Enhancing Faith Proclamation in African Indigenous Christian Missions through Michael Hetch's Communication Theory of Identity

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Abstract

Identity is a critical factor in the process of communication. The multicultural nature of many African societies such as Nigeria, makes faith proclamation in indigenous missions more challenging. Certain identity gaps exist that need to be addressed through effective communication. Kwame Bediako is right on point as he notes that every culture has a role to play in the formulation of Christian theology and identity for its context which, if discovered by the gospel preacher can lead to effective communication of the gospel message. To bridge the gap of identity in gospel communication, while employing a descriptive research design; we believe Michael Hecht's theory is applicable and relevant. Michael Hecht's communication theory of identity (MH-CTI) conceptualizes human beings as inherently social, and whose "lives revolve around communication, relationships, and communities and who operate from multiple and shifting identities". The theory broadens the consideration of culture in communication from the perspective of nationality, race, and ethnicity, to that of identity with multiple intertwining frames. Thus, it asserts that the achievement of satisfying communication is not only a function of an individual's identity as a single unified entity; it comprises of the performance of all identity layers. Therefore, to achieve satisfying intercultural communication outcomes, the theory proposes that the communicator must strive to overcome the challenges occasioned by distortions resulting from different kinds of identity gaps. Identifying and bridging these inevitable gaps is capable of promoting effective communication in gospel proclamation in indigenous Christian missions such as CAPRO missions with origin in Nigeria and mission presence in several other parts of Africa..

Keywords: Christian missions, Identity, Communication, Theory of Identity, Indigenous Missions, Africa.

Introduction

Communication is critical in every aspect of human endeavours. Hesselgrave (2000, 215) refers to it as the missionary problem par excellence. The early Christians recognised this reality in their missionary pursuit. Apologists like Justin, Tertullian and Clement attempted to communicate the gospel message in the Greek historical and philosophical categories of their immediate audience. It is also the reason for the translation of the scriptures into Slavic languages (Ott, Strauss & Tennent, 274). The Christian Bible has been translated into different languages to convey the intended meaning of the text to the culture of the people. This effort was key to the spread of the gospel across various cultures including the emergence of the Greek Septuagint (LXX) for the Diaspora Jews, and the teaching of the scriptures in Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, and Latin, as well as Old English, German, French and Italian languages for the first four hundred years (Shaw 2000a, 123-124). Thus, communication is a critical factor in Christian missions, especially in such a context as Africa, with high cultural diversity.

However, since communication is a complex phenomenon involving the identities of the individuals involved in the process, and since these are affected by different factors, conveying a message, such as the gospel, especially across cultures, has remained a herculean task. The writers investigate how faith proclamation may be enhanced in indigenous African missions through Michael Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity. Using the descriptive design, they argue that intercultural communication is an undeniable reality of African society and an understanding of Hecht's theory may be used to enhance faith proclamation in its indigenous missions. They use various tools of intercultural studies to explicate that the nature of faith proclamation requires an understanding of Hecht's conceptualisation of communication to be effective in an African context.

Dynamics of Faith Proclamation

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines proclamation as "the act of saying something in a public, official, or definite way". The speaker conveys the position of the organisation or individual they represent before a target public or audience who makes meaning out of the message. Phelps (2009, 11) asserts that Christian preaching is the method by which divine truth is communicated to people through human vessels to achieve the goal of a total transformation of lives and society.Stott (2000) agrees that, as a religion of the Word, it as an indispensable part of Christianity without which its essence is lost. According to him, it has an unbroken tradition of over twenty centuries in the history of the Church and it is both essential and challenging in contemporary society.

