

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Catalyst for Change or Empty Exchange?

Evaluating the impact of
short term home-stays in Manila squatter communities
on participating New Zealanders

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy in Development Studies
Massey University, New Zealand

Murray Brian Shearer, 2005

Abstract

This study is a qualitative evaluation of a scheme called Discovery Teams, offered by the christian agency Servants to Asia's Urban Poor. It examines the experiences of twenty-two New Zealanders who have spent between one and four weeks staying as guests in the home of Filipino squatter families, and evaluates the various ways this experience has generated ongoing changes in their lives. The study concludes that participating in a discovery team has acted as a catalyst for change in most team members' lives. This is especially true for those who have already begun to ask questions about poverty and suffering — and their own response to these issues — before their trip to Manila. Most team members fit this description, thanks to a thorough program of personal and team preparation. The study also reveals that participating in a discovery team during a time of personal transition — such as a change in employment or marital status — increases the probability of team members implementing changes on return to their home country. Being immersed in an urban poor community, building relationships with local people, and reflecting regularly on these experiences all contribute to team members gaining a deeper understanding of the many ways that poverty impacts the lives of real people. Those who come to understand that there are connections between their own abundance and the poverty of others are very likely to develop a deeper sense of personal responsibility toward the poor. They are consequently more likely to continue responding to poverty through different aspects of their lifestyle, vocation and the practice of their faith. However, for most this requires some level of resolve to grow in personal maturity — particularly their ability to look beyond themselves — and a willingness to allow their christian faith to adapt to a more complex understanding of reality. Responsible leadership, exercised by mature team leaders, also positively influences each of these outcomes in team members' lives.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to: Shona Shearer for your constant support and occasional detective work; my supervisors Donovan Storey and Manu Barcham for your guidance; ‘the stakeholders’ Ross Pilkinton, Tim McCowan, Elaine Williams, Mick Duncan, Paul and Wendy Hing-Mather, Dorothy Matheson, Lloyd Martin, Alan Jamieson, John Crawshaw, Wayne Kirkland and Fiona Duckworth for the history and clarification; past team leaders for giving me leads to follow; the four ‘guinea pigs’ (you know who you are) for your help in refining my research questions; all those who graciously agreed to be interviewed for this research; Dianne and Brian Shearer for your unwavering support, encouragement and the loan of the Merc.; Ross and Margaret Haliburton for your encouragement and the farm-stays; Ken and Joy Shearer for kindly hosting me in Christchurch; Mr T. Scott for asking “so what?”; Mel for helping with the transcripts; NZ taxpayers for making this research possible; the other members of ‘the axis’ (Phil, Annie & new member Ruth) for the riveting dialogue; the Urban Vision city team for keeping it real.

I dedicate this work to past and present members of Servants Manila Team and their Filipino associates.

Definition of Terms

Discovery Teams (capitalised)	A scheme designed to place small teams of non-poor people in the homes of urban poor Filipino families for a short term of up to four weeks
discovery teams (lower case)	Short-term teams of non-poor people who have stayed in various Manila squatter communities
discovery team members	Non-poor people who have, at some stage, been part of a discovery team
Holistic	A way of viewing the different areas of human life as a seamless, integrated whole
Holistic program	The range of activities and procedures guiding the implementation of this scheme, expressly designed to address different areas of team members' lives
Incarnational	A theological term that refers to <i>being present in the flesh</i> , but also often carries some connotations of relinquishing power or status
Incarnational model	Describes the particular <i>form</i> of the home-stay in Manila, where team members put aside privilege and comfort to be present in a poor community
(the) Non-poor	People who do not experience any significant economic hardship (although may still experience other forms of poverty)
(the) Poor	People whose lives are marked by extreme hardship, due to their exclusion from the benefits of the economic system
Respondents	discovery team members who have been selected and interviewed for this study
Servants to Asia's Urban Poor	Grassroots christian organisation originating from New Zealand (usually abbreviated as Servants)
Squatter communities	Clusters of makeshift households built on vacant land, usually in densely-populated urban areas
Stakeholders	People who have been involved in developing this scheme, or have prepared and sent various short-term teams to Manila squatter communities

