In 2005 I embarked on a project in response to specific challenges my ministry had long faced in attracting, empowering, and retaining ethnic minority staff and leaders. I put together the results of some basic cross-cultural research as well as a series of questionnaires with multiple ethnic minority staff at the time and proposed some potential solutions for my organization, Cru, moving forward.

That version got passed around in different circles within the organization at a couple levels. First, several leaders in the national campus leadership at the time read it and it served as a catalyst for some discussion and conversations at the time. Second and most notably, it began to be passed around ethnic minority staff in the organization themselves as a resource for them. I’ll never know to what degree the initial write-up served as a catalyst for change, but at the very least by my correspondence over the years it served to bring some validation and hope to many ethnic minority staff members – especially Asian American and Hispanic staff members.

Two years after writing I became official designated staff of an ethnic minority strategy, Epic Movement, providing me an opportunity to continue learning and exploring the realities for our organization as it relates to being fruitful cross-culturally and in retaining ethnic minority staff. I am re-releasing an updated edition of this study and proposal as I come up upon my wife and I’s five year anniversary of serving in the Epic Movement of Cru. I’ve revised about a third of the content and added connections and insights that came over the course of serving more closely with Ethnic minorities in Epic and other ethnic strategies in Cru.

The last five years have been an immense blessing to my family, and myself in large part due to the experience of serving in this context and with the staff of Epic. My awareness and character and vision has grown through the exposure to many incredible ethnic minority staff that are living by faith in amazing ways in our organization. Much has been learned and I felt like it was an appropriate time for me to make a revision and reflect on the same questions raised seven years later.

Reflections on the 2005 Version

When reviewing the way I framed the issues and dynamics back in 2012, prior to extended work in an ethnic minority context, I was pleased that many of the issues were very much the same. However, I was blown away by how differently I see the same cross-cultural challenges having been in consistent dialogue over them for five years. To me it’s the difference of understanding the facts or information about this problem and seeing more the human reality and experience that results as these tensions are lived out in real people, in real contexts. In this edition I tried to add more holistic connections, particularly as it relates to the sum total of all these differences as they translate to power disparities and their impact on identity. I also removed a couple proposed solutions that I now believe would not be very helpful.
This is a study, an assessment, a survey of the landscape organizationally as it relates to the fundamental challenges of seeing ethnic minority staff thrive in our organization, both in terms of significant leadership roles and in terms of greater numbers and longevity on staff. I shaped this to be an educational tool for personal learning and to be a catalyst for increased humble dialogue and for redemptive solutions for us going forward. It’s not comprehensive. It provides no magic bullet. It is not prescriptive or universal – not every ethnic minority staff will resonate with all of the value tensions or proposed solutions. But I believe these are fair generalizations of what the reality is and what the challenges for us are.

We have come a long way from where we were twenty years ago, but we still have much to learn and do for the sake of our mission to reach every student and to create environments that are affirming and nurturing ethnic minority staff member’s calling to ministry through our organization. I hope you find this informative, insightful, and that it can serve as a catalyst for great dialogue.

**Historical Background**

As the demographics of society and the college campus have changed, Cru has increasingly faced cultural and spiritual battles on the journey towards effectiveness in the mission of reaching every college student for Christ. Historically a white, Protestant, evangelistic ministry and organization, Cru is now faced with the reality that a large percentage of the students on the college campus today represent different cultural and ethnic traditions. Today, over one out of three students across the United States could be categorized as part an ethnic minority group. In some parts of the country the numbers are even more striking and Caucasians are already the minority by population. The rapidly changing face of the university and society as a whole continues to serve as a catalyst for the campus ministry of Cru to examine their core values, ministry philosophy, and methodology in an effort to be effective and influential in bringing Jesus Christ to every student on every campus.

The commitment to this vision has in part led to multiple, significant re-structuring efforts within the Campus Ministry. A large restructuring effort in the early 1990's opened new doors for change and took a larger step in positioning the ministry to more effectively reach all campuses and students of all ethnic backgrounds. Much of this change was initiated because of the recognition that the ministry philosophy and strategies of the current day were ill-suited to be able to effectively expand the ministry in terms of the number of campus movements as well as in terms of the number of ethnic students being reached on campus and getting involved in ministry on campus.

Within a little more than a decade since those organizational changes, the ministry experienced again exploded once more in terms of students involved and the number of campuses that have a Cru movement on campus reaching students for Christ. In retrospect, those changes had a larger impact on the scope of our ministry as it relates to the number of campuses Cru had a presence on and a general increase in students involved than it did on our fruitfulness among ethnic minority students and communities. However, the doors were open for ethnic minority staff to begin to more effectively organize and network within the organization.

Since the initial writing of this article in 2005, there have several key developments. First, several more ethnic minority contextualized ministries have been given increased autonomy and freedom to do contextualized ministries. Epic Movement, Nations, and Destino joined Impact Movement as visible and recognized ministries within the Campus Ministry. And to some degree in response to the growing challenge of releasing laborers and resources to reach
ethnic minority students and priority ministry locations, another re-structuring has taken place, starting in 2007 as “The Way Forward” and over the several years following. It should be noted that part of “The Way Forward” included the EFM 100 initiative to mobilize 100 staff to be designated with an ethnic minority strategy to give lift to our cross-cultural ministry efforts. And as a personal note, my wife and I were among the first of the EFM 100 as we transitioned to the staff of Epic Movement, Cru’s Asian American Campus Ministry, late in the Fall of 2007.

As the ministry has expanded to more campuses, some of which are heavily populated by ethnic minority students, much has changed as there are many more ethnic students involved in the ministry and ministry efforts now consistently involve cultural issues into their plans and strategies. The work of our ethnic minority strategies with their regional partners in ministry have helped take a major step towards reaching students from all backgrounds.

