

US Lifestyles and Ministerial Preparation

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In December of 1992 I had the special privilege and challenge of addressing the annual Evangelists' Gathering on the assigned question, "Are Evangelists Obsolete for the Twenty-First Century?" I argued there that some things will not change in the next century.

God will continue to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). The need of redemption will continue. Christians will face temptation to sin particularly to pleasure or to make power, property, prestige the standard of "success" rather than Jesus' measure that the greatest are those who serve most. SO, revival – Christianizing the church – will never be obsolete. And the message of Christian holiness is needed more than ever. Evangelists are not, I concluded, obsolete of the twenty-first century, but "business as usual" without careful consideration of our changing culture will probably not be adequate.

I found Tex Sample's adaptation and extension (in *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches*, 1990) of the values and lifestyle research (Mitchell, *The Nine American Lifestyles*, 1983) very helpful for that assignment. Since then, I have continued to think about our tendency to minimize culture as we prepare for and carry out ministry. This paper gives me the occasion to speculate about some implications of Sample's insights regarding U.S. lifestyles for Nazarene ministerial preparation.

Nazarene ministries are called to communicate the Gospel. When their assignment will be in another culture like Africa, their preparation includes careful study of the culture. WE recognize that language and other aspects of the culture may either assist our ministers in communicating the gospel or prevent needy people from really hearing the good news.

However, when ministerial students prepare for American assignments, cultural understanding seems more likely to be assumed, without special preparation. Perhaps we presume that "good ministers surmount mere cultural issues. Or, it may be that the complexity of our culture tends to be so overwhelming that we minimize it to make it more manageable. Or, perhaps we presume ministers called from any particular sub-culture can readily translate their theological education as they return to that sub-culture from their formal preparation.

Whatever the causes, it seems useful to speculate on some implications of U. S. lifestyles for Nazarene ministerial preparation. Tax Samples has given us a manageable set of cultural categories. It is important to know that within each of his broad categories there are another three more specific categories and that within each of these there are significant differences between such groupings as age cohorts and ethnic groups. Still, the general categories are simple enough to facilitate reflection and also appear to represent the values and lifestyles research fairly.

The following brief summary is not a substitute for a careful reading of Sample's insights concerning these cultural sub-groups. The attempt here is to suggest general characteristics of the groups as a foundation for thinking about ministerial preparation and culture. Furthermore, this consideration of some implication of these lifestyle for ministerial preparation are only suggestive, and not exhaustive. I hope they suggest some of the issues which might be important to our improvement of ministerial preparation.

The Cultural Left

About 33 million of the 180 million American adults are in the Cultural Left. Most baby boomers are not in the cultural left and the cultural left includes some who are not baby boomers, but the majority of this group are boomers (Sample, 1990: 25).

This is probably the group on the other side of the "culture war". These people hold a self-fulfillment ethic. For them, life is intrinsically valuable and emotionally expressive (Yankelovich, *New Rules: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down*, 1981).

Group Characteristics

People in the cultural left tend to be inner directed in contrast to the outer direction of older generations of Americans. They are generally not motivated by traditional 'ought' and 'should'. They are not likely to accept any norm of conformity to jobs from which they are alienated, to spouses they do not love, to arbitrary community standards, or to churches which are not compelling in their belief and action. They have not committed themselves to the obligation of community, business, family, country, or faith.

People in this group are often children of affluent families. They tend to be well educated and to have incomes higher than the national average. They have a deep and abiding commitment to personal freedom. They give, and expect, tolerance. "Doing one's own thing" is important to them.

Sub-Groups

Drawing on Arnold Mitchell's work (1983) Sample (1990: 26– 28) identifies three sub-groups on the cultural left. The "I-AM-Mes" are the youngest group, with almost all of them are younger than twenty-five and an average age of twenty-one. They have "an abundance of energy, the daring of youth, and insistent appetite for the new." Their lifestyles is not entirely consistent as they are confirming yet wildly innovative, self-effacing yet narcissistic, contrite yet aggressive, and demure yet exhibitionistic. This is temporary, transitional stage. There appear to be around six million adults in this group.