Third World	A left-over term from the Cold War era, used to describe economically poor nations (used in this study because it is the most widely understood term)
Transformation	Personal or inner change, expressed primarily through changed practices and relationships, and ultimately through changed social structures
Worldview or world picture	The unique way that each person interprets reality

List of Tables and Diagrams

Figure 2.1	Two streams feeding into the creation of Discovery Teams.....	13
Figure 2.2	The two core components of Discovery Teams.....	18
Table 2.1	A typology of short-term teams visiting the Third World	22
Table 2.2	A framework for measuring and evaluating holistic transformation	28
Table 4.1	The sample frame, stratified according to gender and year of trip.....	63
Table 4.2	Quota sampling from the sample frame	65
Figure 4.1	Age of respondents in 2004.....	70
Figure 4.2	Age of respondents at the time of their trip	70
Table 4.3	Characteristics of respondents.....	73

Contents

Title Page	
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Definition of Terms	iii
Tables and Diagrams	iv
Contents	v
Chapter One: Introducing the Research	1
Overview of Discovery Teams	1
Purpose of the research.....	2
Scope of the research.....	3
Situating the research.....	4
Overview of the Chapters	4
Chapter Two.....	4
Chapter Three.....	5
Chapter Four.....	6
Chapter Five.....	7
Chapter Six.....	7
Chapter Seven.....	8
Chapter Two: Origins, Organisation and Objectives	9
Servants in Manila.....	9
A unique approach.....	11
Origins of Discovery Teams.....	12
A program in search of a model.....	13
A model in search of a program.....	15
Organising Discovery Teams	17
A holistic program.....	18
An incarnational model.....	21

Objectives of Discovery Teams.....	24
Holistic transformation.....	25
Conclusions.....	29
Chapter Three: Reviewing the Literature.....	30
Reframing Development.....	31
Transforming Travel.....	33
Breaking routines.....	34
Mindfulness.....	35
Authenticity.....	36
Critical Awareness.....	38
Values and Vision.....	40
Values.....	42
Vision.....	43
Sustaining Change.....	46
Traction — distraction.....	46
Solidarity — security.....	48
Reinforcing — reverting.....	49
Conclusions.....	50
Chapter Four: Conducting the Research.....	51
The Nature of this Research.....	51
The interview survey.....	54
Limitations of the interview survey.....	55
Personal Bias.....	57
Ethical Considerations.....	58
The Research Procedure.....	59
Phase I: Consultation.....	60
Phase II: Establishing a sample frame.....	61
Phase III: Pilot interviews.....	63
Phase IV: Selection of respondents.....	64
Phase V: Data collection and handling.....	67
Characteristics of Respondents.....	68
Gender.....	69
Ethnicity.....	69
Age.....	69
Marital status.....	71

Education.....	71
Occupation	72
Faith.....	72
Family background.....	73
Conclusions	74
Chapter Five: So What Happened?	76
Motivation.....	76
The Process of Formation.....	78
Personal preparation	79
Team formation	81
Immersion in the Community.....	83
Previous experience.....	83
Adjustment	84
Back regions.....	85
Exposure to poverty.....	86
Observing richness	88
Being in the Community.....	89
Being versus doing	89
Relationships with Local People.....	91
Levels of relationship	91
Ongoing connection.....	92
The Process of Reflection.....	93
Personal reflection	93
Corporate reflection.....	94
The Process of Reintegration.....	95
Personal reintegration	95
Team debriefing.....	98
Conclusions	99
Chapter Six: So What Has Changed?	100
Personal Transformation.....	100
Worldview formation	101
Character formation.....	104
Spiritual formation.....	107
Transformed Relationships.....	110
Relationships with journey companions	111

