discover their own way of defining the power balance in their relationship as Romano suggests in his book '*Intercultural Marriage: Promises and Pitfalls*'. Romano proposes four types of marital style: submission/immersion (where one spouse totally submits and is immersed in the other culture), obliteration (each erases their own culture and creates a third one), compromise (each spouse gives up one aspect of their culture and trades off with something of the other culture) and consensus (implies a give-and-take but in the form of an agreement that can be revised as needed) (2008, pp.161-166). In my perspective Romano's suggestion can be effective in enriching their relationship, when couples are willing to accept each other's culture and combine distinct styles to suit the different stages of their marriage.

It has also been suggested that missionary couples in CCM can be successful and it 'seems to work best in cases in which both [husband and wife] are spiritually and emotionally mature' (Roembke, 2000, p.145). Consequently, understanding the needs of missionary couples in cross-cultural marriage in order to engage with them and facilitate spiritual and emotional growth that is caring, is the focus of this dissertation which aims to enhance member care of missionary couples in CCM.

2.3 Cross-Cultural Marriages

Statistics in the United States have shown that 'about 15% of all new marriages in 2010 were between spouses of a different race or ethnicity from one another' (Wang, 2012). This reality exists not only in the United States where this research was done but it is also true that cross-cultural marriages are common in many parts of the world as people move across the nations. The United Kingdom has been reported to be a nation which is 'becoming a racial melting pot with a surge in the number of relationships and marriages across ethnic dividing lines in the last decade' (Bingham, 2014). Bingham's census analysis has shown that 10% of the married population living in the United Kingdom are in a relationship with someone outside of their own ethnic group (ibid, 2014).

Needless to say, cross-cultural marriage is a topic which brings discussion from a wide range of fields of thoughts. Some sociologists have investigated its impact on migration (Charsley *et al.*, 2012) concerning cross-cultural marriage linked with interest in citizenship. The fears that some people will use cross-cultural marriage as a door to gain access to another country are not necessarily unfounded. However, it is also true that genuine love and assurance that the person is the 'right one' lead people to marry cross-culturally.

Regardless of the real motives the reality is that cross-cultural marriage has always existed. It has been there since biblical times. 'Some of the wisest and most honoured biblical heroes and heroines (including Moses, David, Esther, Ruth, Solomon, and Joseph) were involved in cross-cultural or interracial marriages' (Alupoaipei, 2009). Lingenfelter & Mayers states that when both parties 'seek to

follow Christ and live as he lived, their values and rules are transformed as people apply them in such a way as to honor (sic) him and to love others' (2003, p.115). I believe that cross-cultural marriage is a living testimony that two individuals from different cultures can indeed be transformed to demonstrate that in Christ people can be united and barriers can be broken down between nations (Gal. 3:28).

It may be argued that all marriage relationships are cross-cultural, as each person carries their own personality traits, is descended from different sets of parents and could also originate from different parts of the same country. It is true that any marriage will involve two different mindsets, tastes, viewpoints and family backgrounds (Breger & Hill, 1998; Alupoalicei, 2009). Added to that, the natural gender differences between men and women will result in a cultural divide between couples (Tannen, 1992). In the same way that 'multicultural team are more complex than a monocultural team (Roembke, 2000, p.109) those complexities occur to couples in CCM. For that reason, it would be a restricted viewpoint to neglect the fact that missionary couples in CCM face deeper cultural impacts and challenges in comparison to mono-cultural married couples.

Fraser-Smith affirms that 'there are certain situations that emerge in many of the stages of a cross-cultural married couple and their family's life which require a sensitivity to the cultural dimension' (2016). She also adds that there are situations in which the demands of a cross-cultural married couple will differ from those of a mono-cultural married couple. For instance a decision regarding location (which country to retire to?), a contingency plan for repatriation, medical emergencies, cultural obligations to the extended family, language issues, deputation and visiting two countries are some of them (ibid., 2016). Those challenges, some internal, others external, could bring to the family and the couples themselves a number of implications. It is also relevant to consider that 'current resources and popular thinking for traditional marriages is not likely to address the uniquenesses (sic) a cross-cultural marriage experiences' (Gardner, 2015b). Roembke (2000, p.144) expressed concern about the issues of missionary couples in CCM effects on multicultural teams. She believes that because of the cultural complexity of such marriages, it is important to give space for the marriage relationship to mature before placing them in a third culture. These statements highlight the significance

and place of member care providers when relating to missionary couples in CCM. In my personal experience of being in a CCM and mentoring newly-weds, I would agree that CCM couples need time to engage with each other and learn each other cultural language.

Although there are other valid elements that will influence the nature of a cross-cultural marriage, such as race, social class and/or religion, for the purpose of this dissertation I have concentrated mainly on couples who are in a married relationship with someone who is not from their passport country. They may, or may not, speak the same mother tongue as their spouse; however their interpretation and/or understanding of the meaning of the language may differ (Breger & Hill, 1998; Romano, 2008). They have had different cultural experiences in their childhood and will not share similar cultural memories (“Top 10 Clues” - Appendix 6). Therefore, a cross-cultural marriage could be defined as being a relationship in which each partner interacts with the other with the understanding that she/he and his/her spouse are individuals who ‘have grown up learning values and lifestyle patterns that are different from one’s own’ (Lingenfelter & Mayers, 2003, p.11).

Among Christians, especially missionaries, cross-cultural marriages are happening more and more (Gardner, 2015b). According to Grete Shelling (2016) it is not uncommon for single missionaries to marry cross-culturally and this ‘will affect their approach toward the people group they minister to, as well as their marriage’. Such couples, continues Shelling will face

more conflicts, more challenges, more stress, and more need for self-exploration, other-exploration, communication – all of which take time, emotional energy, and lots of negotiation skills over a long period of time, even after many years of marriage (ibid.)

Arguably the above challenges can be an experience in a mono-cultural marriage, however in a less intensity or frequency. Hence to conclude that ‘there is no doubt that intercultural marriages take more effort than other marriages because there are so many more elements to be blended, the differences are more dramatic, and the partners may have totally disparate ways of solving problems’ (Romano, 2008, p.24).

Missionary couples in CCM also will face issues of 'language and cultural barriers, religious differences, immigration issues, perhaps social stigmas or family pressure, relocation to a new country and subsequent "living abroad" issues' (Williams, 2012, p. 16). Many facets of a cross-cultural marriage will influence the relationship of the couple, and in many ways reflect on the relationship with team members. For instance, immigration issues which are pertinent to the couple, will ultimately affects the whole team and could cause disruption, uncertainty and losses.

This chapter reflected upon the literature on the themes of member care, culture and cross-cultural marriages. The intention was to seek written material that could assist member care providers on their task of improving their support to missionary couples in CCM. Having learned the uniqueness and particularities of missionaries couples in CCM, I have concluded that using the literature available in combination with further research would be beneficial as to provide a deeper understanding of their needs. In the next chapter I will present a summary of the methodology chosen for this research starting with the online survey and then, the semi-structured interviews, highlighting the main profile of the participants.

CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology

To achieve my goals, I have chosen to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The instruments of data collection for the field research were a combination of desk research, an online survey and semi-structured interviews. Using a mixed method has helped me 'to gain a great insight of the research and better understanding' (Creswell, 2009, p. 203) of the experiences of the participants, both from the CCM couples and the sending agencies member care providers. At first, I expect the survey to be the gateway to the main part of this research which was the semi-structured interviews. However it did provide a broader picture of the current practice of member care for missionary couples in CCM among sending agencies in the United Kingdom. The semi-structured interviews being a valuable tool for assessing attitudes and values, and also a means to explore 'voices and experiences' (Byrne, 2012), provided an opportunity for cross-cultural couples to share their experiences. It also allowed the participants to evaluate their feelings and understanding of the facts and events experienced by them during that specific time.

Both the sending agencies and missionary couples in CCM who took part in the semi-structured interviews will be mentioned anonymously. To comply with the ethical guidelines and to protect their identity, no connection to the sending agency to which they belong to and their country of service will be disclosed. Since this research was with a small proportion of missionaries from each sending agency it is beyond the scope of my research to generalise the practice of member care by one specific sending agency.

3.1 Overview of the Survey

With the endorsement of Global Connections⁵, seventy-six sending agencies based in the United Kingdom were contacted by email with an invitation (see sample in Appendix 2) to participate in a short survey, using a quantitative approach. Global Connections made the choice of these specific agencies as they have a considerable number of members and thus have a greater possibility amongst them for substantial numbers of cross-cultural couples. The survey was focused on the member care provider, more specifically - the sending agency. The sending agencies represented were all evangelical, interdenominational, and based in the United Kingdom but which send missionaries worldwide.

While examining the nature and effectiveness of member care offered by agencies to their cross-cultural couples through the various stages of their missionary career (from recruitment to retirement), this research also took into consideration the overall concept of balance between self/mutual care and sender care. The ultimate goal is to encourage agencies to continue in what they are doing well and to present an opportunity to re-evaluate the areas that may need improvement. This could be achieved by knowledge gleaned from the couples themselves as well as gathering resources from other agencies on caring for missionary couples in CCM.

The intention is to identify good practices for member care of missionary couples in CCM serving in mission. The outcome is the collation of a number of their personal experiences that could be used by sending agencies and sending churches (although the latter is beyond the scope of this survey) to improve their practice of member care for missionary couples in CCM. The results of this research may possibly enlighten the member care providers' own view of cross-cultural marriages. It could also provide a resource to assist the agencies and their workers during the process of recruitment, training, in their field of service and returning to their sending country/countries or at any other transition stage.

⁵ Global Connections is a network of UK agencies, churches, colleges and support services linked together seeking to serve, equip and develop churches in their mission. <http://globalconnections.co.uk>

The online survey was conducted between 9th March and 20th April 2015, using Survey Monkey for data collection. The survey consisted of ten questions (see Appendix 3) with the aim of rating how the sending agencies considered themselves a multi-cultural organisation and how they offered member care for missionary couples in CCM.