The concept of proclamation is represented by different New Testament expressions in the Bible. Amongst these, three are so fundamental. The first is the Greek word khru,ssw (*kerusso*), meaning "proclaiming, announcing, preaching" (Haygood 2003, 980-981). Associated with khru,ssw is the expression didach, (*didache*), meaning 'teaching.' Arguably, these are two different concepts but the New Testament reality reveals that the latter, which serves for theological expansion, is often embedded in the former that focuses evangelistic purpose (Phelps, 22). The second, euvaggelizo,mai, is usually rendered "gospel" and means proclaiming the good news, carrying the same meaning as the verb form of kh,rugma, rendering it the acts of preaching the gospel (Mathis 2003, 670-671). The third is marture,w (*martures*), meaning 'to bear witness' (Thayer 2000).

Considering various expressions used in the New Testament in addition to the three above, Hesselgrave (1991, 25-26) proposes that a succinct summary of the task of those involved in gospel or faith proclamation is communication. The other expressions include sugce,w(*sugcheo*) and sumbiba,zw(*sumbibazo*) in Acts 9:22, meaning 'confound' and 'prove' respectively; dihge,omai(*diegeomai*) in Acts 9:27, meaning 'describe;' suzhte,w(*suzeteo*) and lale,w(*laleo*) in Acts 9:29, meaning 'argue' and 'talk' respectively; diale,gomai(*dialegomai*) and pei,qw(*peitho*) in Acts 18:4, meaning 'reason with' and 'persuade' respectively; nouqete,w(*noutheteo*) in Acts 20:31, meaning 'admonish or warn;' kathce,w (*katecheo*) in Acts 21:21, 24, meaning 'inform or instruct;' de,omai (*deomai*) in 2 Corinthians 5:20, meaning 'beg or beseech;' evle,gcw (*elegcho*) and evpitima,w (*epitimao*) in 2 Timothy 4: 2, meaning 'reprove' and rebuke respectively; and parakale,w (*parakaleo*) in 1 Peter 2:11, meaning 'exhort or urges' (Ibid). Thus, proclamation is the communication of the gospel message to a target audience, in this case within the context of indigenous missions in Africa.

Communication has been defined in different ways. According to Lustic and Koester (2010), it is "a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meanings" (13). For Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy (2013), it is a "dynamic process in which people attempt to share their thoughts with other people through the use of symbols in particular settings" (29). Okunlola (2014) agrees that it is

the process of relating an idea or ideas, observations or information (message) verbally (or otherwise) by a sender to a receiver through proper channels in such a way that a desired response (verbal or otherwise) is elicited from the receiver, who in turn relates a feedback (message or action) to the initial sender, such that both parties continue to send and receive signals and messages until the communication purpose is achieved or the process is terminated (61).

This unified understanding has different implications. First, as a process, communication progresses from one stage to another. Second, it has a final stage which may be termination of the process or achievement of the intended purpose. Third, it involves an exchange of idea in the form of signals which could be verbal or non-verbal. The fourth implication is that communication changes with time and context and the communicator is expected to be aware of the appropriate symbol to use in conveying his thought and idea to his listener. Fifth, the process involves not only the communicator and their message but also the encoding process, the channel, the receiver, the decoding, the feedback and the noise that may be associated with the process (Samovar *et al* 2013, 30).

In sum, these definitions emphasise communication as a continuous exchange of ideas, sensitivity to context, and the concept of shared meaning are emphasised. They associate communication with culture since meanings may be assigned to symbols based on a specific pattern in the context of interaction and according to a shared pattern. Therefore, faith proclamation is a complex reality in indigenous missions in Africa because of its cultural diversity leading to different patterns of shared meanings.

Notably, Okunlola posits that the complexity of the communication process is not limited to the involvement of intentional and non-intentional actions, verbal and non-verbal expressions, its transactional nature, as opposed to being actional or interactional, is a critical factor (Ibid, 59, 80-81). The non-intentionality in communication is means an individual may send a message without knowing that they are doing so because people of other culture may assign meanings to symbols that look arbitrary in another context. In agreement Lustic and Koester (2010, 16) assert that the parties work together to create and sustain symbolic meanings as they both engage in sending and receiving messages simultaneously. Thus, there is neither an exclusive sender nor an exclusive receiver of a message. Rather, there is a shared creation of messages and meanings, which involves seeking understanding and developing agreements and negotiation of shared meanings.