Looking at the bigger picture of the past few decades as it relates to specifically ethnicity and cultural issues, there are reasons to be hopeful for the future of our ministry. For there have never been more ethnic minority students involved with us.

The Problem Stated

The fundamental problem right now culturally within the campus ministry is that we, as an organization that is perhaps 85 – 95% Caucasian, are seeking to bridge to an audience that in some parts of the country is far more than 50% ethnic minority. Many ethnic student leaders that may sense a call to full-time vocational ministry often choose to serve with other churches or organizations instead of joining with us.

Some of that should be applauded, but when we begin to explore some of the reasons some potential laborers serve elsewhere we may be called to ask ourselves more difficult questions. More central to this article is the reality that the large majority of ethnic staff who have joined the staff of Cru have tended to leave staff for other ministry or vocational opportunities within the first several years of service. This article explores some of the often unseen dynamics that contribute to our organization’s significant attrition when it comes to ethnic minority staff.

For example, when I joined the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ/Cru in the winter of 1998, my new staff class in my region was approximately 30% ethnic – much higher than most regions across the country at the time. From a group of about fifteen ethnic staff from that era, only one or two remained on staff eight years later. And within the year of me updating this article (2012) that number will reach zero.

One of the implications of this attrition is that ethnic minority students will continue to need to be reached by predominantly Caucasian staff because these are the staff that continue on or that last in the ministry with Cru while the majority of ethnic minority staff have not tended to stay in the organization with as much longevity. This is a significant tension in our ministry. The problem that I will seek to explore is this, "Why do ethnic staff with the campus ministry of Cru leave staff when the scope of our ministry is becoming increasingly ethnic?" The issues are much more complex than I can hope to cover in this general effort, but this is one...
attempt to provide an introduction to some of the cultural tensions that are at work that affect ethnic minority staff attrition and to offer some potential solutions and recommendations for our next steps. Please note that most of my research has explored the cultural issues involved for Asian Americans so this discussion may be more skewed towards why Asian-Americans may leave staff.

Exploring Root Issues

Distinguishing the Issues

Before exploring the potential cultural issues that may lie at the root of why ethnic staff leave the ministry of Cru, it is important to distinguish the main reasons why any staff person may leave the staff of Cru. Geert Hofstede demonstrates that there are human, cultural, and personality/individual components to what a person brings into any environment. Some ethnic staff may leave staff for personally driven reasons while others may choose to leave for reasons that would resonate with all of us because of our common humanity. What I will explore in this article are the more culturally rooted reasons an ethnic minority staff member may leave the organization.

While not completely void of cultural components, the primary documented reasons why any staff person leaves staff is a sense of “calling” to another vocation or ministry, the burden of financial support (fund raising), and issues related to job/work satisfaction. Not every ethnic staff member may leave the staff of Cru for specifically cultural reasons and they may leave for the same reasons that Caucasian staff may leave. According to a recent study on CCC staff attrition, it should be noted that 55% of all staff terminations in recent years have been for staff members with 0-5 years of service. There is a lot of attrition for staff in these early years in general, but the question remains why such a high percentage of ethnic staff leave the ministry despite the increasing need for ethnic leadership and the recent development of national campus priorities related to shared leadership with ethnic minorities.

While it is true that culture affects everything and while the above reasons for staff attrition may be true across the board, these things may be experienced by ethnic staff differently than Caucasian staff. For example, while an Asian-American staff member may choose to leave staff because of a sense of calling to a different ministry, there may be an underlying cultural value that needs to be met - to do ministry in a place where there is a greater overlap of values as opposed to serving in a ministry where they are constantly going against the grain culturally.

"...one of the strongest factors in many ethnic minority staff member’s “calling” elsewhere is the deep feeling developed over the course of the experience on staff that it just isn’t a place for them...."

After having served primarily in the ethnic minority context over the last five years I believe this holds true. Ethnic minority staff exit the organization for multiple reasons, many of which are similar to why any staff would leave. But it’s more clear to me than it was at the time of my first version of this article that one of the strongest factors in many ethnic minority staff member’s “calling” elsewhere is the deep feeling developed over the course of the experience on staff that it just isn’t a place for them – that fundamentally there is not room for who they are and how they are different and that to live out who they are and the fullness of their identity they need to serve elsewhere. Many just don’t feel welcomed in the organization at large and routinely experience a lack of voice and powerlessness within the organization. Many feel the burden is always on them to make it work in the organization and that over time contributes to not feeling valued.

Hofstede also demonstrates that beneath cultural practices are invisible values and it is at this level that cultural tensions are born. So as we continue to explore the sources of why ethnic staff leave the campus ministry of Cru I will attempt to show more of the possible underlying cultural tensions that lie beneath the generalized reasons for why ethnic staff leave.
Communication

One of the most obvious cultural issues that most ethnic staff have to battle in their experience on staff with Cru is the tension between direct and indirect communication. Craig Storti writes, "The differences between the two poles of this dimension, directness and indirectness, probably account for more cross-cultural misunderstanding than any other single factor." Many ethnic staff, especially Asian-American staff, have an indirect communication style while the dominant communication style in Cru's culture is direct. From the very beginning of one's experience on staff, one is immersed in and encouraged towards direct communication. From initiative evangelism, a hallmark of Cru's ministry philosophy throughout its existence, to 360 degree feedback processes and personal fund raising, the practices and methodologies of the ministry are clearly in the direct communication mold.

I've interviewed several current and former ethnic staff with Campus Crusade and almost every one of them has expressed that this is one of the areas that has been the most difficult for them during their experience. One Asian-American staff woman expressed,

"Our Asian culture is not very confrontational and in our ministry there is more of an emphasis on truth and grace intentionally and confrontationally in a healthy way. This has been a real learning point for me. I think it is good; but it is so counter-cultural to Asian culture and I am aware of this every time I enter into these situations."