Sample calls the second sub-group on the cultural left the "Experiential." These people are committed to immediate, vivid experience. They yearn for deep personal involvement and hands-on engagement with life. They tend to be in their late twenties, independent, and self-reliant. They are generally happy, confident, and psychologically healthy (Sample, 1990: 27). This group may have about eleven million people.

The third sub-group is identified as "Societally Conscious." These people are successful, influential, and mature. They average just under forty in age. Almost forty percent have graduate school education. Almost sixty percent are professionals or in technical occupations and have high incomes. They are deeply concerned about social issues. They are attracted by mystical experience, but they tend not to seek it in Western religions, particularly no tin

organized religion (Sample, 1990: 28). However, their spiritual quest might be addressed by some of our ministers and churches. There are probably about fifteen million American adults in this group.

The Cultural Right

About 77 million of the 180 million American adults are in the Cultural Right. This group is concerned with making a living, life-making, rather than a career. They are territorially rooted, locals (Sample, 1990: 58-62).

Group Characteristics

People in the cultural right are committed to traditional values in the areas of family, community, faith, and country. They tend to have low educational levels. There are significant differences in income within this group which includes lower middle class, working class, and very poor people (Sample, 1990: 58 -59).

Sub-Groups

The largest sub-groups in the cultural right are what Sample calls the "Respectable" and Mitchell calls "Belongers". There are about sixty million adults in this group (Mitchell, in Sample, 1990: 60). They are lower middle class, blue collar, and upper lower class. Respectability is the way these people demonstrate the success of their families and their lives. They are very family oriented. These people tend to hold a self-denial ethic. Their median income is below the national average, although a few are wealthy. Half of this group has less than a high school education. People in this group are more likely to participate in church than are people in the other sub-groups of the cultural right (Sample, 1990: 60-62).

Sample calls the second group on the cultural right "Hard Living". People in this group are tough, may be heavy drinking, have considerable marital instability, are oriented to the present, and prize independence and self-reliance (Sample, 1990: 60). Mitchell calls them "Sustainers" and says they are "angry, distrustful, rebellious, anxious people who often feel left out of things" (Mitchell, in Sample, 1990: 60). Their median income is about half the national average. Their jobs are unsatisfying and often unskilled or semiskilled. They tend to have large families (Sample, 1990: 60-61). There may be about 11 million adults in this group.

The third group on the cultural right are the "Desperate Poor". Mitchell calls this group the "Survivors." Sample estimates that there are about six million adults in this group. They are the poorest of the poor. Some are the children of desperate poor parents with little opportunity to escape the conditions of their birth. Others have slipped from economic conditions through misfortune, lack of effort, or old age. They tend to be elderly, often ill, and poorly educated, traditional, conservative, conventional (Sample, 1990: 61).

The Cultural Middle

Perhaps seventy million adults are in the Cultural Middle. People in this group emphasize career in contrast to the self-fulfillment emphasis of the cultural left and the traditional local norms and values of the cultural right (Sample, 1990: 101–103).

Group Characteristics

Cultural middle people are the most successful, or most driven by striving for success, of any group. They desire high social status and seek it through their careers. They tend to be future orientated, delaying gratification to achieve career goals. Women in this group are inclined to set aside their own aspiration in favor of their husbands' careers. People in this group are the most satisfied with their work, standard of living, and future. However, problems with their careers create considerable stress. Individualism is very important in this group. They emphasize the value of education (Sample, 1990: 101–103).

Dub-Groups

Sample calls the largest sub-group "Successful," while Mitchell calls them "Achievers." They are diverse, gifted, hard-working, and happy. They have the highest household income and assets of any lifestyle group. They tend to be self-employed and live in the suburbs. Their average age is in the early forties, but with considerable diversity in age. They tend to be materialistic. Sample estimates that there are about thirty-seven million adults in this group (1990: 103).