Relationships with the poor	112
Transformed Practice.....	114
Vocational changes.....	114
Lifestyle changes	120
Conclusions	123
Chapter Seven: So What?	124
What Happened?	124
Motivation	125
The process of formation	125
Immersion in the community	125
Being in the community.....	126
Relationships with local people	127
The process of reflection	127
The process of reintegration	128
What Changed?	128
Worldview formation	129
Character formation.....	129
Spiritual formation.....	130
Relationships with journey companions	130
Relationships with the poor	131
Vocational changes.....	131
Lifestyle changes.....	132
Generating Change.....	133
On the journey	133
Open and expectant	134
Clarification and reflection	134
Time of transition	135
Sustaining Change.....	135
Critical awareness.....	136
Moral reasoning.....	136
Reconfigured faith	137
Supportive relationships	137
Remaining mindful.....	137
Obstacles to Change	138
Inadequate team leadership.....	138
Losing focus	139

Translating the experience.....	139
Recommendations	140
Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research	141
References	143

The paradox indeed is that the beginning of healing is in the solidarity with the pain. In our solution-oriented society it is more important than ever to realize that wanting to alleviate pain without sharing it is like wanting to save a child from a burning house without the risk of being hurt.

— Henri Nouwen.

I was reading this while I was in Manila, and I thought, ‘yeah, being here must cause a Westerner to engage somehow. If it doesn’t, then it hasn’t really served its purpose. It must do more than make you feel pity or whatever. It must cause you to make some fundamental shifts in how you think and live’.

— Tom.¹

¹ The quoted passage is from H.M. Nouwen (1976) *Reaching Out*. Harper Collins, London, p.38. Tom is the pseudonym I have given to the interview respondent who relayed this story to me.

Chapter One

Introducing the Research

In this chapter I introduce the research topic by giving a brief overview of Discovery Teams. This involves describing some of the defining features of this scheme and presenting the core aims of the stakeholders. I then explain the purpose, and define the scope, of this particular study with reference to these aims. I also seek to situate this study within the wider body of research, briefly explaining its contribution to development thought and practice in general. Finally, I present an overview of this study by stating the aims, and previewing the contents, of each chapter.

Overview of Discovery Teams

Since 1988, the christian agency Servants to Asia's Urban Poor have been offering a scheme that places small teams of people from Western countries into Manila squatter communities for up to four weeks at a time. The name that Servants have given to this scheme is Discovery Teams. This name reflects Servants' emphasis on team members adopting the role of *learners*. The primary goal of this scheme is to activate changes in the lives of team members, in response to their experience of Third World poverty.² A distinctive feature of Discovery Teams is that they employ a home-stay approach, which places non-poor people in the homes of urban poor Filipino squatter families for the duration of their stay in Manila. Hosts are encouraged to incorporate their guests into their daily lives, not sheltering them from the difficulties and

² Despite being a leftover term from the Cold War era, 'Third World' is used throughout this study to describe economically poor nations because it remains the most widely used and understood term. The designation 'Western countries' (or 'the West') is likewise problematic, but is nevertheless used here because of its familiarity. Another important definitional issue concerns the name 'Discovery Teams' itself. The use of such a descriptive name makes it very easy to confuse the *scheme* (Discovery Teams) with the individual *teams* (discovery teams). In order to reduce this confusion, I have used capitals when referring to the scheme and lower case when describing individual discovery teams.

struggles they face. Each team member is subsequently brought into close contact with the everyday challenges of a particular urban poor family. It is anticipated that the complex issues of global poverty will become more focussed, as they are observed through the lens of a specific family in a specific community. In addition to observing the effects of poverty on other people, team members themselves also inevitably experience some deprivation of their own privacy, space, freedom, choice and — occasionally — even health. This is intended to give them a personal experience of certain realities that the urban poor face on a daily basis. On returning to their home country, it is expected that team members will make some corresponding adjustments to different areas of their own lives — such as their vocations, lifestyles and interpersonal relationships — as they reflect on their observations and personal experience of Third World poverty.³

Purpose of the research

The primary purpose of this research is to conduct an evaluation of Discovery Teams, gauging the effectiveness of this scheme with reference to the aims and objectives of Servants and other key stakeholders. Discovery Teams are premised on the belief that an experience of this nature can stimulate internal changes in non-poor people, which can then be translated into changed practices and relationships upon returning to their home country. More specifically, Discovery Teams aim to give non-poor people a new appreciation of the ways that their own lives intersect with the lives of the poor, promoting ongoing life choices that demonstrate an increased sense of personal responsibility toward the poor. This study seeks to establish the extent to which this kind of change has been integrated into previous discovery team members' lives, and sustained over time. It also seeks to identify the various personal and/or structural factors that either promote or inhibit these changes. This research, therefore, asks the question: *are Discovery Teams a catalyst for change?*