Another aspect of communication complexity is based on the reality that the message could be verbal or non-verbal, including tone of voice, gestures, frequency and proxemics. According to Kraft (1999 77-81), understanding people of other groups involves learning their pattern of assigning meaning to words, gestures and other symbols. He posits that people's interpretation is always subjective, depending on their perception of the situation. The resulting complexity is due to this reality and people of different communities assign different meanings to the same symbol or sets of symbol even when they speak the same language. The implication is that communication is not just a function of the expression or symbols used; it also involves the persons, the relationship between the parties involved and the context of such interaction. It also underscores the concept of shared meaning which is based on the identities of the communicating parties.

Falola (2003) asserts that people's identity is affected by their culture, playing a critical role in their relationships. According to him,

in Africa and elsewhere, culture shapes the perception of self and the interaction between people and their environment. . . . It defines boundaries among people, as in the case of gender roles or relation between the poor and the rich. As a means of communication, it enables understanding, and when a foreign language is imposed, it serves to consolidate domination. It is the basis of identity (50-51).

An important reality in Falola's idea is that culture, communication and identity are linked. Such a connection becomes clearly visible during an intercultural interaction. His use of the expression 'foreign language' is not limited to non-African language. Instead, it could be any language, verbal or non-verbal, with which an individual is not familiar, even if they live in the same geographical location as their communication partner.

Therefore, effective communication requires the need to identify and overcome the challenges occasioned by distortions resulting from conflicting identities. Michael Hecht's communication theory of identity focuses on the relationship between communication and identity, which has been established as inseparable in cross-cultural interaction. Relationship between these two variables may exist either between individuals or among people in the social sphere (Jung and Hecht 2004, 265-266). Thus,

communication, culture and identity are critical dynamics of faith proclamation. These are necessary for faith proclamation in indigenous Christian missions in Africa since there are different cultures.

Dynamics of African Indigenous Missions

Middleton (2021), amongst other scholars, asserts that Africa is considered to be the second-largest continent after Asia, occupying about one-fifth of the total land surface of the earth. According to him, the region was first called so by the Romans based on the following three possibilities: first, with the Latin word *aprica*, meaning 'sunny;' second, with the Greek word *aphrike*, meaning 'without cold.' Both have been derived from the geographical location of most of the continent in the tropical region bounded by the tropic of Cancer in the North and the tropic of Capricorn in the South. The third possibility is a reference to it as the Land of the Afrigs, a Berber community south of Carthage (Ibid).

An important implication of the African nomenclature is that it has emerged as a form of identity ascription by a group to another. This ascription raises three important issues. The first has to do with whether the tagged group avowed the name or its implications. This is a challenge of the identity gap. The second is whether the group referred to are entirely so. For instance, both Middleton and MacDonald (2019) affirm, not only that the area referred to did not cover entire modern Africa; the features used may not have covered all to whom they have been applied. This is a challenge of stereotype. From the second challenge emerges a third, and relates to the attitude attached to the characteristics associated with the group. This is a problem of prejudice. All of these have direct implications on faith proclamation in indigenous missions in a continent with a diversity of cultures.

Affirming Africa as a home of cultures, Falola (3) emphasizes the use of 'cultures,' against 'culture,' positing that the latter may be misleading, portraying a notion of homogenous worldview. He asserts that there are more than eight hundred recognisable cultures and languages, representing a diversity of values, dialects, philosophies and worldviews. He states that modern Africa may be categorised into the Maghreb, which includes Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Egypt, and the sub-Sahara, which comprises the rest of Africa. The Maghreb is more culturally connected with the Middle East than the rest of Africa due to the influence of Arab and Islamic cultures. Thus, activities in Africa are inevitably intercultural, with identity factor affecting faith proclamation.