The second sub-group on the cultural middle Sample calls "Strivers." Mitchell labels this group "Emulators." People in this group are intense in their efforts to make it to the top. They are deeply affected by the lifestyle and values of the "Successful." However, they tend to be in managerial and administrative jobs rather than the professional and technical occupations of the "Successful." "Strivers" are more likely than other groups to have attended technical schools. They tend to be competitive, ambitious, and orientated to conspicuous consumption (Sample, 1990: 104). There may be about thirteen million American adults in this group.

The third cultural middle group is the "Conflicted." This group is committed to both career and family without sufficient resources for both. They are middle middle-class in the stratification system. Their families dream of more and make do with less. Their lives are characterized by stress as they deal with too many claims and too few resources (Sample, 1990: 102–105). There may be about twenty-one million adults in this group.

Ministry

Program for the cultural *left* should be intrinsically valuable – worthwhile in and of itself. Obligation and loyalty do not motivate this group. Worship and program should be emotionally expressive. It should facilitate should include compassionate ministry and community. Ministry commitments for these very busy people should have a limited duration (Sample, 1990: 33–35).

Program for the cultural *right* should emphasize denomination traditions and programs. It should give opportunity for Bible study. Preaching and Christian education should provide opportunity for people to see moral issues in terms of the lived reality of their own lives. Ministry opportunities should provide occasion for compassion and should include social gatherings (Sample, 1990: 143– 144).

Effective ministry in the cultural *middle* group should include traditional decision-making. It should be high quality in preaching, teaching, community life, and service opportunities. It should address the stress, life crises family pressures, and success striving characteristic of this group.

Some Implications for Ministerial Preparation

Over the last several years there appears to have been a growing consensus that we can, and perhaps must, do better in Nazarene programs of ministerial preparation in the United States. Rising costs of formal education, a declining rate of membership growth, relatively stable levels of participation in worship, and declining numbers of active, anglo congregations signal a need for careful reconsideration. If present trends continue, we will need fewer and fewer ministers and we will have declining church base of financial and personnel support for whatever ministerial corps is needed.

And, while the church struggles, the American culture needs ministry as much as, or more than, ever. Such diverse voices as William Bennett, Bill Clinton, Norman Lear, and the Wall Street Journal have recently called for a revival of moral values. While their perception of need no doubt differs from each other and from ours, the American culture obviously needs the effective ministry of the church.

There are undoubtedly many areas in which Sample's insights into U. S. lifestyles might inform Nazarene ministerial preparation. For this presentation, I have chosen to speculate about the implications of his three major cultural sub-groups for our recognized educational options and for continuing education. Educational Options

The *Manual* of the Church of the Nazarene recognizes four options by which a minister may complete the course of study required for ordination: directed studies, Nazarene Bible colleges, liberal arts college, and college plus Nazarene Theological Seminary. No comprehensive denominational strategy appears to have been published regarding these four options.

It might be presumed that individual ministers might select from among these preparation options on the basis of their values, abilities, and interests. Congregations may also prefer graduates of these different options according to congregational values, experience, and abilities.

The denomination is understandably reluctant to interfere either with future ministers' choices among educational options or with congregations' preferences. A comprehensive strategy might be inadvisable or unnecessary. Certainly ministers must not be, or feel, coerced into a method of preparation which does not correspond to their understanding of God's will for their

ministry. And, Nazarene institutions of higher education have unique, important missions, traditions, and needs which must not be put in jeopardy.

Still, some ministers will, and in obedience to God should, spend all of their careers pastoring churches in the cultural right where educational levels and incomes are low. If extensive education takes them away from that culture and leaves them with unmanageable debt, it may hinder or destroy their ministry, even though we intended to enable them and enrich their ministry. If that happens, the churches they serve will not thrive and ultimately the denomination and its educational institutions will also suffer.

My educational experience was similar to that which Sample describes (1990: 47- 48). I left western Nebraska and the "Respectables" on the cultural right and traveled to Bethany Nazarene College to prepare for ministry. The further I progressed in my education, the more I moved into the sub-culture of "Conflicted" in the cultural middle. Sample remembers his father saying, "Well, son, you just keep on and you're gonna get so far out in front of us we're gonna mistake you for the enemy and shoot ya!" My father undoubtedly had similar concerns. My education made it less likely that I could serve the cultural right from which I came.