To answer this question I surveyed a selection of 22 former discovery team members, who participated in the scheme between the years 1988 and 2003. In consultation with a network of 12 stakeholders in this scheme, I developed a set of interview questions designed to explore these peoples' Discovery Team experiences and to identify any changes that they believe have resulted from their experience. These questions provided a platform for conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each of the 22 respondents. I compared their responses to a framework of categories, which I also developed in consultation with the stakeholders. In addition, I asked each of the 22 respondents some background questions, to

³ My interest in this topic stems from my own involvement in one of the pilot teams that ultimately led to the creation of this scheme. The implications of my involvement in this team, in terms of its effect on my approach to this research, are discussed in detail in Chapter Four, under the heading 'Personal bias'.

establish the personal characteristics of this particular survey sample. This also made it possible to detect any personal factors that might encourage or inhibit team members' ability to engage with this experience or to assimilate their responses into their everyday lives. I have therefore been able to: record a snapshot of 22 former discovery team members; explore their experiences of preparing and going to Manila; and establish the extent to which their personal responses to this experience have activated particular changes in their lives. The research individually explores each of these three dimensions of Discovery Teams, and ultimately seeks to establish some significant connections between them.

Scope of the research

As previously mentioned, Servants established Discovery Teams with the primary goal of activating changes in the lives of team members as they respond to their own personal experience of Third World poverty. Three of Servants' four declared objectives for Discovery Teams concern changes occurring in the lives of team members. The first objective concerns *personal change*, which ultimately results in appropriate responses to Third World poverty. The second objective concerns *changed relationships* between the poor and the non-poor, where bridges are built between these two socially disparate groups. The third objective concerns *changed practices*, where discovery team members are challenged to live their lives and practice their faith in reference to the poor wherever they may be found.⁴ Therefore, I have chosen to limit this study to *examining the experiences of discovery team members and exploring the extent to which their time in Manila has activated changes* in these three interconnected areas of their lives. While Servants' fourth objective for Discovery Teams is to empower host families in their roles of offering hospitality and educating their guests, it is beyond the scope of this research to study the impact of this scheme on the Filipino host families and their communities. This topic warrants a separate study, which would certainly provide a valuable counterpoint to this research.

I have chosen to limit this study to *New Zealanders* who, as a member of a discovery team, have spent 1–4 weeks staying in the home of a Filipino family in a Manila squatter community. Although discovery teams have travelled to Manila from other parts of the world, by far the most have come out of New Zealand. This is largely due to Servants' close ties with its own country of origin. Surveying people from only one country does prohibit comparisons with people from other parts of the world, but it puts a clear boundary around this study and reduces the (already very high) number of variables. As a New Zealander myself, I also believe I am more qualified to survey people with whom I share the same nationality; while it is no

⁴ For clarity and consistency I have used my own paraphrases of these objectives. The original wording can be found in J. M. Craig (1998) *Servants Among The Poor*, Servants and OMF, Manila, p.203.

guarantee that communication will be straightforward, it does decrease the likelihood of major cultural misunderstandings occurring. On a purely practical level, it also makes it possible to survey most respondents face-to-face, due to their geographical proximity.

Situating the research

This study sits alongside the small but growing body of work exploring the issue of non-poor people coming to recognise their own need to change in response to their personal encounters with the poor in the Third World. It affirms that the relationship between the poor and non-poor is a two-way relationship, in which each party has something worthwhile to offer the other. This, of course, requires a willingness on the part of both parties to *be changed* by their encounters with the other. While it has been widely assumed that the poor must change in order for their lives to be improved, the prerogative of the non-poor to also change in response to the reality of poverty has, for various reasons, often been given far less attention or emphasis. This issue is explored in Chapter Three under the heading 'Reframing Development'. It is my hope that this study will contribute in some way to the case for non-poor people grasping opportunities to encounter the poor — in humility and as eager learners — and to subsequently evaluate aspects of their own personal lives and practices in light of these encounters. Practically, I hope that this process will encourage non-poor people to integrate creative responses to poverty into their own lives in an ongoing way. While this study sets out to evaluate and refine one tenacious effort at achieving this goal, I hope that it will also help to improve any effort — however small — that promotes more equitable relationships between the poor and the non-poor.