Christian missions in modern Africa started with the efforts of various Western missions. Its indigenous form is a direct corollary of what started as the three-self formula, conceptualised by It later grew to seven-self formula bothering on the following: first, self-image for which it is the Church of Christ in the culture. The second, self-functioning allows the church to operate its life and mission without the support of the sending mission. In the third feature, self-determining, the emerging church decides apart from the founding agency. Support is the fourth self-identity of an indigenous church, and it focuses on how it finances its operations. The fifth identity is propagation, its response to the Great Commission through evangelism and missions. In self-giving, which is the sixth feature, the church ministers to the needs of the society where it is planted. Finally, an indigenous church is self-theologizing, the metaphors and concepts of its local culture in Christian doctrines (Terry 2000, 483-485). While all these are interrelated in the life and mission of any church, the focus of this work is on self-propagation. Assuredly, this has become a reality in Africa.

Thus, indigenous missions in Africa emerge from the formation of the African Indigenous Churches which may be discussed in three categories. First, some African churches seceded from the Western mission bodies and became independent, due to leadership challenges (Ayegboyin 2011, 166; Barrett 2000, 43). The second category includes the locally founded African churches aimed at contextualising the gospel to the pertinent context of its people. They emphasize prayer as a means of solving all existential problem of man, which the mission churches did not do (Ayegboyin 166). The third category constitutes the contemporary independent Pentecostal churches that result from various Pentecostal movements (Ibid 165). They shifted "from being dependants to becoming more self-reliant contributors and givers" (Baba 2006, 3). Ezemadu (2006, vi) identifies the importance of mobilisation, training, sending, funding and partnership as critical factors in indigenous initiatives in extending God's Kingdom on earth.

The emergence of indigenous churches did not naturally translate to the formation of indigenous missions in Africa. There were a series of God's visitations in revival and Pentecostal movement before they could consolidate (Ndukwe 2019, 4-5). Famonure (2006, 1348) affirms that, though there were African evangelists from the indigenous Church, they did not organise into indigenous missionary agencies until the late 1940s and early 1950s. According to him, the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) established the African Missionary Society, now known as the Evangelical Missionary Society, in 1948. He also adds that others, including student movements, have emerged as indigenous missionary force in Africa. These include FOCUS in East Africa, NIFES and GHAFES in West Africa, Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) and Christian Missionary Foundation (CMF) in Nigeria, the Christian Outreach Fellowship in Ghana, and Sheepfold Ministries in Kenya.

With the cultural diversity of Africa, the indigenous missionary groups have had to contend with the challenges associated with cross-cultural ministry. Consequently, they have had to face the challenges of intercultural communication as undeniable realities in African indigenous missions. To succeed in their missionary endeavours to reach different cultures of Africa, they engaged in specific dynamics. Seven of such dynamics will be discussed as observed and practised in Calvary Ministries (CAPRO), a Nigeria-based indigenous agency with fields in Africa and the rest of the world.

The first dynamic relates to <u>training in cross-cultural ministry</u> which, amongst other things, started as an orientation programme for those who were to serve with CAPRO. Apart from the English-speaking and Hausa-speaking schools of missions established in Nigeria and the French-speaking counterpart in Cote d'Ivoire, both as sending countries, CAPRO has also established training outfits in other countries like Togo and Kenya (Ndukwe, 227-244). It has often introduced trainees to rudiments of missiological studies in addition to general biblical studies, believers' nurture and leadership in context.

The second dynamic of indigenous missions in Africa, from an insider view, is the policy on the acquisition of language and culture. CAPRO expects every missionary to learn the culture and language of the people to which they minister within a specified period during which they are not expected to engage in any substantial ministry effort other than relationship building. Besides, the use of an interpreter in preaching is disallowed as it is believed to be less effective (Calvary Ministry 2001, 38-40, 46). This comes as a sequel to the training programme mentioned above.