In the city University of New York survey of 113, 000 American households, conducted in 1989-90, the people who identified themselves as Nazarenes tended to have educational levels suggesting that many, perhaps a majority, of our congregations are located on the cultural right. The following table compares Nazarenes appear to be slight less likely than the larger society to have completed college, however, the statistical margin of error for a sample of 385 is larger than the difference observed.

Table 1		
Formal Education		
	Adult Americans	Adult Nazarenes
Less than College	58.7%	65.2%
Some College	21.1	17.1
College Graduate or More	19.7	16.4

Totals do not equal 100% since some respondents did not answer the question

Similarly, the CUNY study suggests that Nazarene may also tend to be less affluent than Americans in general. This would also be consistent with the hypothesis that many of our members and congregations are located in the cultural right.

Table 2		
Before Taxes Total Annual Household Income From All Sources		
Family Income	Adult Americans	Adult Nazarenes
Less than \$20,000	32.6%	37.1%
\$20,000 but less than \$40,000	31.2	37.4
\$40,000 and over	22.2	14.6

Totals do not equal 100% since some respondents did not answer the question

It seems likely that many, perhaps most, of our ministries also come from, and will serve throughout their careers in, congregations on the cultural right. Our challenge is to adequately equip them for ministry without alienating them from their culture.

A recent ANSweR POLL survey suggests considerable difference between the educational levels of our pastors and our laity.

Table 3				
Fall 1991 ANSweR Pastors and Lay Members Highest Level of Completed Education				
Response	Laity		Clergy	
	N	%	N	%
Less than College	73	42	17	7
Some College	56	32	44	17
College Graduate or More	46	26	197	76
Total	175	100	258	100

Some ministries can and should become, in Sample's terms, "trilingual" and "tripraxis," able to communicate, reflect, and act in ways appropriate to each of the broad lifestyle groups identified here (1990: 147). Others are surely called to be "specialists" within one sub-culture. A comprehensive strategy would have to design means to bring about appropriate proportions of both. However, if the "specialists" are advised to obtain the same ministerial preparation as the "trilingualists," both the pastors and the church they serve may suffer. Therefore, perhaps in addition to offering ministerial preparation options, the denomination might improve the

effectiveness and health of pastors, churches, and thereby the educational institutions and the denomination itself by formulating a comprehensive strategy which was sensitive to the needs and abilities of congregations in the various cultural sub-groups.

Table 4 summarizes use of the educational options.

Table 4						
Proportions of Pastors Using Various Educational Options						
	Minister Survey 1975*		Pastors Survey 1986		Summer ANSR Poll 1993	
Educational Option	N	%	N	%	N	%
Directed Study	452	16.0%	28	11.8%	20	7.4%
Bible College	395	14.0	51	21.4	53	19.5
Liberal Arts	1158	41.0	75	31.5	109	10.1
Grad. School	819	29.0	84	35.3	90	33.1
Total	2824	100	238	100	272	100

*Estimated date of survey, the precise date was not noted. The full range of response will be found attached to this paper. Ministers marked each level of education utilized. While it is not possible now to identify only the highest level marked, it is possible to estimate the highest level by starting with the highest level and working back. About 29% indicated some level beyond college. When these are subtracted from the 70% who indicated college, the result is 41%. Of the remaining 30% a maximum of 14% terminated their preparations with Bible college, leaving 16% who used only the home course of study. If some of the 14% attending Bible college then went on to college, they would already have been included there which should raise the proportion using the directed study approach.

Without a prayerfully, carefully formulated comprehensive strategy regarding our four educational tracks, we may encourage more education than is affordable or appropriate for the needs of the subculture and for the positions we need to fill. The demands of ministry are tremendous, so we naturally desire to equip everyone as completely as possible. But, if in the process we raise aspirations beyond likely achievement, we probably reduce pastor's sense of worth and fulfillment. The spiritual well-being of the pastor and the congregation cannot be improved by making significant ministry seem trivial.