The agencies were also asked to identify how many of their members are married cross-culturally. Table 1 below shows the summary of their answers.

Number of missionary couples in CCM	Number of agencies	Total of missionary couples in CCM
None	4	0
1-10	14	38
11-20	7	103
21-30	0	0
31-40	1	39
41-50	2	97
-	1	Didn't know

Table 1 – Missionary couples in CCM within agencies

Some of the couples interviewed in the second stage of this research have stated that this was a determining factor when they were considering which agency to join. Their choice of agency was influenced by how multicultural the agency was and how cross-cultural marriages were accepted. One spouse (W10) said that ‘the very reason we are with [name of agency] is because we are in a cross-cultural marriage. Being a multicultural agency, when we went to the field we were not the only cross-cultural married couple there’ (W10). A question to reflect on is, do agencies with more missionary couples in CCM attract others to join them? It might or not be true. In my own experience, my husband and I, even before we joined a sending agency, had developed over the years strong connections with other missionary couples in CCM. This could be partially due to my own personality or cultural background. However, these relationships have become our source of mutual care as we can relate and understand each other in a more deep and meaningful way.

The reason for using a survey is not only that it allowed a much larger amount of data to be collected, analysed, and planned at minimal cost (Cater, 2011, p. 9), but it also presented a numerical figure quantifying the percentage of cross-cultural couples within each agency while also identifying those who were willing to take part in more detailed and deeper research.

Whereas twenty-nine sending agencies were interested in participating in the survey online, it was observed that eight of them stopped at question number four (which was at the end of the first page). Since this was an anonymous survey, I was not able to trace them to answer the remaining other six questions. However, twenty-one of them completed the full survey, of which nine gave permission for their missionary couples in CCM to be contacted for further research. See Table 2 for a summary.

Total of agencies...	
... Invited to participate in the survey	76
... Which fully replied to the survey	21
... Which partially replied to the survey	8
... Which did not reply to the survey	47
... Which volunteered for further research (giving names of missionary couples in CCM to be interviewed)	9

Table 2 – Summary of online Survey among sending agencies

The results of the survey were the only source used to evaluate the sending agencies' practices of delivering member care for missionary couples in CCM since I was not able to do an analysis of each sending agency's policies. However the perception and practice received by each couple had a bearing on the evaluation of member care delivered to missionary couples in CCM.

Once the survey was completed, to gain insight into what missionary couples in CCM experienced as receivers of member care from their respective agencies, I proceeded to the second stage of the research. This took the form of a qualitative

semi-structured interview approach where I interviewed the missionary couples in CCM, which will be summarised in the next section.

3.2 Overview of the Semi-Structured Interviews

Using a semi-structured interview (qualitative approach) I conducted interviews with eleven couples, representing ten different nationalities and across six sending agencies based in the United Kingdom. My aim was to hear from the couples themselves what aspects of the member care offered by their sending agency were useful, valid and relevant; and what was not. The first two pilot interviews were conducted with the husband and wife participating together. However, during the second interview, I noticed that one partner dominated the conversation. Making use of methodological reflexivity (Creswell, 2007) I decided to conduct the remaining interviews with husband and wife separately in order to make the methodology more robust by allowing both parties to express themselves without interruptions. I realised that this would also give them equal opportunity to share their experiences. The semi-structured interview comprised of sixteen questions (Appendix 3) which included basic demographic information.

Some couples who took part in the interviews expressed that the experience of responding the questions, offered them the opportunity to gain greater understanding of their own cultures. Such differences and viewpoints also encouraged them in their process of learning, respecting and affirming each other's culture, despite their disparity. By sharing about their own experiences, couples were able to reflect on their original expectations regarding receiving member care, and the way in which these expectations have been altered over the years.

All the interviews were conducted with the permission of their sending agencies, and the aim was to invite between three and four couples from each agency. Due to time constraints and the availability of the husbands and wives, it was not possible to arrange so many interviews with couples from each agency. However the interviews, with those available and willing to participate, were very positive and productive. The semi-structured interview was chosen as this type of approach allows the researcher

to write and record the experiences of couples (Creswell, 2007) with the intention of hearing their stories in an informal yet sequential way. This method inspired the subjects of the study to feel comfortable and relaxed in sharing their own life-stories while answering the questions.

Where possible my intention was to have a face-to-face interview which would have generated openness as well as offering me the opportunity to collect not only verbal but also non-verbal data. However, there was the realisation that such an approach was not always possible and therefore the use of virtual instruments such as Skype was my best option, as it provided flexibility and was cost-effective (Cater, 2011, p. 2). When using Skype, I opted for the visual facility mode at the start of the interview allowing a more personal connection between the interviewee and myself. After the basic part of the interview was done, the mode was switched from visual plus voice to voice alone due to internet connection limitations.

As mentioned previously, the couples who participated in this research were encouraged by their respective sending agencies to do so and they took part according to their availability and willingness. The prerequisites of participating in the interview, were that they had been in a cross-cultural marriage for over two years and were serving full time as missionaries, preferably in a multi-cultural setting. Most couples had one to three children, with only one childless couple. Their children were aged from six months to twenty-six years old. Table 3, below summarises these findings. As this research was done within sending agencies in the United Kingdom, most of the couples interviewed (seven in total) were living currently in Britain, either because they had returned permanently to Britain, or were in transition or on home leave. As seen in Table 3, participants represented ten different nationalities and were from a variety of continents.

Couples (coded)	Nationality	Length of marriage	Mother tongue	Region of residence	Number of Children	Level of Children's Education
H01 W01	Finnish English	8	Finnish English	Europe	1	Under School Age
H02 W02	English Canadian	7	English English	Middle East	3	Under School Age
H03 W03	Chilean English	15	Spanish English	Europe	2	Primary School
H04 W04	Canadian German	18	English German	Europe	3	High School
H05 W05	Brazilian English	7	Portuguese English	Europe	1	Under School Age
H06 W06	English Chinese/Malaysian	6	English Mandarin	Europe	2	Under School Age
H07 W07	English Finnish	27	English Finnish	Europe	2	University
H08 W08	English Czech	11	English Czech Republic	Europe	3	Primary School
H09 W09	New Zealand Northern-Irish	5	English English	Europe	2	Nursery School
H10 W10	Dutch English	15	Dutch English	Europe	3	High School
H11 W11	English Brazilian	23	English Portuguese	Europe	none	N/a

Table 3 – Overall Summary of Participants

Every couple, except for one, was a combination of a British spouse with a non-British one. The non-British spouses were represented by nine countries, having predominantly Asian, South-American, North-American and European cultures. The years of marriage ranged from three to twenty-seven years, with an average of

seventeen years. The numbers of participants according to their country of origin are shown in Table 4.

Country of Origin	No. of Participants	Country of Origin	No. of Participants
Britain	10	Finland	2
Brazil	2	Germany	1
Canada	2	China/Malaysia	1
Chile	1	New Zealand	1
Czech Republic	1	The Netherlands	1

Table 4 – Number of participants versus country of Origin

In the sixteen semi-structured questions, interviewees were asked to describe their experiences in a cross-cultural marriage as well as to highlight the benefits and challenges they have encountered. They were also asked to share how their sending agency advised them regarding being in a cross-cultural marriage. I was encouraged by the way in which generally the cross-cultural couples interviewed had the freedom to share their stories without the feeling of being interrogated. Many of them expressed their appreciation for having the opportunity to share their lives and voice their experiences in an uninhibited way (Creswell, 2007, p. 43).

The overall period of time for this research was a year (with a break in continuity of several months for personal reasons). The time-frame involved preparing the survey and questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews to data collection, coding, analysis and the actual writing stage of the dissertation. In this perspective, the instruments of data collection of the qualitative approach were a combination of literature review, an online survey and semi-structured interviews with missionary couples in CCM. The next chapter will combine the findings from the survey and the semi-structured interviews with analysis by interacting with the literature and the experiences of the interviewees. I will conclude with some suggestions on how member care of missionary couples in CCM can be enhanced by sending agencies.

CHAPTER 4: Findings and Analysis

As mentioned previously, in chapter one, this dissertation aims to enhance member care for missionary couples in CCM. The focus of the research is to explore the current member care provided for such couples and at the same time learn from the couples how they perceived the member care specifically offered to them by their sending agencies.

In chapters two and three, I presented respectively, a review of literature and the methodological path chosen for this research. In this chapter, I will present the research findings and discuss them while using the literature review as a theoretical framework. The critical assessment of the literature review revealed that a great amount has been written regarding caring for missionaries and a wide range of authors have contributed to member care in specific situations or for defined people groups. However, the aspect of caring for missionary couples in CCM and their specific needs seems to be lacking. A greater insight into the needs of missionary couples in CCM, would result in the care offered to them being delivered in a more intentional and relevant way.

Firstly, drawing from the online survey responses, I will use the resources presented by the sending agencies, highlighting what is already being offered to missionary couples in CCM and their understanding of what is of relevance to discuss with them. Secondly, from the semi-structured interviews, I will present the lessons that can be learned from the challenges and benefits shared by the missionary couples in CCM who took part in this research. For each theme a description will be given followed by a personal reflection. The themes which emerged were issues of cultural differences, communication, citizenship matters, family matters, losses and gains, wider perspective in life and cultural richness. Thirdly, drawing from the responses of the interviewees, I will present a summary of their suggestions as indications to sending agencies of how to improve their member care provision.

My intention is to develop a greater awareness of the needs of missionary couples in CCM by providing some practical ideas as to how member care providers can

better prepare and support such couples for service as missionaries giving them meaningful care which will strengthen their marriage, families and communities, especially while missionary couples in CCM are going through transition (O'Donnell, 2002, p.17).