A third dynamic for the indigenous missions in Africa from CAPRO's perspective is a tradition of team orientation. CAPRO would not normally send a single missionary to a new field where there are no other missionaries. It is either a married couple or two single individuals who are sent (Calvary Ministry 33-34). Apart from helping the individuals to serve to complement the other, the female also has the confidence of operating as full-fledged missionaries, who have the same training as the men and, therefore, can fulfil their ministerial obligations. This is so critical in Africa where women may not be accessible to male missionaries.

Church planting and growth strategyis the fourth dynamic in African indigenous missions. First, CAPRO recognises church planting as a means of making disciples, holding that the "New Testament church planting is a cyclical process by which an entity that does not have the gospel is entered and systematically engaged until a locally-led body of believers which grows in grace and numbers, is established. Such a body, in turn, produces manpower to continue the spread of the gospel" (Calvary Ministry 31). This is observable in their church planting practices by which churches are multiplied through the efforts of the indigenous believers of the target people group, rather than the missionary. This has also led to the establishment of the Hausa School of Missions for equipping non-literate workers from Northern Nigeria.

The fifth dynamic of indigenous missions in Africa, as practised by CAPRO, is the use of the dry season discipleship programme. While disciple-making is expected to be carried out in churches, this specialised training is patterned after what is common in Northern Nigeria where CAPRO missions started. Since the majority of the people in Northern Nigeria are an agrarian community, and predominantly Muslims, the dry season between January and the end of March of every year is always work-free. Consequently, many have used it to camp some Muslim faithful, particularly children and teenagers, to learn more about Islam. This has been adapted for believers also to learn about their faith.

The research outfit is the sixth dynamic that CAPRO demonstrates as an indigenous missionary agency in Africa. Apart from leveraging on reports of others, such as Patrick Johnstones'Operation World, CAPRO has an established department that is saddled with the responsibility of surveying new people groups to furnish missionaries with adequate information needed for entry and ministry among the people groups. This dynamic helps to prepare and strategise adequately.

The seventh dynamic of indigenous African missions exemplified in CAPRO is the establishment of an outfit for co-mission activities which is called Mercy ministries. Its functions, amongst other things, include the following: community health programme by which selected missionaries and indigenous believers are trained to manage community health care delivery such as, personal hygiene, dietary education, and family health. Most of these health officers are often registered with or recognised by the local authorities. They also have a well-digging unit; a farm unit for veterinary needs and acquisition of chemical fertilizers; a co-operative and loan system facilitated by the ministry's partnership with organisations like the Tearfund; the establishment of primary schools among the people they are reaching. The King's School, Gana Ropp, Plateau State, caters for the missionaries' children and initially absorbed children of indigenous believers from the field. Other schools surfaced as needs arose in each field, according to the ethnic affiliation - the Hausa (Katsina State), the Gbagyi (Kaduna State), the Kamuku (Niger State), the Dukkawa (Niger State), and the Mumuye (Taraba State).

The aforementioned dynamics have resulted in a high level of success in establishing indigenous churches amongst peoples of different cultures. Howbeit, better results may be achieved if Hecht's theory is applied and people's identity is factored into the process of intercultural communication.

Michael Hecht's Communication Theory of Identity

Communication theory of identity (CTI) was developed by Michael L. Hecht and his colleagues in the 1980s as a phenomenon that conceptualises humans as "social beings whose lives revolve around communication, relationships and communities and who operate from multiple and shifting identities" (Hecht 2009, 139-140). The central idea is that both an individual self-image and others' view of them affect the social relationship as they co-create their identities during the process of interaction (Jung and Hecht 2004, 265-266). It implies that, apart from what individuals avow as their self-image, what others ascribe to them also affect their interaction as they adjust by negotiating such identity back or forth. This is why it fits ell into the transactional model of communication.

While most theories address communication from one viewpoint, Hecht and his colleagues considered developing communication theories built on multiple theories to explain different aspects of peoples' behaviour in relationships (Hecht 2002, 78). This holistic consideration of identity as a communicative process that must be understood through a transactional model makes the theory unique. Thus, it allows for the negotiation of meanings in the exchange of messages between communicators from the initial to final stages of their interaction. The theory takes culture in communication beyond the boundaries of nationality, race, and ethnicity, to that of identity in which an individual has four intertwining layers of identity, namely; the personal, communicative, relational, and communal frames (Hecht 2009, 141).