This highlights one important reality when looking at behavior through a cultural lens. The meaning in behavior can be different depending on which cultural context one uses to interpret that behavior. The language in this specific quote reveals this in the realm of communication. In referring to the direct communication style of the dominant culture she refers to it as "confrontational". This is not a moral judgment on a specific kind of communication style, but it reveals that direct communication can carry with it different meaning to different people. In the ministry culture at large, direct communication is viewed as respectful, bold, and is seen as an admirable trait if done with tact and love. However, to ethnic staff with cultural backgrounds that value indirect communication then direct communication can be interpreted as confrontational and may be interpreted further as disrespectful or rude. Beyond the impact this makes on ethnic minority staff comfort level within the organization, it also is a factor in the ideal of leadership that the organization esteems, rewards, and holds up as the model for future generations. If one doesn't feel like they culturally can ever be the kind of leader the organization will recognize, honor, and reward, their "calling" elsewhere will be accelerated.

There is a strong overlap between values in communication and overall ministry philosophy. Campus Crusade's ministry philosophy with an emphasis on initiative evangelism presents significant cultural challenges to many ethnic staff. Paul Tokunaga writes,

"Bring up evangelism with Asian Americans and it's often a pretty short discussion. Asian Americans generally are not strong in reaching unchurched nonbelievers. We don't like evangelism because it feels too confrontational, something we avoid at all costs. We don't like to put people on the spot. Ambiguity is more comfortable."

Another Asian-American staff woman interviewed said that, "In the Asian culture harmony and not making waves is a high value. In initiative evangelism I often struggle with feeling like I'm causing waves when I have to share my faith with strangers, and I'm overstepping my boundaries with them."

Storti writes the goal of most direct or western communication is "getting or giving information" while the goal of indirect communication is "preserving and strengthening the relationship with the other per-
son." With this glaring difference in how communication is viewed and experienced, it should not be a surprise that a ministry philosophy that very heavily errs to the side of information exchange would be difficult and hard for ethnic minority staff that have different deeply ingrained values of communication.

These tensions have significant implications for the average ethnic staff person who communicates indirectly. First, they may experience over time that there are not many "safe" environments for them because of how they experience confrontational or directness of communication. They also may feel devalued. Indirect communicators in a direct communicating dominant culture may feel like they are not listened to or respected because others are missing out on their contributions which is being offered in a different way than the typical staff person. Furthermore, in response to direct communication some ethnic staff, especially Asian-American staff may shrink back and defer rather than respond in kind. Over time the experience of not feeling heard or respected as well as the weariness of having to try to respond in kind to direct modes of communicating can lead one to evaluating their call to this specific ministry.

It is documented that the majority of staff leave because of a “call” to another ministry or another kind of work. However, there are no distinctions given for what factors have influenced these decisions of "calling." We don’t explore in depth the “real” reasons that often are at the root of such a “calling.” For ethnic staff that have left, the constant struggle of having different communication styles and values therein are likely to be significant factors in a sense of calling to a different type of ministry or work that most likely will allow for them a greater sense of harmony between their personal values and communication patterns and those of their work environments.

People, no matter their culture, want to serve in a place where they feel wanted, understood, and recognized. It is hard when one may feel invisible culturally while seeing others get validated in these ways. The conclusion is that those people “fit” and maybe I do not. These three desires among others seem to be part of the DNA of many “callings” off staff. And that type of experience is often a product of both cross-cultural tensions as well as the natural power disparities that come when one culture overwhelmingly informs the organizational culture at large.

**Concept of Self**

Another glaring issue that ethnic staff may experience heavily are the value tensions that relate one's self-understanding. CRU is very much a ministry in which western values govern the dominant culture. Storti identifies a continuum between what he calls individualist and collectivist values. He writes that for the individualist, "The smallest unit of survival is the individual. People identify primarily with the self, and the needs of the individual are satisfied before those of the group." He continues by arguing that for the collectivist, "The primary group, usually the immediate family, is the smallest unit of survival. One's identity is in large part a function of one's membership and role in a group." Though they may differ from one another in their concept of the self, Asian-Americans, Latino-Americans, and African-Americans all are much farther towards the collectivist end of the continuum than the dominant Caucasian culture. The tension stated then is that ethnic staff members that define themselves by their family or community relationships must serve and function within a dominant culture, which places a priority on the individual.

One area in which this dynamic really weighs on the ethnic staff member relates to parental and family perceptions about the staff members decision to join staff. When an ethnic staff person joins staff it is typical for the family to struggle in different ways with the decision. It can be perceived as disloyal, irresponsible, or even disrespectful for the staff person to make such a choice out of an individual call. One younger Asian-American male staff member expressed to me, "My general sense is that the lack
of parental approval/support has played a major part in the number of Asians that have left staff in years past." Another staff member expressed the Asian-American desire well when she said, "My desire is to bless my parents and I want them to be proud of me." All staff probably desire their parents to be proud of them, but the cultural values within each culture differ as to what determines whether one has made their parents proud. The rules are often different for ethnic staff in terms of how their cultural context shapes to what degree they are viewed with respect and honor by their families. Joining a ministry like Cru and engaging in the financial support process of the ministry already goes against some of these cultural rules, making it difficult from the outset for the ethnic staff member.

Not only do families of ethnic staff tend to struggle with their vocational decision, but the ethnic minority staff person tends to struggle as well. Most ethnic staff that I interviewed for this project expressed that they felt a value conflict in being on staff related to family. More than one current Asian-American staff members said that one of the main reasons why they might leave staff would be to "take better care of their families". Within Asian culture especially there is a value of success and status with an aim to take care of the family and one's parents. Ethnic staff, in choosing a vocation that does not make a lot of money, often feel pressure and even guilt about not being able to fulfill this value in the way that they would like.