Overview of the Chapters

In this section I present a roadmap of the chapters in this study by stating the aims, and previewing the contents, of each. The main themes, concepts and categories that define this research are also briefly signalled here. Many of the terms used in this section are also explained under the Definition of Terms on pages *iv* and *v*.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two explores the origins, design and aims of Discovery Teams in some detail. This is in order to describe how this unique scheme evolved through combining Servants' philosophy of working alongside the urban poor in Manila with the practice of two New Zealand christian agencies sending short-term teams to Manila in the 1980s. The chapter traces the merging of

these two 'streams' of philosophy and practice, and explains how this fusion birthed a new scheme that became known as Discovery Teams. The chapter then describes the subsequent process of designing an appropriate short-term team *program*, and developing a suitable *model* to implement it. I name these two core components of Discovery Teams *the holistic program* and *the incarnational model*, explaining the meaning of each of these terms. From each of these two core components I draw three further categories that allow the different dimensions of peoples' Discovery Team experiences to be explored in more specific detail. First, I break the holistic program down into its three key phases: the time before the trip to Manila, which is defined by *the process of formation*; the time in Manila itself, which is defined by *the process of reflection*; and the period after the trip, which is defined by *the process of reintegration*. Then I break the incarnational model down into its three primary components: *immersion*, which describes team members being placed in the heart of a squatter community; *being*, which describes team members being present in the community by not becoming busy or distracted; and *relationships*, which describes team members connecting personally with people in the community. Chapter Five, which deals specifically with peoples' actual Discovery Team experiences, is consequently structured according to these six categories.

Toward the end of Chapter Two I present a second framework, for examining the changes that have occurred in team members' lives. This framework is assembled around Servants' three general aims for Discovery Teams, which are *personal transformation*, *transformed relationships* and *transformed practice*. I explain that personal transformation refers to changes taking place in a person's interior world, transformed relationships refers to changes in their interactions with other people, and transformed practice refers to changes in their engagement with the world around them. I describe how, in consultation with the 12 stakeholders, I developed some more detailed categories for each of these three areas of change. I explain how this process has subsequently expanded three broad aims into eight measurable objectives, each with a set of corresponding indicators that reveal whether or not these objectives have been met. I describe how this enabled me to formulate survey questions that deal specifically with each of these eight categories, and to measure the answers I received against defined indicators. Chapter Six, which deals specifically with the changes respondents have experienced, is structured according to this framework.

Chapter Three

In Chapter Three I examine various theoretical perspectives on how interaction with the poor can initiate changes in a non-poor person's life; how those changes might take place; and how they may be sustained over time. Because there is no single body of literature that covers each aspect of a scheme like Discovery Teams, I have surveyed literature as diverse as development

ethics, tourism, sociology, education and developmental psychology as well as more conventional development studies literature. In order to tie this diverse set of ideas together, I have followed five major themes that emerged from my reading of this literature. *Reframing development* locates Discovery Teams within an emerging picture of development as a human endeavour. *Transforming travel* examines how encountering a new environment and participating in new experiences can activate a process of personal transformation in travellers. *Critical awareness* discusses the process of people gaining a new perspective on the world by unveiling unjust systems and locating themselves and others within these systems. *Values and vision* explores deep personal change in character and beliefs, and how these might inform and motivate changed practices. *Sustaining change* is concerned with new practices and priorities gaining long-term traction, and examines some factors that may either encourage or inhibit this. Each of these five themes illuminates one or more aspect of this research topic, and I have sought to weave these theoretical perspectives through this study.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four explains the process I employed to conduct a qualitative evaluation of Discovery Teams, and presents my justifications for adopting particular research strategies and tools to implement it. I discuss the various strengths and weaknesses of choosing primarily qualitative methods to conduct this research, and I highlight some quantitative methods that I employed to supplement them. My decision to use semi-structured interview surveys as the main data collection tool is also explained with reference to the ways I have attempted to emphasise the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses of this approach. In order to strengthen the integrity of the study, I declare my personal biases and suggest some of the ways they could affect the results of this research. In particular, I describe my own experience of participating in a short-term team in the late 1980s, and the deep personal change that resulted from this essentially positive experience. My strategies for limiting the influence of my own biases and dealing with various ethical considerations are both discussed in this context.