The personal frame constitutes an individual's self-awareness and self-image. It is about how they differ from others. The enacted identity, also called communication identity, focuses on how individuals express themselves and how they sincerely want to be seen by others. It is directly linked to the third, which is the relational identity frame, determined by the relationship an individual has with others. The relationship of the parties dictates their expression. The fourth frame of identity is communal. It is the characteristic of a group and to which an individual belongs, transcending their individual qualities (Hecht 2009, 266-267). Hecht's theory recognises identity, and the resulting communication process, as not only a function of an individual's identity as a single unified entity. Instead, it comprises the performance of all identity layers which makes communication more complex in an intercultural context.

According to Hecht's theory, a major issue of concern is the interpenetration of these frames as the communication process progresses. The outcome is possible identity gaps when individuals' ascribed

identity frames differ from what they avow at any stage in communication. The result is a complicated unique identity of an individual (Shin and Hecht 2017, 4; Hecht 2002, 80). This interconnectedness is the real communication issue, especially when it is intercultural. Consequently, achieving communication satisfaction is often a difficult task because understanding an individual identity requires an examination of the four layers and how the individual tends to shift from one layer or frame to the other in the process of communication (Hecht and Choi 2011, 140). The theory locates and integrates individual, communication, relationship and society together (Jung and Hecht 2004, 266). The implication is that faith proclamation may not be treated separately from the experience of the individuals concerned, their relationships, their ascription of meanings to expressions and the groups to which they belong. Faith is not proclaimed in a vacuum; it is done in the context of people's culture and experience.

According to Jung and Hecht (2004), "identity gaps are defined as discrepancies between or among the four frames of identity. Theoretically, the number of possible identity gaps is 11 (six gaps between any two of the four frames, four gaps among any three of them, and one gap among all four frames). Identity gaps are almost inevitable result of communication and social relations" (268). The practical implication is that the simplest identity gaps are found at the level of two frames, like personal-enacted and personal-relational. Examples of the intermediate gaps are personal-enacted-relational and personal-enacted-communal. The peak is the level of interaction at which all four frames conflict. The far apart the worldview, values, differences and languages of the communicators, the more the possibility and the width of the gap. Also, interactions could fluctuate from one level of discrepancy to another, depending on their negotiation at different communication stage.

For instance, if an individual who avows their personal frame of identity shift to their relational frame with their partner who remains at the level of ascribing them with the personal identity they avow at the previous stage in their communication, personal-relational identity gap ensues. Other possible identity gaps include personal-enacted, personal-communal, communal-relational, communal-enacted, and relational-enacted. One may present an identity gap by their unintended use of non-verbal communication means, including the use of space, gesture and other symbols, which may bring contradictions between their verbal and non-verbal expressions. Thus, identity gaps may form a major challenge in achieving effectively communicating the gospel message in such a multicultural continent as Africa. Hecht's conceptualisation posits that communication satisfaction is a function of all the frames of identity in their shifting nature.

Communication satisfaction is a key outcome of communication appropriateness and effectiveness. They consider the appropriateness of communication as a function of applicable rules within the context while effectiveness is considered to aim the goal of the conversation (Jung and Hecht 2004, 270-271). Thus, achieving the desired goal of holistic transformation in faith proclamation is more than understanding the nationality, race, and ethnicity of the communication partner. The four layers of identity must be taken seriously. Unfortunately, it is practically impossible to have a single identity frames in operation in a conversation: at least two or even three are often engaged in conversation. The four may also be engaged together. The smaller the gap the more communication satisfaction experienced. This is what is often pursued in any intercultural missions such as the African indigenous missions, to achieve the desired goal of holistic transformations.