Continuing Education

About 1975 a survey was conducted by the Department of Education and the Ministry regarding ministers' preferences for continuing education. Copies of the instruments and tabulate responses are included at the conclusion of this paper. Most of the respondents were serving as pastors (2, 525 out of 2, 824, or 89%). While much has changed over the last twenty years and it would probably be useful to replicate this study, ministries' response then give us some basis now, perhaps the most comprehensive basis available, for speculating about U. S. lifestyles and continuing ministerial education.

Education in The Field

Nazarene ministries indicated a preference of continuing education which would not interrupt their service. Majorities indicated a preference for "Extension work under competent instructors conduct within reasonable driving distance (e.g. An evening course every Monday for eight or ten weeks.), " and for "One Day Seminars in local areas with guest instructors." The following table presents all of the options suggested in the survey and proportions choosing each.

Table 5		
Continuing Education Preferences		
Extension Work	1525	53.8%
One Day Seminars ²	1464	51.7
One Week Courses ³	864	30.5
Two or Three Day Courses ³	665	23.5
Specific Correspondence Courses ⁴	624	22.0
Systematic Home Study ⁵	553	19.5
Two Weeks ³	354	12.5

1. Within reasonable driving distance and under competent instructors (e.g. An evening course every Monday for eight or ten weeks)
2. In local areas with guest instructors
3. On college or seminary campus
4. Involving submission of assignments, grading and some form of recognition for satisfactory completion
5. Periodic or continuous program under professional guidance

The K-Church Project, Intermediate Size Initiative, and Small Church Institute are denominational responses to this desire. The Master of Ministry program on some educational regions and the Doctor of Ministry program of Nazarene Theological Seminary also respond to

this demand. In addition, several parachurch organizations and super-church pastors of various denominations are addressing this felt need.

Credit/Degrees

The most often chosen preference for credit and/or degrees was "Credit not desired." This appears to be consistent with the attitudes toward educational degrees which might be expected on the cultural right.

<i>Table 6</i>		
<i>Preferences for Credit and/or Degrees</i>		
<i>Credit not desired</i>	<i>1097</i>	<i>38.7%</i>
Associate Degree	71	2.5
Baccalaureate Degree	201	7.1
Masters Degree	675	23.8
Doctors Degree	516	18.2

The doctor of ministry degree was indicated by nearly one in five ministries. The Seminary has responded to this need with a degree program designed for ministers who remain in their ministry assignment while completing the requirements.

However, ministries who have not earned the Master of Divinity degree are not eligible for this program. Perhaps this is the reason that among those indicating a preference to work toward a degree, a masters level degree was most often indicated. Nearly one in four ministers marked this level. This appears to consistent with the fact that for a large proportion of our minister the highest degree earned is at the bachelors level (see table 4).

Perhaps the combination of ministers' preference for continuing education while remaining in the field (see table 5) and the fact that for those ministers not living geographically close to the Seminary the Masters of Divinity would be very difficult to pursue in the field has resulted in the development of Master of Ministry programs at several of our colleges/universities. These programs, like the Doctor of Ministry program, tend to be structured to allow ministries to continue serving while continuing their education.

Subjects

The mid-seventies survey also asked ministers to indicate the areas in which they felt "a special need." The full listing of courses suggested and the tabulation of responses is attached. In addition, a table of responses arranged in order of proportions indicating need has been constructed and attached. Table 7 presents the subject areas indicated by at least forty percent of the respondents.

Cultural Sub-Group Implications

Pastors who serve congregations in the cultural left and middle will probably be expected and assisted by their members to continue their education. Available programs are probably already being utilized by these ministers. However, since few of our colleges/universities have responded to the preference indicated on the mid-seventies survey, for short-term educational opportunities in or near their local area (see Table 5), non-Nazarene seminars appear to have become the most widely used means of continuing education for these Nazarene ministers.

Pastors serving congregations in the cultural right probably need official denominational affirmation of continuing education before their members will approve or support their participation. A denominational requirement of some minimum amount of continuing education would legitimize participation for those cultural right congregations who are most loyal to the denomination. Without that legitimacy, it might be expected that members with low educational levels and some suspicion of intellectual pursuits would discourage or prevent their pastors' participation.

