

What Are the Missionaries?

Instructions for the Coordinator
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This activity requires a set of pictures depicting missionaries or culture workers engaged in a variety of activities. The pictures should show missionaries or culture workers interacting with national people in diverse situations. The pictures should have been taken by someone in your organization; or otherwise in the public domain.

Purpose

To examine the process of perceiving, and to expose predispositions, biases, and anxieties related to the roles of missionaries or culture workers for the purposes of self-understanding in relation to judgments.

Materials

Prepare multiple sets of pictures, about 8-10 in each set. The emphasis in the pictures should be on the *variety of roles* played by the people depicted, not on the occupational differences among various kinds of assignments. For example, one picture might depict someone in the *role* of a mentor or advice giver rather than in a medical *occupation*. If the person depicted is in a medical occupation, the picture should clearly show the role that person is playing.

Each participant is to be given one copy of the Response Form (see below) for each picture and will complete a separate form for each picture.

Procedure

Ideally, your group is seated in a large circle or around tables. Writing surfaces should be available. You, the coordinator, are to lead a discussion after the pictures have been circulated and the Response Forms completed. The order in which the pictures are circulated is unimportant. Distribute the pictures without allowing more than one or two to accumulate at any one person. With a larger number of participants, two may examine one picture but they must complete the writing task independently. If necessary, pass pictures around participants who are taking longer at the writing task. They can catch up later if time allows.

Time

The activity is to take one hour minimum. Allow about 20-30 minutes to complete the forms. If the discussion seems to warrant it, extend the time 30 minutes.

Suggestion

You may read this page to the participants, or tell them in your own words what they are to expect and what objectives are to be achieved.

Response Form

Complete the sections on this form, one for each picture.

1. Your general feeling about this scene:

Warm _____ Pleasant _____ Uncertain _____ Uneasy _____ Cold _____

Other _____

2. What does the missionary or culture worker seem to be doing? What role behavior is evident in the relationships?

3. Briefly describe the reason(s) behind your feelings about the scene:

4. Could you see yourself engaging in a similar or related activity?

Yes, because . . .

No, because . . .

5. What possible piece of information (that the picture doesn't reveal) would make your interpretation of this picture warmer or more pleasant?

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Discussion Guide—Suggestions to Stimulate Interaction

Sharing Impressions

Ask: What picture impressed you the most? Give us its number so that we can find it easily. What did you see in it? What did some else see in it? Why the differences? Can you be sure you are right about the situation it shows? Are you being objective? Should you be? Can you be?

Repeat the questions as seems to be productive.

Self-Examination

Ask: What, if anything, did you learn anything about yourself in this exercise? Are you pleased with how easy (or hard) it is for you to make judgments? Are the data (evidences) in the pictures adequate for passing judgment? Here is a *sample* of a conversation in relation to a picture. “Who is the missionary in this picture? As a matter of fact, the person you identified as the missionary—the man who looks like the “boss”—is a tourist. The missionary is the worker with his feet closest to the lower right corner of the picture. Why did you assume the other was the missionary?” In this example, the facilitator would continue to probe the nature of the judgments made about the people in the picture and their relationships.

Clarifying Ambiguity

Ask: Which was the most ambiguous photograph? What would you want to know before interpreting it? Which of your first impressions would be a good basis for testing out other responses? Tell us about one picture that you could feel better about if you were able to establish one certain piece of information.

Personalization

Place the pictures on a table or tape them to a wall so that everyone can see them. The display will serve only as a reminder.

Say: Use your Forms as representative of the pictures. Work individually and silently. Make two stacks. In one stack place the Response Forms that deal with types of missionary role activities that you would be *comfortable* doing. In another stack, place the Response Forms that depict role activities you would be *uncomfortable* doing. Emphasize the criterion of being comfortable to help in making the decision.

Ask: Invite a member of the group to talk about a picture depicting a role they would be comfortable doing. After some conversation, invite someone to select one picture that shows a role he or she would feel uncomfortable doing. Ask them to describe feelings and to discuss reasons for the discomfort. Suggestion: Don’t let others attack this sort of openness. If necessary establish a rule where participants can only ask questions of one another. They cannot accuse, criticize or even give advice.

Conclusion

Ask each person around the circle, in turn, to tell which picture they think best shows the sort of missionary or culture worker they want to be and why.