Enhancing Faith Proclamation through Hecht's Theory

A holistic transformation in cross-cultural missions may be categorised into five major interlinking phases namely; contact, pre-sowing, sowing, church nurturing, and leadership development stages (Love 2012, 369-376). It has been stated that most interactions in Africa are naturally intercultural. Thus, enhancing faith proclamation in its indigenous missions requires a critical focus on communication, culture and identity important dynamics. Consequently, faith proclamation is often confronted with the challenge of identity gaps which distort the process of gospel proclamation leading to undesired outcomes. These outcomes may surface at any of the five phases. This section considers two important ways by which an understanding of Hecht's theory may be used to enhance gospel proclamation in the cross-cultural context

of African indigenous missions. The first is by reducing the gaps that lead to message distortion, while the second leverages cognitive theories of learning to engage the reality of the gaps for holistic transformation.

1. Ameliorating the Negative Identity Gaps in Communication

Proper identity recognition in the process of communication will minimise the challenges resulting from stereotype, identity gaps and prejudice. These challenges range from cognitive knowledge to attitudes and actions. It is then that the verbal and non-verbal message may achieve the desired goals of holistic transformation without violating the communication rules. An understanding of the shifting and intertwining natures of the identity frames will help the cross-cultural minister to understand that changes are more than locational and cultural factors; they are more a contextual factor wherein several micro-contexts may differ from one stage of communication to another. Consequently, it would guide the minister through a proper deconstruction of their attitudes and behaviour during interaction.

Deconstruction will guide them against the cycle of stereotype, prejudice, otherisation, essentialism, and culturism (Holliday, Hyde and Kullman 2004, 22-24). Stereotype has to do with the characterisation of a group based on some features which may not necessarily be false but also either incorrect at some points or with some individuals. Such ideology could lead to prejudice, a personal judgment based on interest rather than evidence. Consequently, an individual may be otherized, reducing them less than what they are. Otherization could lead to cultural essentialism which is imagining a culture as a phenomenon within which and by which people live. The danger of essentialism is its bent toward culturism, a reduction of a member of a group to the pre-defined characteristics of a cultural label (Ibid). All these results in a widening range of different identity gaps.

Therefore, for the dynamics of indigenous missions to achieve the desired goals of communication satisfaction, deconstruction may be required to minimise the inevitable identity gaps. Consequently, to enhance faith proclamation through these dynamics, an understanding of the multiple layers, shifting and intertwining natures of the identity must be engaged. For instance, in the dynamics of research and training, more works will be done as the focus will not be limited to a common generalisation about the language and culture of the people. While these are so central to any context, they form only part of the context. Thus, researching into people will be broader and deeper, incorporating possible changes in the light of identity and communication.

In the expression of their co-mission efforts, an understanding of Hecht's theory will enhance communication satisfaction through the administration of projects. The idea here is that projects such as schools, hospitals, water, business, amongst others, will not be duplicated from one community to the other without thoroughly investigating such projects against the backgrounds of the people's identity. This also points to the need for diversity in strategy and methods of ministry from one location to another. With Hecht's theory, it is clear that the same strategy or method that worked with a particular people group may fail even among the same people group located close to the other. Such understanding is necessary for the contact, pre-sowing, sowing, church nurturing, and leadership development strategies. Therefore, these identity layers and changes must be put into consideration to achieve maximum satisfaction.

2. Engaging the Positive Identity Gaps for Holistic Transformation

It is not enough for the cross-cultural minister to reduce identity gaps that distort their messages; they must also be able to engage certain identity gaps for holistic transformation. The writers opine that doing this is similar to what cognitive theories of learning propose for change in individual leaner. In such a situation, faith proclamation in indigenous missions is both communication and teaching-learning processes. Both the cross-cultural minister and the target audience are communication partners in a process where the former stands as the teacher and the latter as the learner.