4.1 Sending Agencies: Sharing Current Practice of Member Care

The online survey (Appendix 3) sent to the sending agencies' member care providers had 10 questions. Generally the responses were most encouraging and gave very specific, useful and practical suggestions on how to prepare missionary couples in CCM for going overseas service, whether they are entering their journey of marriage or have been married for a while. For instance, several respondents demonstrated a broader awareness of cross-cultural marriage and comprehension of the couples' needs. Their replies also revealed that there are many practices and suggestions which can be learned by other organisation from their current member care provision. It also was noticed that five of the agencies, which have an average of sixteen missionary couples in CCM between them, did not make use of any resources to improve and assist their support for those couples.

Table 5 shows a summary of the responses to two questions from the survey. *In what ways are those [cross-cultural married] couples prepared for a cross-cultural relationship? And If you refer to resources what type do you use?* Since this was an anonymous survey, sending agencies have been coded, being R for "respondent", and are numbered according to the sequence in which the survey was answered.

Agency coded	No. of members	No. of CCM couples	Preparation on cross-cultural relationship	Type of resources used
R01	50-100	03	Reading material, books. Ongoing dialogue with sending church (pastoral support) local team leaders (logistical support)	Books by Janet Fraser-Smith (AWM), Oscar website One Another Ministries
R02	10-30	03	Read books on subject, discuss with church counsellors or leaders, general discussion with agency staff/members/trustees.	We let couples choose which materials they would like to use.
R06	30-50	01	Visits, lengthy discussions, correspondence have taken place so that couples involved are clear what they might be entering into.	[none]

Agency coded	No. of members	No. of CCM couples	Preparation on cross-cultural relationship	Type of resources used
R07	Less than 10	None	Normally our organisation would not "prepare" any couples for a CCM relationship.	[none]
R08	Over 100	More than 45	Many of these relationships pre date my time in [agency] so I am not aware of what people may or may not have had.	Nothing at present
R11	30-50	05	Most were already married before joining us. All have to undergo cross-cultural training, focussing on ministry rather than marriage	[none]
R12	Over 100	Around 15	Pre-marital counselling where possible	[none]
R13	Over 100	20	Majority join already married	[none]
R18	Over 100	Not sure	Assessments as part of their pre-assignment preparation, such assessments would include some review of their relationships.	Doing MC Well, Enhancing Missionary Vitality, Honourably Wounded
R20	Less than 10	01	Books, talks, prayer	Love across Latitudes, Cross cultural marriage - a Christian perspective
R21	Over 100	39	Seminar [when joining the agency] which includes cross-cultural marriage	Refer to specialist on cross-cultural marriage
R22	Over 100	Around 52	Suggested reading. Many of them fall in love first and ask questions later!	<i>Love Across Latitudes</i> , link to others in a similar situation.
R23	30-50	04	Most [were] in the relationship before involving the mission	Books: <i>Love Across Latitudes</i> <i>Marriage Masala</i>
R24	Over 100	10	Legal advice about visas, need to resign and re-apply as a couple; not allowed to serve in the country where the new spouse is from.	<i>Love across Latitudes</i>
R25	Over 100	16	Books, discussion, other cross-cultural couples	<i>Marriage Masala</i> , <i>Love across Latitudes</i> , <i>In Love But Worlds Apart</i> , MC resources for CCM relationships
R27	Less 100	02	Not at all from the agency point of view	We don't use resources. Our 2 couples are in Europe. One couple are missionary veterans and the other couple newly-weds
R28	50-100	15	Through mentoring relationships, support from the short-term coordinator or team leader. Sending country also have responsibility	Love across Latitudes, In Love but Worlds Apart
R29	50-100	12	Most were married before we knew them	I haven't used any yet

Table 5 – Sending agencies' current support for missionary couples in CCM

As it can be noticed certain respondents were not included in the table above, and they were omitted for two reasons. Either due to not having, at present, any missionary couples in CCM in their sending agency or for not completing the survey, as explained earlier in chapter 3, under Overview of Survey.

In the last question of the online survey, respondents were given an open question where they had an opportunity and space to add comments and suggestions. The answers by two respondents were both a cause for concern and yet a reaffirmation of the need for both raising awareness of their needs and enhancing member care to missionary couples in CCM. For instance R03 wrote

So important to look at this. In my 12 years with our mission I have seen 4 couples with cross cultural marriages either divorce or leave the field very broken. There are others who are doing well but they come under our [country] office so it's more difficult to refer you to them.

Similarly R07 expressed his/her concern

We have had past experience of a cross cultural relationship encountering difficulties which has resulted in the relationship very sadly ending. The decisive factor in the breakdown of their relationship was not quite clear, but some underlying cultural issues might also have been a factor.

Some respondents added in the comments their own experiences of giving practical advice, which might be of use to other sending agencies, R06 shared saying that

Where I have counselled people contemplating cross cultural marriage, I have always advised that it is essential that each meets up with prospective in-laws and see them in their home setting. They should know every facet of what they are marrying into and look at the possibility of facing life in the long-term in a foreign setting.

Likewise an organisation has being pro-active by designating a couple who is specialist in marriage enrichment that will give assistance to their missionary couples. Their respondent R11 wrote that 'we feel that marriage needs to be a priority in our member care, cross-cultural or not'.

The above quotations demonstrate that the issue of cross-cultural marriages are of concern to some agencies. My expectation that by widening their awareness of cross-cultural marriage issues, sending agencies will be in a position to offer informed and appropriate care to such couples. Another aspect which sending agencies were also asked to consider, was in rating the relevance of some topics to discuss with their cross-cultural married. As observed in Figure 1, most member

care providers agreed that the three most relevant topics to discuss with the missionary couples in CCM in their agencies were child-rearing/education, cultural values/team and visas/legal issues.

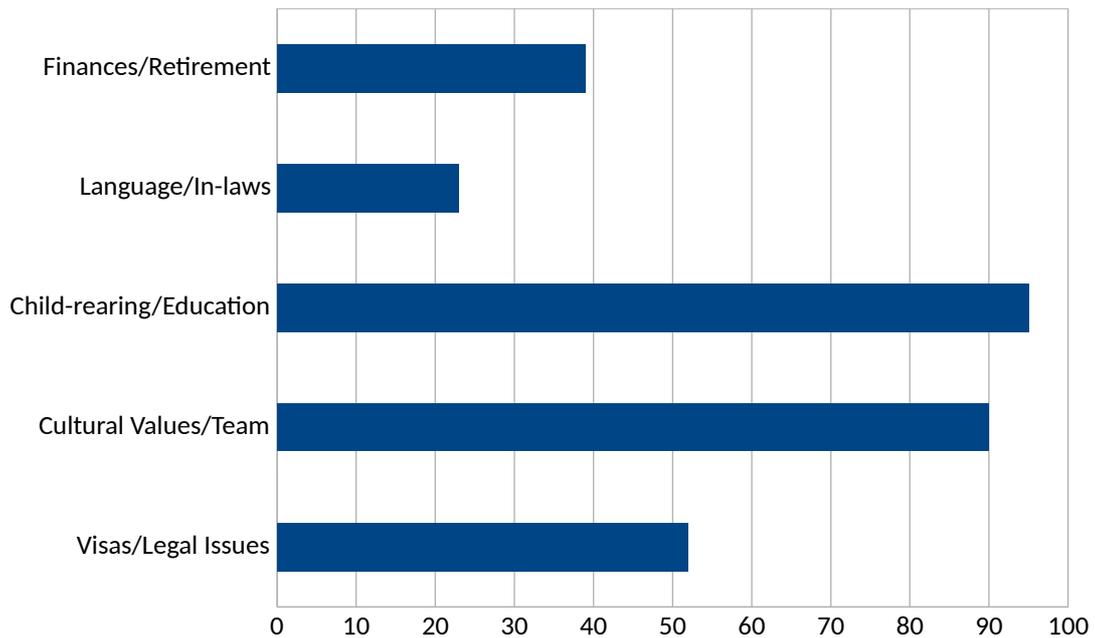


Figure 1

Figure 1 - Topics considered to be discussed with missionary couples in CCM

The understanding I gained from the survey was that some sending agencies are engaged and aware of the issues that missionary couples in CCM encounter and are prepared to discuss, encourage and walk alongside those couples. However, other agencies seem to demonstrate through their responses that cross-cultural marriage issues are not yet part of their wider concern. Nevertheless, I anticipate that this research will bring some awareness and bring sending agencies a glimpse of ideas and encouragement as they seek to offer more informed member care to missionary couples in CCM.

4.2 Missionary Couples in CCM: A Glimpse of their Experiences

4.2.1 The Challenges

Interacting with another culture different from your own does bring challenges (Lewis, 2006 Romano, 2008; Shelling & Fraser-Smith, 2008). For that reason, as part of the interview a key question encouraged the interviewee to answer the following: According to your own experience what challenges does cross-cultural marriage offer? Interviewees shared their stories including their perceptions of what they considered to be a challenge. By identifying the challenges of a cross-cultural marriage (Figure 2), member care providers will be able to assist and encourage couples in areas that might be the cause of tension. Stresses in the marriage will consequently bring strain to the entire family. When families are facing challenges this in addition affects ministry and team members (Gardner, 2015a, pp. 145 -154).