Conclusion

Considering the church with the viewpoint of Sample's three broad cultural sub-groups allows us to examine and perhaps clarify some of the conclusions circulating recently. For example, consumerism has evidently affected some Christians and churches. However, a consumer approach to religion seems most likely to be characteristic of people on the cultural left. Short-term commitment so personal involvement are also most likely on the cultural left.

It has been widely announced that denominational loyalty is dead. In fact, earned loyalty probably still exists everywhere. And, blind, undeserved loyalty was presumably never healthy for anyone. However, it is likely that on the right, where most of our churches are probably found, institutional loyalty still exists until there is some evidence that it is not deserved.

It seems likely that congregations are often made up of people from more than one sub-cultural group. Some of our churches are demonstrating that it is possible to successfully serve more than one culture in the same congregation. However, merging cultures is undoubtedly demanding and the challenges involved seem likely to increase the more highly each group values its culture and the more differences there are between the groups. An English speaking church which abandoned English in favor of Spanish in order to better serve existing and potential Spanish-speaking members, might expect to alienate most of the English-speakers. They could learn Spanish, and undoubtedly some would, but most would probably seek out an English service somewhere else. Translation or similar services in each language would probably be necessary in order to serve both without alienating either.

The challenge of merging cultures may not be as easy to understand when the issue is attire, music, or worship style. For example, when worship style and music are adjusted to minister effectively to returning baby boomers, other members may be alienated. English-speakers could learn to worship in Spanish, and anthem-singers could learn to worship through popular choruses, but the change might undermine their worship.

The most recent ANSWER POLL found only 33% of the pastors agreeing with the statement, "I wish we sang more of the older gospel songs, like we used to sing years ago," while 63% of responding lay members agreed with the statement. It may be that adjustments in worship style and music appropriately designed to improve ministry to returning boomers on the cultural left who seek immediate, vivid experience may alienate both long-term members and returning boomers on the cultural right, who value traditions.

Similarly, we might discontinue lay training because it does not fit the professionals in the cultural middle and thereby deprive needed education of lay ministers on the right.

Finally, it may be important to comment on the important questions which arise when we begin to think about adjusting to any culture. "Is this not simply the accommodations of the gospel to the lifestyles of contemporary life? What about the prophetic word of God?" "You are promoting a cultural Christianity. What expectations ought these people meet when they come into the church? Shouldn't they have to change?" And, if the culture in questions is that of the "baby boomers", for example, the questions may be: "Are you selling out the gospel to a group of spoiled, immature young adults who need to grow up?" Tex Sample raises these questions and then reminds us of three things: (1) the gospel *always* begins with people where they are. It does not stop there, with *anyone*. (2) The Apostle Paul said, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (I Corinthians 9:22). (3) "The task of the church is to search out the presence and the work of the spirit of Christ in the midst of the [culture].... One can be confident that Christ is already there." "The challenge... [is] to discover where the Spirit of Christ is at work; that is, find where the liberating and saving currents are and join in" (Sample, 1990: 42-43).

I am deeply in debt to and grateful for the ministerial preparation program of the Church of the Nazarene. Exemplary, devoted professors have enriched my life and ministry. Wise advisors have helped me avoid mistake and follow God's will. I believe we have a strong system of ministerial preparation.

I also believe we can improve our services to the congregations and future ministers of the church. Making cultural sensitivity part of our planning and curriculum may be one of the ways in which we can improve.

For the Ministers Who Wants to Grow

Dear Pastors:

Ordinarily questionnaires are a dozen! No doubt many come across your desk and end up in the waste paper basket. But this one is different!

It comes from your *church*. The Department of Education and the Ministry is trying to get factual information so that the needs of our Nazarene ministers may be better served. It will take just a few minutes of your time but it could accelerate the speed with which Dr. Richard S. Taylor will be able to develop a program that will enrich, inspire, and inform our Nazarene pastors. Your help is needed and will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
George Coulter
General Superintendent