Many Caucasian staff also experience parental disapproval or desires to greater provide for their family as well. However, to generalize the Caucasian and ethnic experience into the same kind of problem for staff is to minimize the different cultural values at work. While the Caucasian will no doubt struggle as well and have to wrestle with some degree of alienation, there will likely be a deeper struggle for the ethnic staff person because these situations affect their understanding of their very identity as well as their cultural roles. Many ethnic staff, in choosing to join staff, have chosen to overcome these deep cultural tensions only to find themselves having to work and function in a very individualistic culture in which roles and identity are defined very differently.

These value differences often are evident in different expectations towards team. For example, Caucasian staff often are quite comfortable functioning independently and may be focused on the tasks at hand as well as one's own personal responsibilities. On the other hand, ethnic minority staff who tend to define themselves more by their primary group may expect a certain level of community and connectedness between members of the team. Expectations for the ethnic staff person may go beyond the actual work to emphasize the relationships involved and harmony. American Caucasians typically have different expectations that prioritize the goals and objectives over harmonious working environments and relationships. For ethnic minority staff who are more likely to draw meaning from their environment and relationships therein as opposed to a sense of production and bottom-line pragmatism, participating in what merely feels like a working group can create disappointment, a lack of job satisfaction, and perhaps a growing desire to pursue a different opportunity that can more likely provide the kind of meaning that they are looking for.

As the years have passed since first exploring this topic in 2005, one reality has become more apparent. Ethnic minority staff, many of whom experience a level of rejection from their families which as noted goes to some very deep places in terms of identity, also experience rejection for who they are from the organization at large. I don’t believe the organization intentionally rejects anyone, but the continual experience of being different and lacking a voice and lacking the same type of power to influence organizationally as Caucasians have creates a really difficult existential reality. On one hand, many

“Ethnic minority staff, many of whom experience a level of rejection from their families, also experience rejection for who they are from the organization at large.”
ethnic minority staff have joined staff at great personal cost to them in light of the fabric of their culture and identity. On the other hand they often also feel like they are not being honored in the organization, often feeling invisible or powerless. So amidst all the other challenges that come with the staff lifestyle and calling, where are they experiencing support and having their dignity as ethnic minority ministers affirmed? This is usually an unacknowledged tension and difficulty that affects ethnic minority staff retention.

**Orientation Towards Money**

Finances are a consistent lightning rod for ethnic staff on staff with Cru. The financial ramifications of being on staff are significant. First, for an ethnic staff member joining staff is foregoing (at least temporarily) the opportunity to make the kind of money that can help them fulfill their expected role in their family in the way that is expected. There is a sacrifice for the ethnic staff member and for the ethnic staff member's family when one chooses to join the staff of Cru.

Second, one of the major pre-requisite's for serving with Cru is raising one's own financial support which covers salary, benefits, and ministry expenses. Ethnic minority staff members not only have to overcome expectations for how their choice of vocation will reflect on their family and how they will provide for the family, but they also must overcome the cultural stigma's that may be present towards the missionary support raising process. An Asian-American male staff member expressed to me, "Support raising is seen as begging, as compared to a job in which we simply get paid for the work that is done. There is definitely the value of being self-reliant, making it on your own and improving on your situation and status."

Staff with Cru entails a lifestyle of financial dependence on others, something that goes against the grain for some ethnic groups, especially Asian-Americans. The value of self-reliance is a difficult one to reconcile with the missionary lifestyle which is perhaps why so few Asian-American join staff with Cru in the first place.

**Authority**

Another key source of frustration for ethnic staff may stem from having a different approach to authority and leadership than the majority of culture. Storti describes this value difference with a continuum of power distance. Low power distance is more typical of Cru as a whole where decisions may be more democratic, it's okay to say no to one's boss, relationships are informal, and having a position doesn't entail many privileges. High power distance is more typical of many ethnic cultures, especially Latin and Asian cultures. High power distance is more authoritarian, where status and position have greater privileges, and subordinates wait for delegation as opposed to taking initiative. This can lead to uneasiness in environments where leaders are encouraging initiative, speaking freely, and collaborative decision making.

Furthermore, many ethnic staff members that are accustomed to deferring to leadership for advancement or promotion may grow frustrated by Cru which places a premium on initiative and directness. Ethnic staff may have different needs according to their values to be empowered compared to the average Caucasian staff person who may demonstrate a lot of initiative, independence, and boldness. Power distance value differences can be another reason why conflict resolution with leadership and group mediations are very difficult for ethnic staff. Not only is it challenging their communication values, but also their ingrained values about how authority is wielded and should be treated.

For some cultures that place a high value on community and are collectivist in nature, some staff may have expectations on the leader to be an advocate and play a greater role in their lives. This may a difficult dynamic if a Caucasian leader has a strong orientation towards di-
viding work and relationships like some Caucasian staff have a tendency to do. Authority in any situation is a lightning rod for cultural expectations and can be a significant source of despair or disillusionment on one hand, or hope, comfort, and rest on the other.

Attitudes Towards Work

While there are many more possible value conflicts that contribute to ethnic minority staff with Cru leaving for other opportunities, the final issue I will explore here relates to differences in how people or cultures view work. North American business culture tends to be more "mechanistic," while many ethnic cultures tend to be more holistic. Cru reflects this North American attitude in its culture of extreme pragmatism. There is great zeal for the mission and to reach lost people with the gospel, which is a great quality. However, pragmatism plus evangelistic zeal yields methodology and approaches that sometimes lack a learning posture and consideration of the holistic side of men, women, cultures, communities, and ministry.