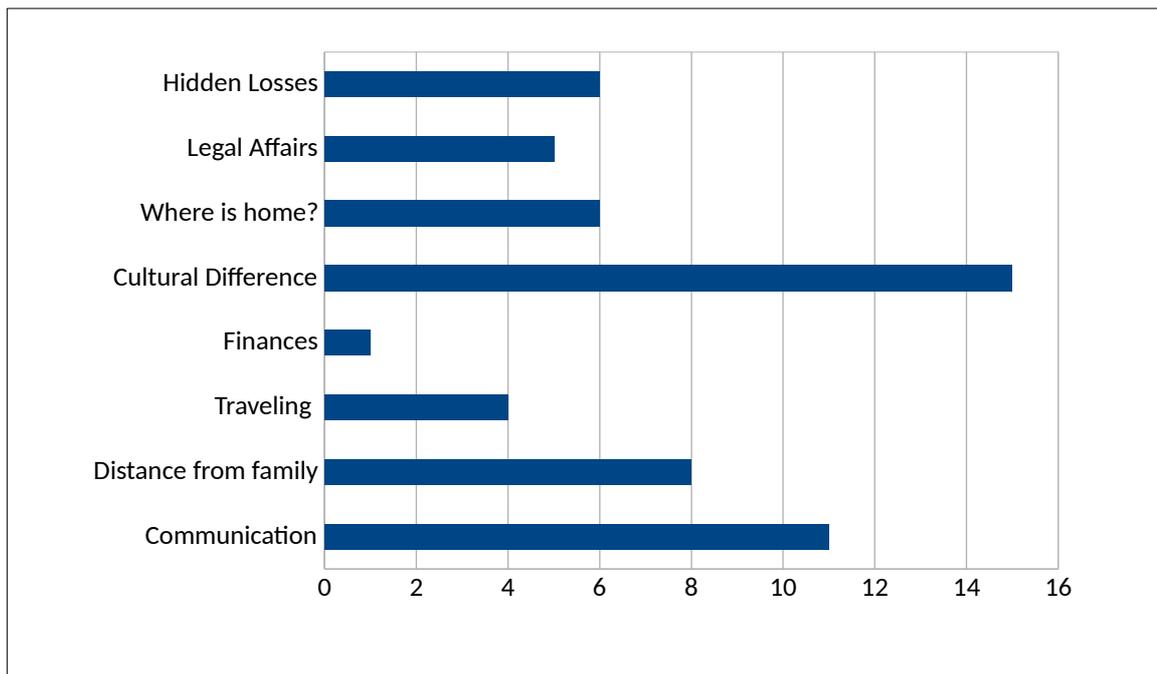


Figure 2 - Challenges for missionary couples in CCM

Cultural Differences

All the couples interviewed have recognised that the cultural differences in their marriages are a challenging element that can bring stress. Despite each individual being exposed to another culture (not necessarily that of their spouse) preceding their marriage, when answering about their challenges, many used sentences such as 'lack of understanding of culture' (H04), 'struggle with other culture' (H10), and according to another interviewee she expressed 'he is from another culture, he cannot understand [my culture]' (W01). This lack of understanding implies a difference in values, communication (language and style) and expectations.

According to Romano, couples in cross-cultural marriages face misunderstanding not only because they view the world from a different perspective to that of their spouses. Romano continues by saying that there is also the element of lack of self-awareness of their own culture. 'Most spouses don't know much about their own cultural value orientations (as they are just doing what comes naturally), much less that of their partner's.' (Romano, 2008, p.35). Ronald Koteskey in his book '*Cross-Cultural Workers Marriage Issues*', speaks of the demand of adjusting to someone else's culture.

It is easier to adjust to differences between families in the same culture than it is to adjust to the deeply held values found in different cultures. Differences that complement each other, such as one person being talkative and the other a listener, are relatively easy to adjust to. However, deeper cultural values, such as male vs. female roles or honesty vs. saving-face may be very difficult to live with. (Koteskey, 2010, p. 24)

A spouse explained that by 'having different backgrounds I will never be [his culture] nor will he be [her culture]' (W09). Certainly there is no expectation that one partner will change his or her culture to be like the other. It is not possible to change the way the other person thinks, feels, and acts (Hofstede et al., 2010) and by no means should one try to do that.

However, it is valid to learn our own cultural traits in addition to those of our spouses. For instance, each culture has its own view and practices regarding food, time keeping, table manners, how to spend money and leisure time – and many

more. Unavoidably all these relatively insignificant differences can cause growing friction between the spouses.

I perceive that missionary couples in CCM are exposed to and interrelate with a different culture on a daily basis. While actually being 'merged' in marriage with that different culture they are developing an international identity (Romano, 2008, p.170). In my understanding, and experience, each spouse acquires traits from the other creating this blended identity.

Communication

Communication, or lack of, was a challenge reported by some of the interviewees. Most couples relate a lack of understanding to the language factor, either because their mother tongues were different or because the use of their language of choice was expressed very differently. 'At the beginning language [was a challenge], now I can express myself better' (H10) said one spouse. Similarly H04 reports that communication 'gets better over time, but initially can be difficult to understand'. However he adds that 'you may understand the words but not the meaning as in the other culture they mean differently. Like an idiom – there are profound meanings' (H04). Communication issues go beyond the words. Marla Alupoaipei believes that 'even if both partners do speak one language well, each spouse should also seek to learn the other's native language' (2009a, p.69) Taking the time to learn each other's language will be rewarded as the relationship grows deeper.

Tiffany Renalds (2011) when researching on *Communication in Intercultural Marriages* believes that a clear understanding of the primary language and communication styles of one another is crucial to cross-cultural marriages. It is perceived that some people are more gifted with language than others, so I was not surprised to hear spouses saying 'I am not too strong in his language' (W10), or 'I don't understand the language deeply' (W06). Despite these constant and intense communication challenges, marrying cross-culturally will create an opportunity for couples to become richer individuals.

My observation during the interviews was that couples who spoke, not necessarily fluently, each other's mother tongues demonstrated a much stronger relationship. I dare to say that they appeared to have a deeper respect for each other. In many ways, the manner in which they referred to each other was more harmonious and their marriage seemed to be more mature.

A couple who both speak English as their first language have reported that at times they also struggled with meanings of words or connotations. One spouse said that he could understand the words but felt lost in the conversation. He said that the 'accent, words...sometimes they said thing I guess I understood but did not make sense to an outsider. They have different words' H09. This should be a reminder not only for the couples, but also for the member care providers, not to assume because people share languages, that they necessarily understand each other.

Relationships need to be worked at; communication is part of this challenge. Recently I read this statement: 'The secret of their blissful marriage was revealed to me. She couldn't speak a word of English, and he couldn't speak a word of Spanish' (Worth, 2012, p. 143). This might be a simplistic and witty way to avoid conflict however it is not the route which will result more fulfilment and growth in any relationship.

Citizenship Matters

Nowadays with so much pressure that is brought about by immigration authorities, it is even more important for couples to be aware of the law of the land. In the last few years, the United Kingdom Border Agency has been tightening their immigration rules regarding national citizens bringing foreign spouses into the country (Elgot, 2015; Sykes, 2016). Missionary couples in CCM and member care providers can find information on this issue and others concerning immigration through the Global Connections website, or directly with the immigration department concerned.

Missionaries' income is usually not high; therefore many couples have to make choices which are not the ideal or preferred ones. Recently, a cross-cultural married missionary couple, had to leave the husband's passport country because his wife

was refused a spouse visa to continue living there, due to the lack of financial support required by that authority. Another couple is at present, sadly separated from each other for an indefinite length of time. The wife who has been serving in an African country for years, has permanent residence for that country. The husband who is originally from a different country, has been living there on a religious visa. However, on returning to his home country to apply to renew his visa, it was denied. He is at present stranded in his own country, with his wife and child in another country. Situations such as these bring overwhelming heartbreak, grief and stress into the marriage. Inevitably it will also affect team members and require extra support, understanding and sensitivity from member care providers.

Question eleven of the semi-structured interviews, asked what kind of legal requirement is needed for each spouse to live permanently in each other's country. Two of the couples interviewed, reported that they are currently waiting for their spouses to be granted citizenship in their husband/wife country, and for that reason they have had to return to that particular country. One of them explained

Basically I can't live there just as her spouse. I need to have a work permit, I need to have a job there. Technically it will take, I think, ten years to get a visa in [her country] where it is five years for her to get a visa here [his country]. For the moment, as it is, I can go there for three months and then apply again for two months. That is the longest I can stay there. (H05)

In a similar situation, in the case of the couples interviewed where one spouse is Brazilian, they reported that although the foreign spouses currently have permanent residence in Brazil, they will lose it shortly, because they are not living in Brazil. All the European and British nationals said they had no concerns as long as Britain remains within the European Union. At present this is a topic under discussion and in many ways of great concern to many Europeans living in the United Kingdom (Hughes, 2016) and member care providers ought to be informed about immigration regulations which might affect their personnel. Global Connections seek to provide resources to assist sending agencies on this topic and others (see Appendix 5).

Another spouse (W04) shared that 'regarding legal issues, it makes me feel awful to have to prove we are still together'. The reason for this requirement is because they

have never lived long enough in each other's country. Hence it is important to encourage couples to spend sufficient time in each other's home country in order to be able to not only absorb the culture and language, but also to qualify for dual citizenship. Not every country allows dual citizenship. This brings further stress as spouses might have to face an arduous choice of selecting which citizenship to take: his own or his spouse's? Is this decision going to affect their personal sense of belonging? Would they ever be able to call home the place in which they have taken up citizenship? What about their birth place? People, places and history left behind?

“Home Sweet Home”

Cross-cultural workers, whether single or married, face the challenge of re-adapting when returning to their home country. Re-entry is one of the topics that is of great concern to member care providers. Member care specialists have offered excellent resources to assist missionaries in their process of re-entry (Jordan, 2001; Knell, 2007; Chaplin, 2015). However, what happens when one partner is not returning home but rather going to a brand new place? What should be done when the yearning for 'home sweet home' is not met? How can you call home, what is not actually your home? Missionary couples in CCM will inevitably face this dilemma.

The reality is that someone will have to be on the 'losing side' so to speak. H07 explained by saying 'we cannot live in both of our home countries simultaneously'. When the time comes for returning home, couples will have to decide, 'where will be our home? Where would we live?' added W08. This can be a cause of major tension for missionary couples in CCM. W10 expressed her viewpoint by stating: 'It is hard to have family in other side of the world...but this will always be the case wherever we live'. The challenge of being far from families is very demanding. When a spouse in a cross-cultural marriage speaks of the challenge of being 'far from family' it is very significant. In most cases to visit their extended families means immigration control, expensive air fares, change of weather, time-zones and languages (Williams, 2012).

In the first instance, it is normal for married couples experience that sense of excitement and fear, as they face the discovery of embracing a new lifestyle.