In the second half of Chapter Four I describe the five phases of my research strategy and offer my reflections on how the research procedure transpired in practice. *Phase I* explains my process of locating and consulting with a range of interested parties (stakeholders). It describes how their input has helped to shape the key categories for this study. *Phase II* outlines the gradual process of establishing a sample frame, and explains my decision to stratify this sample frame into more representative groups. *Phase III* describes how I conducted four pilot interviews, and how the lessons I learned from them have been fed back into the research process. *Phase IV* explains the procedure I adopted to randomly select a further 18 people from the sample frame, and the challenges I faced locating and making contact with them. *Phase V*

describes the procedures I employed for collecting data through one-on-one, semi-structured interview surveys. I also explain the process of converting the recorded data into a useful format for analysis and reporting. I end the chapter by describing some personal characteristics of the 22 respondents who were finally selected and interviewed for this research. This includes my own reflections on the extent to which they can be considered representative of the total population of discovery team members.

Chapter Five

In Chapter Five I present the actual Discovery Team experiences of my 22 respondents — from their first preparation session to their final debriefing. In order to give this exploration of peoples' Discovery Team experiences some structure, I have broken the *holistic program* down into three phases, and divided the *incarnational model* into three components. The three phases of the holistic program are: *formation*, which concerns team members preparing personally and corporately for their trip; *reflection*, which concerns team members processing their experiences privately and as a group; and *re-integration*, which concerns team members adjusting to their home environment on their return from Manila. The three components of the incarnational model are: *immersion*, which concerns team members being placed in the home of a squatter family; *being*, which emphasises the value of simply being present in the community rather than doing lots of activities; and *relationships* which concerns team members building connections with hosts and other local people. The 22 respondents' experiences of each of these six aspects of Discovery Teams are explored in some detail throughout Chapter Five.

Chapter Six

In Chapter Six I deal specifically with the changes respondents have experienced in their lives as a result of their Discovery Team experience. Using the framework presented at the end of Chapter Two, I examine different aspects of personal transformation, transformed relationships and transformed practice that have occurred in their lives. The three categories of personal transformation I examine are: *worldview formation*, which concerns team members becoming critically aware of systems that cause poverty; *character formation*, which concerns team members growing in personal and ethical maturity; and *spiritual formation*, which involves cultivating a spirituality that can embrace suffering and provide the motivation to respond appropriately. The two categories of transformed relationships I examine are: *relationships with fellow journey companions*, which involves team members cultivating ongoing relationships with like-minded people; and *relationships with the poor*, which concerns building connections with people who experience some form of poverty. The two categories of transformed practice I examine are: *vocation*, which concerns the main activities into which people channel their time

and energy; and *lifestyle*, which concerns their use of money and resources and the standard of living they strive to attain for themselves. The indicators of change occurring in each of these areas are described at the end of Chapter Two.

Chapter Seven

In Chapter Seven I draw together the experiences and the changes that my respondents have reported, and summarise these with reference to the various theories that inform this study. This involves highlighting some of the strengths and weaknesses of the program and the model employed for Discovery Teams, and examining how these have contributed to, or detracted from, the overall objectives of the scheme. From these summaries I identify a set of factors that seem to have engendered changes in respondents' lives, and have subsequently helped them sustain these changes over time. I also present some factors that have created obstacles to such changes occurring. My conclusions about the effectiveness and value of Discovery Teams are consequently informed by each of these factors. Finally, I make some recommendations for the implementation of Discovery Teams in the future, and suggest some areas for further research.