I remember hearing from a very high ranking leader in the ministry during my new staff training when I joined the staff of Campus Crusade/Cru to resist the temptation to use other methods and follow the training that had been developed because "it works." The not so subtle message being that what has worked all along should work now. While in recent history there has been much wider reinforcement in many places that learning, innovation, and risk in addition to faith, the Holy Spirit, and relationships are key in advancing the mission, the attitude still is frequently experienced that what we do for everyone should work for ethnic minorities too as long as we just "tweak" a few things. Such a perspective minimizes the role of culture in how people experience work and training.

Pragmatism is a big part of the unspoken culture of Cru that is hard to really unpack. On one hand, it is driven by values of productivity and efficiency which are positive values and constructive to the mission. However, pragmatism can lead to a culture where there isn't the space that people need to rest, be, and learn with one another on the way to the mission. For ethnically diverse staff teams, it could be very dangerous to try to keep up with the dominant culture and try to produce quick and numerous results without leaving room for members to learn from one another, understand different value systems, and work together to do ministry in a culturally sensitive and relevant way.

Without having space to talk and learn and understand difference, these different values will spill out as everyone feverishly works towards the mission without a spirit of learning towards the underlying values present. Just as pragmatism can be an enemy of an individual's or team's spiritual base, it also serves as an enemy to the development of integration of cross-culture perspective into all that a person or team does. Multi-ethnic development in an organization requires more space and more dialogue than our pragmatic organization is usually willing to recognize.

Pragmatism in the ministry will also go against some ethnic values. One Asian-American staff member has said that, "One of the hardest things for me in Campus Crusade is that we're often too goal oriented and number driven. It often creates the feeling that the tasks are more important than us as the people." Some ethnicities will place high values on relationships and community which to highly pragmatic people or teams are viewed as luxuries to be experienced or things that they should not have to be responsible for. It can be very discouraging for ethnic staff members who value relationship and community to sense that these values are secondary to the goal of accomplishing tasks. Further-
more, if they sense that efforts to build into those values are viewed as a waste of time or not that important, they may begin evaluating whether this is the place for them. This often runs deeper than just personal or cultural preference given the role of community in many ethnic minority staff members sense of identity and self-understanding.

Moving Toward Solutions

Not one person that I know would argue with another if they said that they were going to leave the ministry for another job or another ministry opportunity because they are "called." It is a spiritual trump card that if taken at face value can hinder a valuable learning process that can take place regarding the underlying reasons why someone was called towards another opportunity. Oftentimes callings that are a "calling to go to a different place" are actually a calling to "leave a specific place." This is not always a bad thing. Some do have a clear call and passion towards another context or vocation. However, I'm convinced that calling as we understand it in vocation often has a strong cultural component to it. We need to be willing to explore and learn from those that are choosing to leave the organization because of some of the issues mentioned above.

If we can grow organizationally in creating more culturally sensitive and honoring environments and ministry efforts, then fewer ethnic staff members may feel "called" to serve somewhere else. Culture presents deep, complex, and challenging problems for people of different value systems working together so there will always be significant learning that needs to be taking place. But I believe that there are several steps that we can take as a ministry and organization to further our cultural effectiveness, draw more ethnic minority leaders to serve with us on staff, and retain ethnic minority staff longer in the ministry.

Culturally Sensitive and Relative Fund-Raising

One staff member mentioned in a phone interview that one of the areas in the ministry that presented one of the greatest value tensions for him is the training offered for staff in developing their financial support. After the above discussion of the many value conflicts and difficulties that ethnic staff face in having to raise their own support, it is clear that there are a broader range of issues that staff must be prepared for and trained in than the average Caucasian staff member. However, ethnic staff often receive the same training that Caucasian staff do with the implied message being, "This is how to do this." The training is heavily slanted towards a direct communicating audience. The philosophy of support raising is essentially, "Walk by faith, trust God, cast vision, and ask boldly and God will provide." This philosophy challenges indirect communication values especially, but does not really help equip ethnic staff whose relationships are primarily in cultures and communities that have an inherent negative view towards support raising.

One of the steps that Cru could take would be to adapt much of their fund-development training to ethnic minority staff in light of the specific cultural challenges they may face. Many ethnic minority staff would really benefit from the kind of specific help, training, and tools that could help them bridge to the lay people within their own culture as well as ethnic churches. These staff often face challenges of raising support from churches and people that do not have a grid or understanding of the process and can be met with skepticism or even outright opposition.

Ethnic minority staff have often been on their own to navigate these cultural challenges. One thing that could help significantly would be national and regional leadership developing trust and partnerships with well-known community and church leaders within these ethnic groups. Something that surprised me when I began to serve staff in Epic and work closely with others in the other ethnic minority
strategies was how negative the perception was toward our organization from different parts of ethnic minority Christian communities. I think many staff in Cru would be surprised to learn the extent of these realities which show that there has been a reputation over time as being primarily just a “white” organization. I’ve heard stories of elder boards and pastors counseling potential Epic or Destino staff to “be careful” or ask “why are you serving with Cru when these other ministries understand the ethnic minority story and reality?” What this shows is that there has been a large gap of trust between our organization and many ethnic minority Christian communities and that there needs to be work done to rebuild or earn that trust.

Lay church members may be more open to financially supporting a missionary if the respected figures in their church or community are endorsing the overall ministry of Cru and the specific staff member. Instead of the perception of the staff member pursuing an individual course of action outside the norm, the perception of the staff member may be totally different and their ministry and financial needs may be more accepted. The investment in relationships and partnerships with well-known ethnic churches and figures could go a long way to develop the kind of credibility and trust that ethnic staff and the ministry of Cru needs for them to raise their support.