However, after the 'honeymoon' stage, or cultural adaptation in marriage, the enchantment is exhausted and the reality is different. When couples are married cross-culturally one, or both spouses, will face the hardship of being away from their relatives, home, culture, and in most cases mother tongue. One of the spouses can also suffer from 'prejudices of the host nation... [the spouse is] lonely and isolated' (Ingleby, 2010, p, 123). This isolation is a reality for many spouses, especially those from a collective society. Spouses have expressed similar view that of 'someone is always losing, missing out' (W10, H01). Likewise, W07 added that 'when living in [country of service] I was treated as an outsider. People talked differently with me'. Now that W07 lives in her husband's country she adds it 'takes time to understand [his] people, [also] I am not an insider, because I am not a westerner'.

Changing country of residence is another area that is challenging for couples. When W11 and her family had to leave their country of service in an emergency situation, she recalls her experience saying that 'when we came back from the field it was hard to decide where to live, a challenge that you don't think of at the beginning'. In a proactive way, member care providers could thoughtfully probe couples to discuss their future and whether they have a contingency plan or a prearranged return. Romano suggests that 'moving to a country that is home to neither spouse is considered an ideal situation for many couples in intercultural marriages' (2008, p.69)

Even the process of choosing where to live will in itself contribute to the many disruptions and social changes in the lifestyles of missionary couples in CCM. Those changes may bring hidden losses such as belonging, identity and roots, which I will discuss in the next section.

Hidden Losses

Inevitably missionary couples in CCM will be in a situation where the lack of belonging and of what is familiar is obvious. They may adapt to a new place, learn to communicate well in the local language and in many ways seem well adjusted. However one of them can still feel detached. The ethics, religious and cultural values, and many times the beliefs of their spouse will have no resemblance to what

is familiar and homely to them. 'In certain important events of life the cross-cultural marriage stands out; for instance, birth, death and other celebrations' explained W06. They may relate well with the people, the place and the ministry in which they are involved; however, they may feel confused and lost (Jordan, 2001, pp. 21–22). This confusion is many times due to grieving the many transitions and losses. 'Sometimes the losses are immediate and very real; at other times they are cumulative and subtle (Powell, 1992, p.128). The demand in transition can bring a sense of not being part of something, somewhere. The lack of belonging brings the feeling of not 'fitting in', not being part of a certain culture and place (Nida, 1977, p.38).

'We have two sending bases, two places to go to – where do we actually belong?' says W02. The time taken to adjust and to make sense of who they are and where they belong is a major stress factor for couples in cross-cultural marriages. In his talk entitled "*Where is your home?*", Pico Iyer (2013) recalls that after his parents' home had burnt down completely, he 'literally couldn't point to any physical construction. My home would have to be whatever I carried around inside me'. Many of those who have chosen to live abroad, have at some point in their lives experienced that sense of not being able to call a specific place 'home'. Nevertheless, couples in a cross-cultural marriage may choose to live in each other's country for a period, giving each spouse an opportunity to learn and absorb the other's culture, life-style and language fully. But ultimately 'wherever the couple chooses to live, at least one partner will be "on the outside" in some way or other, and that is OK' affirms Shelling & Fraser-Smith (2008, p.41).

Being from a collective society (for example African, Asian, and Latin American), a person's identity is rooted within their family context. For such individuals, separation from immediate and extended family may make them vulnerable (Kingston-Smith, 2013). It consequently affects their sense of identity as an individual, their sense of self-worth, and their loss of roots will affect their ability to function at their best. According to Gardner (2015b) 'cross-cultural couples are more prone to be disconnected, they are likely to feel the need to put roots down – so "home" is somewhere that they both experience'. This disconnection in many ways may be linked to the lack of familiar place, language, routines and traditions. But a stronger

element may have a deeper influence in this lack of connection. According to many interviewees what makes them look forward to their home country is people, more specifically family.

Family Matters Do Matter

As mentioned previously, missionary couples in CCM have to live with the constant fact of being distant from extended family and friends. In the interviews each couple was given the opportunity to express their keenest desire and emotion when thinking of returning to their country of origin. The answers were grouped together and compiled in a chart as shown in Figure 3.

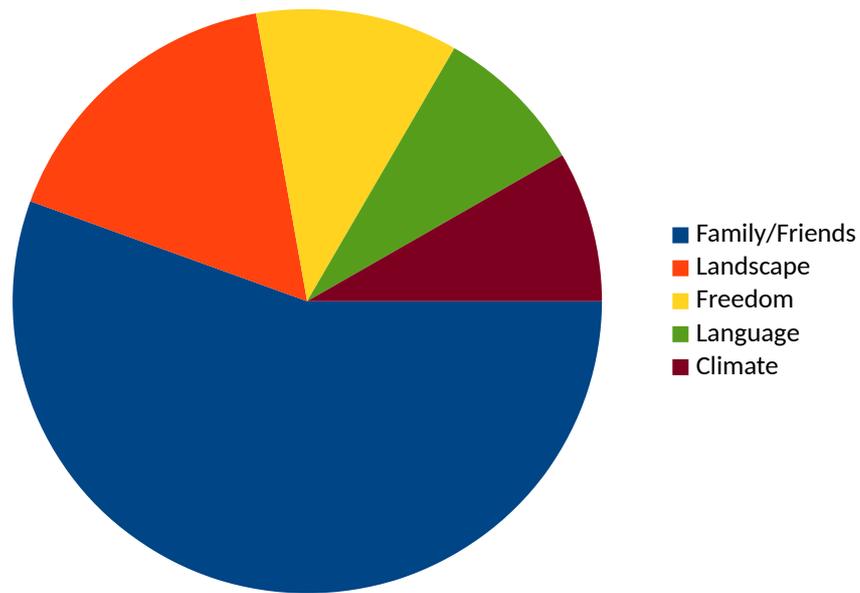


Figure 3 – What spouses miss from their country of origin

Observing Figure 3, the majority of spouses mentioned that reconnecting with their families and friends are the main aspect they miss from 'home'. Having someone who understands their culture and connecting with people is of importance. This may be an element which those who are far from their own country yearn for, as relating closely to those who understand us the most, can enhance our ability to reinforce our own identity (Ingleby, 2010). As expressed by W08 'I missed someone who understood me – not language wise, but someone who is from my culture' Having that profound connection with someone who deeply understands you is essential, 'being able to function in [name of language] all the time, feeling more relaxed I suppose' added H08.

Having a group of people, or even someone, on the same wavelength relating to the person who is the 'foreigner' in his/her spouse's country might be of value. Member care providers can encourage couples, especially the foreigner, to find ways in which they can express themselves in a relaxed atmosphere. Although this may not always be physically possible but it can certainly be achieved using virtual media when circumstances permit.

When connected to other couples in similar situations, this allows each individual to share their experiences, laugh and cry about their mistakes and feel secure and accepted. This association will confirm that they are not alone and consequently bring a sense of belonging and recognition, as affirmed by Eugene Nida (1977). Although in principle it is very beneficial when agencies are able to assist missionary couples in CCM to locate others who share similar experiences, the reality is that it would be unrealistic to expect that agencies would have this as a priority. The main reason is that in many cases families are placed in locations which are very remote. However, the awareness of such needs can motivate member care providers to encourage couples to be proactive and seek out such contact themselves.

Many of the couples interviewed shared how they have searched for resources that were most helpful. Books such as '*Love Across Latitudes*' by Janet Fraser-Smith (2015), was one that several couples mentioned in their interviews. 'This workbook was very helpful for us and we also were around other couples who were in cross-cultural marriages' said H09. Having a relationship with other couples that shared

similar experiences was also mentioned by many of the interviewees as being positive and beneficial.

4.2.2 The Benefits

Overall couples' answers regarding the benefit of a cross-cultural marriage were very positive and brought an insight to this research. According to the couples interviewed the main benefits were connected with their own cultural richness, wider perspective on life, the flexibility that the marriage offers and the opportunity to raise a multicultural family. In Figure 4 a summary of their answers is shown.

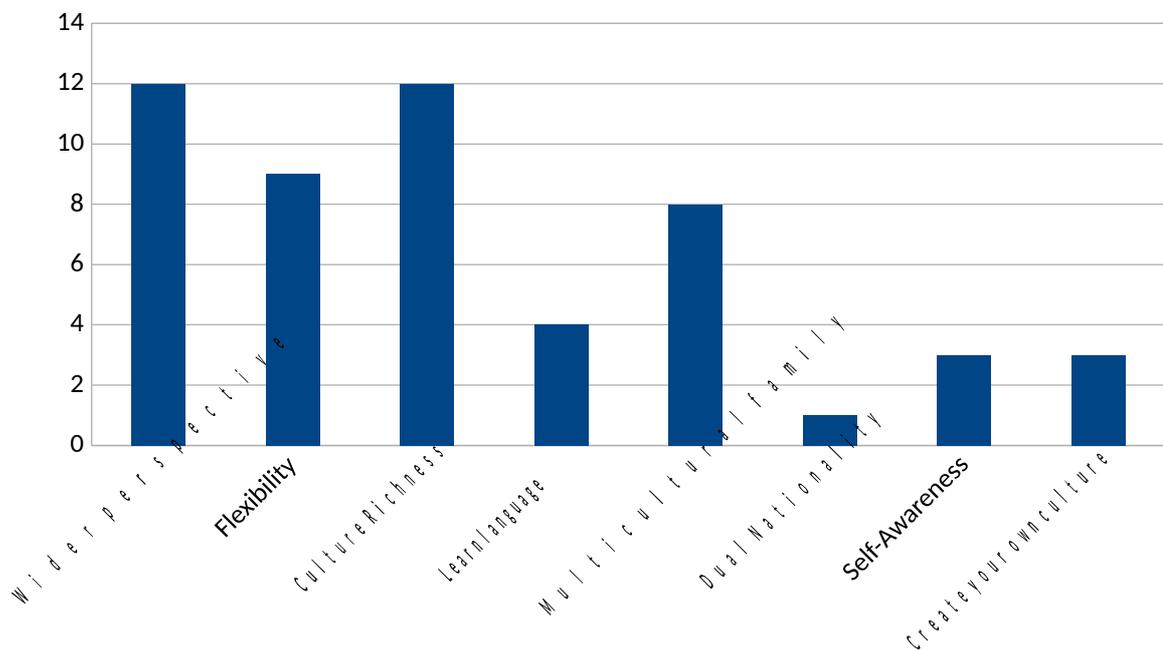


figure 4 - Benefits of a cross-cultural marriage

F

Cultural Richness

As the interviewer, I had the privilege of hearing the excitement and joy expressed by couples when answering the question about the benefits of a cross-cultural marriage. A significant number of couples shared that they consider themselves to be privileged to be in such a diverse and enriching relationship. H02 believes that cross-cultural marriage 'helps us to know and accept other cultures in a more profound way'. Similarly, H08 adds that 'both bring a lot to the marriage, she can learn more about [his country] and even though I cannot be fully integrated in [her country], I can now look at [my culture] from outside and see its strengths and

weakness'. Another spouse shares that in her experience it was an easier way to prevent conflict. W07 explains that 'because we are different, we expect the other to be different, we are more forgiving, more understanding'. Learning about oneself was another aspect that emerged from the experiences of the couples interviewed. According to H04 a cross-cultural marriage