Cognitive theories are relevant to missions because they emphasise a change of worldview as a pre-requisite for transformation. They focus on concepts, ideas, perceptions and orientations as critical elements for deliberate changes to be effected by their thinking system. It is at the perception level that they arrive at a new value system that is lasting (Taylor 2008, 5). Horowitz (1986, 144) affirms that it is at that point that they discover new insights and understanding about their relationships with God and the world

around them. These are identity factors. These theories posit a change in cognition to achieve application that leads to the desired outcomes since messages are deliberately processed (Mangal 2013, 201). Where this aligns with identity is that their previous assumptions often give them a sense of avowed identity which would conflict with the ascribed identity to which they are newly introduced. Resolution of such conflicts could be managed to result in the desired transformation. Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory illustrates this.

Mezirow (1997) considers transformative learning as a process by which changes are effected in a frame of reference of the learner who is considered to have acquired "a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world" (5). Everyone has formative learning, emerging from their exposure to the influence of others through different means of education while that of adulthood result from their discovery of life realities and perspectives (Mezirow 1991, 17, 18). The new realities include the understanding of the message of the gospel which may involve an ascription of an identity different from what the individual avowed.

Mezirow's theory presents three stages of a transformation process. In stage one; there is a cognitive change due to a disorientating dilemma (Mezirow 1991, 28). The disorientating dilemma connotes conflict between the individual's basic assumptions, based on their formative experience within the context of their cultures, and the new insights from the proclaimed message of the gospel. This corresponds to the identity negotiation in Hecht's conceptualisation of the communication process as a transactional model. Once the discovery of identity in Christ is accepted, there is a revision of the belief system (Ibid). This is the second stage and the new identity in Christ replaces the previous identity such as being a worshipper of an idol. This replacement leads to the third stage where new behaviours are mobilised by the individual based on their new paradigm (Mezirow 1991, 28). This means that the individual thinking will no longer thrive on their formative ideologies which may be contrary to the biblical ideologies by which believers should operate. It is upon such realities that changes are effected.

In sum, the cross-cultural minister may engage the cognition of the target audience who have accepted a measure of their message and move them to the next level, leading to a level of the desired transformation. The first two stages of the transformative process are rooted directly in the cognitive domain of the recipient of the biblical truth and they negotiate their old assumptions with the new biblical truths they discover. For instance, when an individual that grows up where head-hunting is a virtue comes to know the Lord, they have a new identity in addition to their tribal identity. When confronted with biblical truth that upholds the dignity of human life, they are faced with the identity dilemma: tribal individual versus Christ's individual. Once they accept their identity with Christ, the next thing they see is the gap between their present behaviour and whom they claim to be. The cross-cultural minister has to leverage this identity gap and mobilise change in the lives of the people. This is critical in Africa where an individual would want to belong to a group.

It must be emphasised that such a transformation is not limited to spiritual and moral changes. It could also include attitudes to changes in their community. Such could lead to the physical development of the community. One of the writers is aware of a mission to some addicts who, after declaring their faith in Christ were made to consider what the Kingdom of God looks like as described in the Bible. The teaching-learning process created a gap between the dirty environment they were identified with and the holy environment of the new Kingdom they are now identifying with. Consequently, the gap between their old and new identities mobilised them for environmental sanitation within their community.

Conclusion

Through a descriptive research design approach, the study examined Michael Hetch's communication theory of identity. In particular, the study focused on how Hetch's theory can be used to enhance faith proclamation in African Indigenous Missions. We clearly noted in the study that most interactions in Africa are naturally intercultural, thus, enhancing faith proclamation African Indigenous Missions requires a critical focus on communication, culture and identity. More often than not, faith proclamation is confronted by the challenge of identity gaps which distort the process of gospel proclamation. We noted in

the study two important ways by which the understanding of Hetch's theory may be used to emhance gospel proclamation in the croosultural context of African indigenous missions; namely in the reduction of gaps that create message distortions and the second is on leveraging cognitive throries of larning to engage the reality of communication gaps in order to foster holistic transformation.

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