There is in place an ethnic-minority assistance fund that is in place that allows ethnic staff members help if there are significant challenges as a result of trying to raise support in ethnic communities that may not embrace the ministry and support raising lifestyle or in low-income communities that make it hard for one to develop the kind of ministry partners that can allow him or her to report to their ministry assignment. This is a helpful resource and needs to continue, but ethnic staff could benefit greatly from ministry leaders paving the way for them within their communities and churches.

As ethnic minority ministries like Epic, Destino, Nations, and Impact develop and mature within Cru, this has been an area where much progress has been made since 2005. In Epic, in large part due to the tenacious leadership of ethnic minority staff themselves, we developed an overall framework and approach to support raising that has sought to provide the necessary support to match the degree of challenge our staff face. A large part of this commitment has been to develop an approach to coaching that helps staff engage the discipleship and heart issues that support raising in these contexts surface – many of which involve culturally based challenges or difficulties. There’s also been increased effort to develop strategies to help networking strategies within Asian American communities and churches. As these ministries continue to grow and learn and get freedom and support from the organization to do the work of contextualization, there will be more learning in this area take place. But the support we offer organizationally must match the degree of challenge that ethnic minority staff face in their contexts.

One area that the organization has really led in recently on behalf of these issues and ethnic minority staff retention is the expansion of our employment statuses. Not too long ago a staff member had to be all in or all out - bringing these financial and cultural tensions to a non-negotiable head. Now with flexibility in employment with various part-time staff options, ethnic minority staff have more options than ever before to navigate their calling to our ministry in light of their other realities. This has been very helpful thus far for both ethnic minority staff and
others. We need to keep exploring ways our systems can support the realities.

**Intentional Leadership Development of Ethnic Minority Staff and Student Leaders**

Several ethnic minority staff have expressed the difficulty of being anointed as the cross-cultural ministry "experts" very early on. It can be a challenging thing to be called upon as the authority for all things "ethnic minority" just because one may be an ethnic minority. This has often resulted in ethnic minority staff being pushed into leadership quickly with the expectations that they will be able to figure it out because they are members of the culture. This is difficult because the avenues for leadership development specifically for ethnic minority staff in cross-cultural ministry are lagging behind the leadership opportunities that they are being asked to assume. One ethnic staff member expressed how this tension plays out saying, "A good thing for Cru is that at times we have taken the risk of putting Ethnic folks in leadership before their time, but the miss is that there has not been the kind of real intentional leadership development needed to make it work." To put it another way, the support and development structures have not been in place to sustain the majority of new ethnic leaders who are shouldering such a great burden and responsibility organizationally.

That previous paragraph was written in 2005. This is where the development of some of the ethnic minority strategies since have provided some of the biggest lift. The above dynamics still are part of our organizational reality, but many more ethnic minority leaders who are needing support, coaching, and development designed for who they are culturally and their context are finding that as the strategies are empowered to serve their people. But these successes sometimes require incredible resilience and investment to design venues to truly equip, train, and support these staff for the actual jobs we are asking them to do in their actual contexts. But the result has been that many more ethnic minority staff are experiencing development and training now that honors their ethnic identity and cultural realities in greater and more authentic ways. That is opening the door for more leadership opportunities as the challenges of leading are being balanced by appropriate and contextualized support structures.

But some of these successes that have been achieved through some of the ethnic minority strategies should not be cause for us to delegate all thinking about ethnic minority leadership development to just these places in our organization. Such a mentality won’t result in leaders throughout the organization learning to think about how to support and come alongside these staff. And not all ethnic minority leaders serve with ethnic minority strategies directly nor do the staff within the strategies only relate to those strategies. The organization needs to think through ethnic leadership and ethnic development in a way that balances training and experience with risk and opportunities. Culturally, ethnic staff can often feel alone in the greater Cru culture because of the many value differences discussed above, and being left with great responsibility without support and development only heightens that sense of aloneness and lowers morale. Ethnic staff have not lasted on staff unless they have a support network within the ministry and have a sense that they are being invested in as a leader and person.

One younger Asian-American staff said that one of the reasons he chose to come on staff was his commitment to the mission and the presence of a value of development. He believes the presence of this value and ideal is positive, though in his experience the development he believes he needs to be ef-
effective in ministry is falling far short of that value. Given the burden that many ethnic staff feel from being different and having to bear a greater weight of the responsibility to bring about cross-cultural change, the highest priority and commitment should be given to their development as people and leaders. They need to be equipped to be able to navigate the increased pressures and stresses that come with being a cultural and ethnic minority in the organization.

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Cross-Cultural Ministry Training through all Ministry Training Venues

Storti describes the level of cross-cultural awareness needed to bridge cultural differences as "the cross-cultural perspective," which he says is "the ability to interpret the behaviors of other people not from your own point of view, but from theirs." Milton Bennett describes this position as "Ethnorelative." Individuals are all in process in their ability to connect across cultural barriers, but organizations and ministries also are in a process in terms of how culturally sensitive their environments are. The organization needs to pursue every opportunity to help the dominant culture grow towards that cross-cultural perspective. Within the ministry there is much conversation about reaching every ethnic group yet there is still a ways to go for individual staff and staff teams before they are doing ministry with that cross-cultural perspective.

To use Bennett's terminology, organizationally I would describe the Campus Ministry as moving from the Minimization stage to the Acceptance stage of cross-cultural development. By this I mean that there still is a tendency in some circles to want to minimize the depth of the value differences at play, yet many are starting to recognize those value differences without negatively evaluating them. To its credit, the organization has aligned most to the need to reach every student and ethnic groups, but the cross-cultural capacity of individuals and teams still is lagging behind where it needs to be for effective cross-cultural ministry. And that cross-cultural capacity also affects our overall organizational culture.