Broadens and expands your cultural horizon, gives a better flavour for life, it gives you a greater awareness of your surroundings, the world views, opinions. My wife being (name of a country) made me aware of who I am. When you are with someone else, with someone who has a different upbringing, suddenly you realize a bit more about you, gave me a self-awareness of myself. You say: why do I say, think like this? When [she] challenges me, [and asks] why? I can take a moment to think, reflect, it would not happen otherwise.

The experiences stated above are encouraging as they confirm how one's culture is only truly visible when the individual is exposed to other cultures. 'The experience of living with someone from a different culture, perhaps of raising bicultural children, of expanding one's worldview and ability to tolerate differences, is a success in itself' (Romano, 2008, p.199). It might be that marrying someone from a different culture does 'open your perspective to other ways of doing things' (W03), and provide an environment where despite of differences, and because of them, couples can grow together (Romano, 2008, p.182).

Many of the couples interviewed shared that they attribute this richness as a consequence of becoming multi-cultural people. Being in a cross-cultural marriage 'allows us to experience another culture deeply' (W03), give a 'deeper cultural awareness' (H02), and 'broadens the way you do things (H09) 'making you adaptable to another culture' (W04). Whereas all this blending of culture can be seen as positive and enriching, it can also generate a confused idea of their own cultural values, principles and beliefs.

Flexibility

Missionary couples in CCM have the flexibility to create their own culture. Drawing a parallel with what occurs with Third Culture Kids (TCK's), couples in cross-cultural marriages will create in their homes a "third" culture by combining elements from each spouse as well as of that country (ies) in which they have lived as a couple (Gardner, 2015, p.154). Interviewees have expressed that they see a great

advantage of being in a cross-cultural marriage as this allows one to create their own culture. Several spouses shared regarding the freedom of making their own cultures. Phrases such 'create your own culture' (W04), 'making your own culture' (H06), 'create a third culture that you like, you can pick and mix between two cultures' (W06) were used by the interviewees. Since there are a variety of lifestyles which can be combined and incorporated into the marriage, couples shared that this experience 'give better flavour to life' (H04) and they use the differences to make life more enriching. Romano reports that cross-cultural couples 'often felt that life with a "foreigner" was more consistently interesting because it was more varied and unpredictable'. (2008, p.169-170).

Multi-Cultural Family

Missionary couples in CCM have the option of creating their own family culture in a very special way, combining elements from each other's culture. During the interviews, participants were asked to share aspects of their own cultures they wished to retain within their family units. Their answers varied from 'sauna' for a Finnish to a 'family closeness' for a South American spouse. Each spouse had a list of cultural aspects that they wished to retain from their own home country.

When considering the Table 6 there are several elements of their own culture which spouses wish to retain and pass on to the next generation. Shelling & Fraser-Smith believe that spouses 'who are aware of their identity are more able to decide which aspects are important to them, and which are less so' (2008, p.48). Having that flexibility and making a choice to incorporate elements from each culture may be a reflection of self-acceptance and pride of one's own culture. Romano believes that when spouses accept their own cultures, they will also be more accepting of their spouse's cultures, and consequently be able to 'grow together despite, and because of, their differences' (2008, p.182). From my observation, the participants revealed an excitement and satisfaction when thinking of the elements which they wanted to retain.

Nationality	I want to retain from my culture....
Brazilian	Family unity, close relationship between parents and children, informality of an open house, barbeque
British	Awareness of history and family, British culture, sense of humour, language, politeness (e.g.: queueing), food, traditional celebrations, sending cards, bed routine
Canadian	Traditional celebrations, food, national anthem, history, acceptance of multiculturalism
Chilean	The determination and perseverance of Chilean character based on the history of the country, resilience.
Chinese/Malaysian	Chinese food, language, culture, history
Czech Republic	Family unity, openness
Dutch	Traditional celebrations, directness to talk about anything, language
Finnish	Sauna, deep friendship as understood by Finns, a genuine acceptance of others.

Table 6 – What spouses wish to retain from their own culture

Wider perspective on life

While most people who have lived in a cross-cultural setting would agree that such experiences are beneficial and do bring a wide range of learning and gains, when it comes to couples who have made a decision to 'permanently' live cross-culturally those gains are constant and intense. According to H01 a cross-cultural marriage 'makes your life more rich and for your children as well, because you are exposed to more culture.' Generally couples affirmed that they are pleased that their children have the privilege of dual passports, languages and cultures.

Parents feel that they are giving their offspring the privilege of a wider perspective on life and learning it in a natural way. H02 affirms that 'we are happy that our kids have (country) dad and (country) mum'. H09 adds that is good that 'children grow up with parents from different countries, [helps them] to know that other people speak and look different.' W03 adds that cross-cultural marriage gives an 'opportunity for the family to become bilingual'.

In a globalised world many people seek the possibilities of widening their options for the future. Children from a cross-cultural marriage already have the opportunity of becoming multi-cultural. W06 shared that 'the children get a richer understanding of things in the world....they have a wider perspective of the world'. The experiences that both spouses and their children gain are of great value. As expressed by W01, 'you get to see and you learn, in a very personal way, another culture and how another culture values marriage.' Perhaps the learning is some way more profound as it is an ongoing life experience. When couples have good knowledge of their spouses' language the learning is expanded. 'Speaking each other's language is an advantage, opens horizons [as you] understand what other person thinks', confirmed H09.

4.3 Suggestions for Sending Agencies

Following on what sending agencies already offer to missionary couples in CCM, having had a glimpse of the challenges and benefits experienced by the couples themselves, I will now share some suggestions drawn from the experiences of the couples interviewed. Below there are several of their ideas/recommendations that could be useful for sending agencies.

Seminar/ Group discussion

Missionary couples in CCM would appreciate an opportunity to discuss their issues. 'Maybe running a course or something. It would be good to connect with other people who are in cross-cultural marriages to talk about things we face' said W09. Similarly, W01 said 'it would have helped if we were connected to other cross-cultural couples', and W07 says 'if we could meet up others and share experiences'.

Being open-minded and available

Most couples demonstrated a willingness to talk about their marriage relationship. 'The agency could be braver to ask probing questions... direct questions, it might help to expose us with few questions.' H08.

Providing resources

Directing CCM couples to relevant resources such as books, websites, blogs, and social media. For instance, the book '*Love Across Latitudes*' (2015) was mentioned several times during my interviews, and was said to be useful as it does 'provide some advice regarding marriage' (H04).

Appropriate member care providers

Assuring that those providing member care are gifted and have experience in cross-cultural living. Spouse H03 said

'Having people who are gifted in member care... they need to have gifts we can 'smell', more pastoral, mature personnel. Need to have the call. Someone who does understand us, maybe someone closer to our own culture who would offer member care to us'.

Rethinking home assignments

Being aware that home assignment time presents more challenges for missionary couples in CCM. W02 said that agencies 'need to be more understanding of the need to split home assignments 50/50'. In practice this might be in the form of giving extra time according to distance and time taken to travel to their home countries, or any other form which will be relevant to the couples and family concerned.

Marriage guidelines

Having guidelines for marriage in place, which would include cross-cultural marriage issues. 'It would be very useful if organisations have clear guideline structures that would reflect marriage. In cross-cultural marriages there is a risk or eventuality of one having to go apart – away for some time....I always find it very strange for couples to be away for too long, it is not healthy for the marriage' affirms W06.

Having a broader view on multiculturalism

As pointed out by W07, she wishes her organisation were 'overall less [country-name], less mono-cultural thinking'.

Being attentive

'I think [cross-cultural marriages] are so common in an organisation like [name of agency] that is it almost forgotten.' H01.

Being flexible

A positive, and encouraging remark was the comment of H08 when saying, 'I am very impressed with my agency and the way they look after their members, and they are more deliberate in doing it. They have a real desire to be flexible regarding members marrying cross-culturally.'

Being proactive, intentional and personal

According to H01, 'I think there could be some sort of cross-cultural marriage days or weekends or camps where couple would come together.' His spouse, who was

interviewed separately, justified by saying 'it would have helped if we were connected to other cross-cultural couples' (W01). It might be an idea to create an opportunity during a mission's conferences where couples 'could meet up with others and share experiences' said W07. As for W08 she suggests that 'maybe on a regular basis or once/twice a year send an email asking "are you doing okay"?'

From my observation, the suggestions from most missionary couples in CCM were relevant and practical. However, few of them said that there was nothing they wanted the sending agency to do. One of them who has been married the longest added by saying that 'it is too late now' (H07). This makes me conclude that in fact they did want some input earlier in their marriage and/or ministry career as missionaries.

4.4 Personal Reflections and Recommendations

This research has proved to be a challenge on many levels. Firstly, due to the number of couples involved and the intrinsic nature of marriage, it has turned out to be a much larger project than I had anticipated. Also, as I mentioned previously, due to the lack of literature specific to caring for missionaries couples who are in a cross-cultural marriage. But a further challenge was that, at the time of data collection, my cross-cultural family and I were also in transition. Ultimately I have benefited from this study as it has not only increased my awareness regarding many other cultures but by and large, my husband's culture and my own culture. Beyond any doubt it has deepened my passion and concern for couples in cross-cultural marriages. This research has demonstrated that this topic is very convoluted. A cross-cultural marriage does involve not only personal experiences, but also different cultures, values and expectations. To conclude this chapter, I will highlight some of my insights into caring for missionary couples in CCM.

Cultural Sensitivity

The research has shown the need to be aware of the cultural background of the missionary to whom the sending agency is offering member care. Although all the sending agencies who took part in this research are based in the United Kingdom,

several of them offer member care to missionaries of nationalities other than British. Gardner believes that 'more international member care personnel is needed at all levels, in all specialities' (2015a, p.122). Sensitivity and a good depth of knowledge about that culture will provide a very positive experience, both to the giver and receiver of member care. From the perspective of someone from a collective society, I consider the element of discussing cultural differences to be of great relevance. 'The vast majority of people in the world live in societies in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual' (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010, p. 90). In their book, *Cultures and Organisations* (2010) a comprehensive explanation of the topic of individualistic and collectivist societies can be found. For that reason, I believe that member care providers should be aware that disagreements between couples, and/or with the team members, are most likely to be due to cultural differences. As of with any other aspects of member care, seeking training in CCM will enhance their ability to best help couples in concern. 'Understanding why others do things differently and why their way of doing things bothers or offends us' (Silzer, 2011, p.2) will increase cultural awareness and improve relationships.

Intentionality

Offering a place and space where spouses can share without reservation. Being aware of their needs and looking for ways of accommodating husbands and wives who feel isolated in cross-cultural marriages is a practical way in which member care providers can serve couples effectively. In the same way, that Christ was seen as an 'outsider', cross-cultural married spouses can also be similarly excluded. Whether you are married or a single person, 'belonging is important...It reminds you that people value you, that you are part of not merely a community but a family' (Herbert, 2013, p.15). Creating a sense of belonging can be a way of retaining some aspect of one's culture. Gardner suggests that 'couples should be helped in evaluating which practices they should maintain in their new home that will build strong family traditions and roots' (2015b).

Mentoring

Couples have suggested a provision of retreats or camps for missionary couples in CCM, however the practicality of those is not always viable due to time and availability of several couples from the same organisation. Nevertheless, it could be a joint event among sending agencies or organised by organisation such as Global Connections. In my opinion, encouraging individuals to seek support, finding a mentor or someone who they can be accountable to, is a practical way in which member care provider can assist. Being listened to, especially during times of transition, stress or major events in the life of missionary couples in CCM is of importance. In such times differences in culture between the spouses are more evident, thus causing conflicts more frequently. It is easy to feel 'unwanted and overwhelmed. So much to say; no one to talk to' (Pirolo, 2000, p.124). Member care providers need the ability to support missionary couples in CCM by listening, empathising and utilising resources such as those mentioned in Appendix 5.

Providing extra time

Offering missionary couples in CCM the freedom and sufficient time to process changes and make decisions. Missionary couples in CCM tend to take more time, as they have many more aspects to consider, language including style of communication being one of them. For that matter, of critical importance would be to encourage each person to endeavour to learn their spouse's primary language. By doing so, sending agencies are in fact, helping the couples to minimise chances of misunderstanding which is a benefit not only for both, husband and wife themselves, but also for other team members and ultimately the organisation as a whole. Another important aspect regarding time, is to be aware that 'debriefing' sessions might take longer, due to language barriers.

Information about Current Legal Affairs

Immigration issues have proved to be a major challenge among missionary couples in CCM. When I got married, someone wisely told us to look at the legal requirements of living in my husband's country as a wife. This short investigation helped us both decide where to get married legally and it avoided a lot of paperwork on the immigration front. Missionary couples in CCM might be suggested to consider

that all family members have in common the same passport country between them. This approach would at least guarantee that all family members will be able to stay together, especially in cases of an unplanned move such as an emergency or evacuation.

Thus, the role of the member care provider is to advise missionary couples in CCM of the complexity and implication of their choices. However, ultimately it is the couples' responsibility to search for the pertinent information regarding their spouse's land and to be aware that immigration rules do change and vary from country to country. The same applies to their children, especially when reaching adulthood.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

About two years ago I got an email from a non-Brazilian member care provider asking me for suggestions of how she could best care for a Brazilian family who were arriving to serve on the same field as her. I was so impressed and inspired to hear the interest and willingness to learn in order to do member care well. That demonstrated a desire to care in an appropriate way. As member care practitioners, 'we want our members to know they are valued, respected, and cared for. And we want to develop a system to deliver care throughout the life cycle of that worker' (Gardner, 2015, p20). In general this member care takes numerous forms and dimensions, caring in a holistic way, for the well-being of missionaries and their families. They are people who themselves cared enough to advance beyond their own comfort zone to make Jesus known among the nations.

In chapter one I provided an overall view of the research proposed, including limitations, personal background and terminologies. The focus was on understanding the needs of cross-cultural couples so that member care providers can assist them in a relevant and significant way. In chapter two, I drew on literature focussing on the topic of member care, culture and cross-cultural marriages. Moving on to chapter three, I discussed the methodological approach by presenting the reasoning for utilising an online survey with the sending agencies and semi-structured interviews with the missionary couples in CCM. Chapter four discussed the findings and the key themes that have emerged from the survey and interviews, focussing on current practice of member care by sending agencies, a glimpse of the challenges and benefits of cross-cultural marriage with some suggestions and recommendations on how best member care providers can support missionary couples in CCM. Undoubtedly the themes which emerged deserve deeper exploration and could benefit from further study.

This study found that there is much to celebrate in the way many agencies have been caring for their cross cultural married couples; however it also demonstrates the extent to which differences in culture impact on the lives of missionary couples in

CCM. These differences consequently affect their families and the relationships with other team members.

To fully understand every missionary couple in CCM within a sending agency was not the aim of this dissertation. People are complex. Marriages are unique. Cultures are obscure. Nonetheless, I hope that by sharing some of the experiences described by the missionary couples in CCM who were interviewed, member care providers will understand that they

have chosen a complicated route in life, one that takes more work, more time, more empathy, more honesty – more everything. They also have an advantage if they realize [sic] this beforehand, and decide they are ready to give whatever it takes to make their marriage succeed, never losing track of the fact that in the end they also have the possibility of gaining more than couples who didn't dare to be different (Romano,2008, p199-200)

By gaining greater awareness of the challenges of missionary couples in CCM, allowing them to voice their experiences and validating their needs, member care providers will be able assist them in a more relevant way. This will thus ensure a platform where missionary couples in CCM can grow in their relationship and become more resilient and effective in their ministry.

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Topics considered to be discussed with missionary couples in CCM.

Figure 2 – Challenges for missionary couples in CCM.

Figure 3 – What Spouses miss from their country of origin.

Figure 4 – Benefits of a cross-cultural marriage.

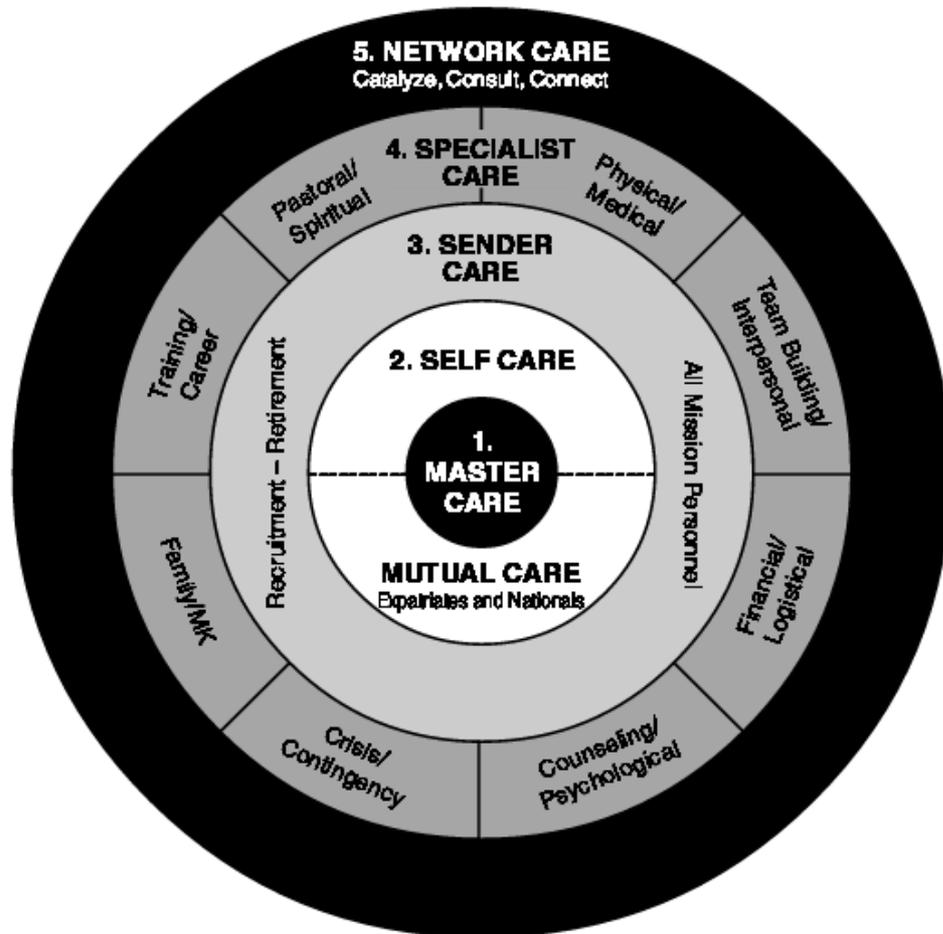
LIST OF TABLES

1. Table 1 – Missionary couples in CCM within agencies.
1. Table 2 – Summary of online Survey among sending agencies.
2. Table 3 – Overall summary of Participants.
3. Table 4 – Number of participants *versus* country of origin.
4. Table 5 – Sending agencies' current support for missionary couples in CCM
5. Table 6 – What spouses wish to retain from their own culture.