As a ministry, it is in our best interest to take advantage of every opportunity available not just to motivate people in the mission and point people towards the need, but to educate and equip staff with the theology, philosophy, and methodology to effectively learn how to do that kind of ministry. This needs to happen in each and every venue so that people can internalize new perspectives and philosophies and so that cross-cultural ministry is not pigeon-holed into its own category as just one type of ministry. Staff and students need to learn how to be cultural learners as one of the vital building blocks of all ministry, not something that is relegated to people that are specifically doing intentional cross-cultural ministry to different ethnic groups. Over the last several years, it’s not uncommon for me and others working in ethnic minority contexts to hear comments reflecting the belief that since there are ethnic specific strategies focusing on “these demographics” that they don’t need to think about it or be intentional about it because “it’s the strategies’ job.” There are many places still that do not reflect an ownership of the total ethnic scope and abdicate to ethnic minority strategies even though there may be plenty of opportunities to pioneer.

There are specific venues in the ministry that lend themselves more than others to do this kind of cross-cultural training. Bernard Adeney writes, "Upon first arrival in a foreign culture, people are especially open to seeing the world in a new way." Every summer we send hundreds of staff and students nationally on short-term international missions. These venues can be very strategic to educate staff and students alike in cross-cultural ministry philosophy and learning, as long as cross-cultural training avoids a paternalistic nature. This kind of training and education, if done well, can lead to greater effectiveness and humility in short-term international
ministry as well as in cross-cultural ministry to ethnic minority groups on campuses in the United States. In addition to current venues, additional venues like one-day workshops or seminars that aim to educate and equip staff and students could be very effective in moving the process forward.

Bennett argues that intercultural sensitivity can only really be experienced and learned through significant exposure and immersion into another culture. So while education and training is part of the solution, a more radical solution may be needed. Bennett estimates that it takes two years of immersion into a different culture to develop that cross-cultural perspective. Right now, we have an intermediate-term international missions program called STINT. Staff and students who have gone on STINT for two years are likely more culturally equipped to do ministry across cultural barriers so it may serve the overall ministry as a whole to send more staff on STINT early on in their staff careers so that over time there is a greater overall capacity for cross-cultural learning. Or maybe we explore more intentional immersion programs stateside where staff members are learning ministry and getting trained in the context of a specific ethnic minority community and culture. That seems to be the more likely fruitful solution for our mission on today’s college campus because it would provide exposure to ethnic minority identity and power dynamics - realities that are not usually observed or learned overseas.

Adeney writes, "How do we learn to live 'well' (or virtuously) in another culture? The simple answer is that we learn through experience. We cannot really know the good until we do it." As we explore cross-cultural training for the organizational at large, this raises questions as to “whose turf” should this training take place? There are legitimate concerns about the capacity of ethnic minority leaders to accommodate and support the cross-cultural training of a large number of majority culture staff. But currently the prevailing desire in most corners of the organization is to do much of the organization’s leadership development and training on the majority culture’s turf – meaning environments where the environment, programs, and content are primarily serving majority culture staff. This is not mean to exclude, but there is the pragmatic common sense solution to customize training according to most of who we have in the room. That makes sense until we factor in the dynamics of again taking already marginalized staff and consistently having them equipped in light of someone else’s reality and in ways that do not resonate as deeply with them, and that sometimes actually alienate instead. It’s always a good question to ask when navigating multi-ethnic community, “What group are we asking to sacrifice for the other?” Historically we have asked, indirectly or implicitly, that ethnic minorities sacrifice for the sake of the majority culture.

It would be both strategic and a significant expression of humility and servanthood to begin exploring how staff throughout the organization could experience ministry and cross-cultural training in ethnic minority contexts and from ethnic minority staff and leaders. This goes beyond just training in “cross-cultural” matters, but would include learning about all matters of leadership from different ethnic voices and perspectives. Ethnic minority staff are gifted and experienced in many aspects of ministry - not just cross-cultural issues. And the reality is that such a commitment would lead us away from desires for simple and universally embraced tools and approaches, which are sometimes preferred by the organization. To the contrary it would nurture context driven creativity and innovation, which is part of what is needed for ethnic minority strategies to feel free and empowered to serve and develop their people in their context.

"Organizational culture will never shift to the degree it needs to in order to support ethnic minority staff as leaders in the organization until it begins to sacrifice some of the majority culture home field advantage in training and development venues."

Organizational culture never will never shift to the degree it needs to in order to support ethnic minority staff as leaders in the organization until it begins to sacrifice some of the majority culture home
field advantage in their training and development venues. In response to Adeney’s question about living well in another culture – we may not be immersed enough to be experts in a particular culture, but we can choose to immerse ourselves for periods of time to grow our capacity to be servants and to be hospitable hosts in our organizations so that ethnic minority staff feel welcomed and valued for who they are and their unique contributions. There is a lot of room for organizational self-reflection here as many assumptions and paradigms of thought that exist seem to reinforce traditional and majority culture preferences.

**Evaluation of Feedback and Evaluation Processes in Light of Cultural Differences**

In light of the great value conflicts that can occur in the area of feedback and evaluation because of communication and authority value differences, there needs to be an examination and evaluation of our current methods of evaluation and feedback in light of other cultural values. Feedback for leaders is encouraged and as teams are encouraged to be learning teams that are growing in "grace and truth" together, one of the inevitable results will be leaders receiving a fair amount of direct feedback from their teams in front of everyone. This challenges different values in both the realms of communication and authority. Ethnic leaders may feel shamed with the extent of the direct feedback from those they lead or fellow peers, while ethnic staff on a team may struggle to give voice to their concerns and experience when it is needed for the health and effectiveness of the ministry. These are tensions that are difficult to resolve, but it would be worth learning different models of feedback and evaluation that can remain true to the Biblical ideals, yet allow for people to experience the giving and receiving of truth in a more culturally familiar way.