APPENDICES

Appendix One – Model of Member Care

A Best Practice Model of Member Care



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Kelly O'Donnell and Dave Pollock

Appendix Two - Sample of Invitation Letter to Sending Agencies

To
Member Care Practitioner,

My name is Wânia Honman and I am a Member Care postgraduate student at Redcliffe College, Gloucestershire University. For my final dissertation, I am examining the current practice of member care provision for missionary couples in CCM within different sending agencies. I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing this survey, which should take you no longer than 15 minutes to complete. I would appreciate your participation in the survey **by the 3rd of April 2015.**

Any information you provide will be held as *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name or your organisation be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By answering this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

For those who participate, a copy of the full dissertation will be available in digital format, which will contain a summary of the practice of member care from different organisations and a compilation of the experiences of missionary couples in cross cultural marriage. As well as, some recommendations by the researcher to both agencies and couples.

If you have any question or concern about this research, please do not hesitate in contacting my my supervisor Tim Davy or myself.

Sincerely,

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tdavy@redcliffe.org
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Appendix Three - Survey Monkey Questions

Member Care of Cross Cultural Married Couples

Survey for sending agencies

The survey in which you are about to participate is designed to find out what aspects of member care is provided to missionary couples in a Cross-Cultural Marriage (CCM) by your sending agency. This survey is being conducted by Wania Honman for the purposes of writing a dissertation for a Masters in Member Care (Redcliffe College - University of Gloucestershire). Any information you provide will be held as *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name or your organisation be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By answering this survey you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

For any more information please contact me on : whonman@redcliffe.org or 0798 2766431

Please circle the most appropriate answer:

1. How multicultural do you consider your agency to be?

Totally 1 2 3 4 5
Hardly 2. Internationally, how many full time members does your sending agency have?

Less than 100 101-300 301- 500 501-1000 1001-1500 Over 1500

3. How many members do you, or your team, provide member care for? (they may serve in the UK or overseas)

Up to 10 11- 30 31-50 51-100 Over 100

4. Of the above, how many couples are represented? How many of the couples are in a cross cultural marriage?

5. In what sort of ways are those couples prepared for a cross-cultural relationships?

6. Of the list below, circle three (3) topics you consider to be the most important to discuss with CCM Couples?

7. If you refer to resources (books, websites, blogs, etc..) to help cross-cultural couples, please list the main authors.

8. Should remote support be needed, which of the following does your UK Member Care office offer the most frequently?

Skype Post Cards Emails Telephone None Other: (specify)

9. What percentage of your sending agency home office workers have served in a multicultural setting for an extended period ? (over 2 years)

0%- 10% 11%-25% 26%-35% 36%-50% 51%-60% 61% or more

10. For my research, I am interested in interviewing couples in cross-cultural marriages. Would you be willing to forward a letter asking if they would be able to participate?

No Yes (If so, please email on whonman@redcliffe.org)

**Member Care of Cross Cultural Married Couples
Semi-structured Interview for couples**

Criteria: Cross cultural missionary couples who have been married for more than 2 years, with or without children.

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to find out if missionary couples in a Cross-Cultural Marriage (CCM) require a different or special provision of Member Care by their sending agencies. This research is being conducted by Wania Honman for the purposes of writing a dissertation for a Masters in Member Care (Redcliffe College - University of Gloucestershire). Any information you provide will be held as *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By answering these interview questions you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

For any more information please contact me on : whonman@redcliffe.org or 0798 2766431

Interview Date : _____ Time: _____
 Your Country of origin _____ Other citizenship (s): _____
 Spouse's Country of origin _____ Other citizenship (s): _____
 No. of years married: ____ No. of years as missionary : ____ No. of children: ____

Child ren	Age	Nationality of birth	Citizenship(s)
Child 1			
Child 2			
Child 3			
Child 4			

1. In your opinion, how would you describe your Cross Cultural marriage?
2. According to your own experience a cross-cultural marriage offers:

Benefits	Challenges
1	1
2	2
3	3

3. In what sort of ways, did your sending agency offer advice regarding Cross Cultural Marriage? Books Websites CCM Specialist None
Others: _____
4. Were you offered cross-cultural training before joining your agency? Yes /No
5. If you were offered cross-cultural training by your agency before joining it, how would you rate the training?

N/A Irrelevant 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7 Very relevant

6. Do you as a couple use one language in particular and, if so, which/whose language?

7. Which language do you use to communicate with the other members of your organisation? 8. How would you rate your language fluency in his/her mother tongue (tick the appropriate box)

Fluency/Rate	less 20%	21 -49%	50-75 %	Over 75 %
Spoken				
Written				
Reading				
Comprehension				

9. Which aspects of your own home culture do you wish to retain in your family unit?

10. To what extent is the frequency of visiting your home country/and churches is fluenced by the need to raise additional support?

Not at all 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7 Very much

11. If you had to move to your spouse's home country, what legal requirements would there be for you to be able to reside there permanently?

None I have Citizenship Apply for Visa I don't know
Other:___

12. What makes you look forward to returning to your own home country? (Tick one or more)

Food Climate Language People Freedom Other:_____

13. How likely would you be to turn to your agency to discuss any aspect of your Cross Cultural Marriage?

Unlikely 1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7 Very likely

14. In an emergency situation, which country would you go to, and why?

15. In which ways could your sending agency best support your Cross Cultural Marriage?

16. Any other thoughts or comments you want to add?

Appendix Five – Suggested Resources for missionary couples in CCM

Books:

- Alupoacei, M. (2009) *Your Intercultural Marriage: A Guide to a Healthy, Happy Relationship*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.
- Barbara, A. (1989) *Marriage Across Frontiers*. Avon, England: Multilingual Matters
- Breger, R.A. & Hill, R. (1998) *Cross-Cultural Marriage: Identity and Choice*, Oxford; New York: Berg
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- Daniel, C. (2008) *Together Investing in Your Marriage*, Farnham, Surrey: CWR
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- Kraler, A., Kofman, E., Kohli, M. & Schmoll, C. (Eds.) (2011) *Gender, Generations and the Family in International Migration.*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press
- Lee, N. & Lee, S. (2009) *The Marriage Book*, London: Alpha International
- Romano, D. (2008) *Intercultural Marriage Promises and Pitfalls*, Boston, MA: Intercultural Press
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- Soisangwan, P. (2011) *Thai the Knot: How to Untangle the Complexities of Cross-Cultural Marriage*, Hong Kong: Blacksmith Books
- Tannen, D. (1992) *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. London: Virago.
- Waters, D. (2007) *One Couple Two Cultures: 81 Western-Chinese Couples Talk About Love and Marriage*. Hong Kong: MCCM Creations
- Williams, W. (2012) *The Globalisation of Love*. UK: Summertime Publishing

Movies (DVD's):

- East Is East* (2000) Directed by Damien O'Donnell
- Guess Who*, (2005) Directed by Kevin Rodney Sullivan
- My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, (2002) Directed by Joel Zwick
- My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2* (2016) Directed by Kirk Jones
- Not Without My Daughter* (1991), Directed by Brian Gilbert
- Outsourced*, (2006) Directed by John Jeffcoat
- Something New*,(2006) Directed by Sanaa Hamri
- West Is West* (2011) Directed by Andy De Emmony.

Online Resources:

- Alupoaipei, M. (2009) A Biblical Look at Intercultural Marriages - Christian Marriage Help and Advice. Available from: <<http://www.crosswalk.com/family/marriage/a-biblical-look-at-intercultural-marriages-11610457.html>>
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- (2013) *The Watts Filters - Cross-Cultural Conflict Communication Janet Fraser-Smith*, Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUh61ZIpUfk&feature=youtube_gdata_player>
- website: <https://interculturalmarriage.wordpress.com/tag/intercultural-marriage-statistics/>

“Top 10 clues that you are in a cross-cultural marriage”

1. Your spouse does not recognise the tune when you whistle the theme song to your favourite childhood TV series.
1. ‘Driving home for Christmas’ involves passports and other official travel documentation, international flights, time zone changes, language ‘crash course’ for your partner (and children) and climatic differences.
2. When you share childhood memories, the stories may sound similar but where one of you say ‘sand’, the other says ‘snow’.
3. You keep on celebrating mother’s day, valentines, father’s day twice or none, every year.
4. You sneeze ‘AHH – CHOO’ and your partner sneezes ‘ACH – EEH’.
5. You learned drastically different versions of history, particularly relating to WW2.
6. Your spouse is passionate about a sport you had previously never heard of.
7. To write a newsletter, involves to translate to at least one more language and to find the right mail list in your many e-mail contacts files.
8. When you come home from work in the evening, your home smells like curry although you are a strictly meat and potatoes kind of guy.
9. The household computer requires two keyboards - one in your language and the other one covered in hieroglyphics.

Couples that enter a cross-cultural marriage bring into their relationship vastly diverse assumptions and expectations about marriage and family life. Many of these assumptions flow out of the values, unspoken rules and belief systems that permeate their primary cultures. These unspoken values have become so much a part of their lives that they are almost hidden from view. Disapproval from parents for a cross-cultural marriage is customary. Parents should play a major role in their children's marriage set up. The relationship depends on the person in them. Care and trust are more important than what the person's religious or cultural background is. There will also be less discrimination amongst races. A marriage that has been honored and lovingly nurtured provides wonderful support during difficult times. In addition to a sound marriage, there are certain attitudes and mindsets that are crucial to weathering storms. Most cross-cultural workers can quote 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."