**Exit Interviews**

My final recommendation involves the process that is undertaken when ethnic staff leave ministry positions or leave the staff of Cru. I believe there needs to be a more elaborate and thorough process for ethnic staff as they go through transition on staff and off staff. The first reason for this is that it affords a safe opportunity to be heard and have a voice without having to speak too frankly to specific people or leadership. Second, there is a learning that the organization needs to do from the ethnic staff’s experience.

To increase the effectiveness of an organization's cultural learning, I propose even adding components to the typical exit interview that specifically target the ethnic staff's cultural experience in their ministry assignment and on staff. It might even pay off to have a completely separate interview that targets one's cultural experience on staff. Through exit interviews and processes we can learn from ethnic staff that are in transitional moments as well as learn from our failures at large. But many who choose to leave will leave quite politely and may be reluctant to really represent their decisions with candor, so intentionality in how best to really solicit honest feedback needs careful and thorough thought.

> “When people can’t shake the feeling over time that there really just isn’t room for who they are people like them, they will leave.”

**Conclusion**

In many ways the issue of why ethnic staff may leave the staff of Cru is a complex and difficult question and simplistic solutions will not suffice. In other ways, it’s actually a really simple dynamic. And at the end of the day, if people have the belief reinforced over time and through dozens of interactions and experiences that really the cost of their involvement is just too high, they will leave. In an informal exit interview with an ethnic minority female staff member I was told,

> “For a long time I believed I was the problem, because in many situations I was told in different ways that I was the problem and I was the one that was responsible for why I felt unwelcome. I don’t believe that anymore. I finally realized the problem really lies outside
of me in the organization and I can choose to move towards a hopeful alternative.”

When people can’t shake the feeling over time that there really just isn’t room for who they are and people like them, they will leave. If one doesn’t feel wanted, understood, or heard over time, it will be experienced on the level of a personal rejection of their very identity and they will leave.

In organizational ministry, we spend tons of hours and tons of money trying to get more laborers and more leaders to join the organization. A large part of this is trying to recruit ethnic minority laborers and leaders. But much less time is invested in assessing whether we’re retaining the right people and if our culture is helping those new leaders succeed. It sometimes seems like we like to just keep moving ahead with the “more leaders” and “more teams” objectives and we don’t fully and reflectively enter into the question of what is needed for the organization to retain its ethnic minority leaders. This isn’t a unique struggle to just my organization, but it’s a challenge across the board.

So what are we to think when ethnic minority staff members say that they feel “called” to go elsewhere? My response? Of course they are. If you’re leaving a vocational missionary organization what else are you going to say? But my observation, even as one who has conducted exit interviews, has been that sometimes we don’t work that hard to track the real organizational weaknesses or even failures that might contribute to losing real leaders. We often settle for spiritual answers and clichés when there may be more tangible reasons under the surface. Staff members are indeed called at times to go somewhere else and it is not about the organization at all. However, the ethnic minority experience frequently has meant that many of these staff are experiencing those three realities in the survey as a normal and ongoing part of their staff experience in the organization at large. As an outsider, serving in one of these contexts, this has been one of the most difficult and heartbreaking realities to really understand and take in.

Every staff member needs to develop the cross-cultural perspective so that they have the capacity and skill to interpret behavior from different cultural points of view. As people begin to experience and embrace other values outside of their traditional value system, strategies and methodologies can be more effectively employed to reach people that are different that us. Ethnic minority students and staff are not the only ones responsible to reach ethnic mi-
nority students for Christ. All staff should bear the weight of this calling. That means a commitment to understanding what true empowerment looks like, what power structures and dynamics are preventing leadership reproduction in these contexts, and in recognizing and rewarding those people most needed to move towards the envisioned future.

Jesus modeled cross-cultural learning in becoming flesh and identifying himself completely with humanity (John 1) and through his strength and leading believers can be agents of change in another culture because of the divine capacity to love that the Holy Spirit can yield in a believer's life. So much of the ministry witnessed in the Scriptures and by Jesus was cross-cultural so it is not a stretch to argue that every staff member must embrace the calling to be a cross-cultural learner and minister of the gospel. They go hand in hand.

An encouraging note was that almost all the ethnic staff I interviewed expressed a passion and commitment to the vision and mission of Cru. The vision is one that ethnic minority staff can get behind and are often very passionate about, yet there are many cultural barriers that make the journey toward that vision a long and weary one. And many have lose heart, seeking to find other places to serve. By taking these issues seriously and embracing healthy change, Cru can help create more ethnically safe environments where more effective cross-cultural ministry is taking place in a way that both includes and values the cultural values and identities of ethnic staff and students.

“The vision and mission of Cru is one that ethnic minority staff can get behind and are often very passionate about, yet there are many cultural barriers that make the journey toward that vision a long and weary one.”

Recommended Reading

Rethinking Culture & Mission
http://resources.epicmovement.com/rethinking-culture-and-mission/

Five Majority Culture Postures Towards Ethnic Minority Ministry
http://resources.epicmovement.com/five-majority-culture-postures-towards-ethnic-minority-ministry/

Six Ethnic Minority Postures Towards Majority Culture
http://resources.epicmovement.com/sixpostures/

Sources

Stone, Dr. Wilbur. TL100 Lecture Notes. 2005.
Virtue, Brian. "Ethnic Staff Questionnaire." (Sent to several current and former ethnic staff of Campus Crusade for Christ and compiled by Brian Virtue). November, 2005.

Photos used courtesy of Mary Perocho.

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