

APPROVAL SHEET

This ministry focused paper entitled
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SECOND GENERATION LEADERS' SENSE OF
VALUATION BY FIRST GENERATION LEADERS AND THEIR RETENTION IN THE
VIETNAMESE CHURCH IN AMERICA**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Date Received: March 24, 2015

International Rescue Committee in the United States to decide to set up a rescue and resettlement program to work on behalf of Vietnamese refugees. The operations soon brought many Vietnamese refugees from Indochina to California, Arkansas, Florida, and Pennsylvania.² In August 1980, another influx of Vietnamese boat people arrived throughout the Southeast Asian countries of Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, Korea, Cambodia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.³

Many Vietnamese refugees resettled in America and have chosen the United States as their second home. In the *Role of Religion in Ethnic Self-Identity*, Rutledge exhibits that Vietnamese refugees arrived and scattered to almost every state, wherever there was a sponsorship for their first time relocation in the United States.⁴ In fact, Vietnamese immigrants were encouraged to scatter across the 50 states, an intentional effort of a United States' policy which sought to avoid a heavy economic impact on any one state or region. Despite this effort, a high percentage of the Vietnamese refugees eventually chose California as their final destination.⁵ However, the immigration process required a cultural shift from the home culture into an enormously different shared environment which demanded a processing period for adaptation.

² George Rupp, "1975: The Largest Refugee Resettlement Effort in American History [IRC at 75]," *International Rescue Committee* (June 27th, 2008), n.p. Cited 9 April 2014. Online: <http://www.rescue.org/blog/1975-largest-refugee-resettlement-effort-american-history-irc-75>.

³ Paul Rutledge, *The Role of Religion in Ethnic Self-Identity: A Vietnamese Community* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵ Roy D'Andrade, *A Study of Personal and Cultural Values: American, Japanese, and Vietnamese* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 78.

WORKS THAT ADDRESS HEALTHY CHURCH LIFE FOR KOREAN-AMERICAN AND OTHER ASIAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES

In *Growing Healthy Asian American Churches*, edited by Peter Cha, S. Steve Kang, and Helen Lee, the writers claim that one hindrance to a healthy Asian American church is when the leader shapes the model of his leadership based solely on his own culture, instead of on Christ's culture.⁴ The work of this present researcher is examining whether this hindrance does, in fact, affect retention of young people within Vietnamese immigrant churches in America today. In the discussions presented in this book, the editors believe that it is time for the first generation of pastors and leaders to learn to value team ministry instead of performing their duties solely through their own personal strength and sacrifice.⁵ In total, the authors present four particularly important skills for today's leaders of healthy Asian American churches. In addition to learning to value team ministry, pastors need to pursue a balanced life, demonstrate vulnerability, and recognize God's leadership.⁶ The present study investigates specifically the relationship between the valuation of team ministry and the retention of the younger generation.

A similar scenario is also happening among immigrant families who came from India, according to Ashish Raichur, in his article *The Second Generation: Spiritual and Cultural Conflict*. Raichur astutely addresses the same problem within the Indian churches in America, which is that church leaders have failed to provide for the spiritual needs of the second generation, resulting in a major gap between the two generations;

⁴ Peter Cha, Steve Kang and Helen Lee, eds., *Growing Healthy Asian American Churches: Ministry Insights from Groundbreaking Congregations* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 60.

⁵ Ibid., 93.

⁶ Ibid.

instead of the kingdom culture of man. In addition, even though *Developing Your Next Generation of Church Leaders* written by Steven Saccone and Cheri Saccone does not directly address a solution for a higher rate of second generation retention within the Vietnamese churches, the priority of having the mature generations of pastors focus more intentionally on furthering the kingdom of God by nurturing the younger generations is relevant to the present project.³⁵

Today's discussion regarding the retention of younger people in the church is not an issue only within the immigrant churches in the U.S. In fact, American Anglo churches are also seeking effective methods for the retention of their young people. In Shellnutt's argument, she advocates that church leaders should connect their church activities to social media sites since young people who were born in the '80s and '90s have grown up as digital natives.³⁶ Her claims are supported by the high percentages of young people who use Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Shellnutt presents many insights for retaining the second generation using digital means which may also be applicable to Vietnamese church situation.

In *Are Millennials Really Leaving the Church?* Bob Smietana cites two hindrances to the church's retention of young people as proposed by Sánchez-Walsh. Sánchez-Walsh states that the church should change to reflect the diversity of today's American society. An additional hindrance to the retention of the younger people identified by Sánchez-Walsh is that current church leaders from the older generation are

³⁵ Steve Saccone and Cheri Saccone, *Developing Your Next Generation of Church Leaders* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2012), 22-23.

³⁶ Kate Shellnutt, "33 Under 33: Meet the Christian leaders shaping the next generation of our faith," n.p. Cited 25 February 2015. Online: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/july-august/33-under-33.html>.

DATA COLLECTION

From September 2014 through January 2015, 150 potential participants from each of the 3 previously-described groups were invited to participate voluntarily in the study and were provided with a copy of the survey instrument, consisting of the “Second Generation Valuation by First Generation Scale” (SGVFG Scale). (A copy of the SGVFG Scale is available in Appendix A) Group A consisted of 150 young people who are still attending either the Vietnamese or Montagnard Alliance churches in the Raleigh area; both the Vietnamese church and the Montagnard church in North Carolina are under the South Atlantic District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Participants of this group were invited to participate in this research in person on Sunday, November 30, 2014, from 3:00pm – 4:00pm during the weekend of the Thanksgiving week. An introductory presentation was given to help participants understand the purpose of this project, which was to discern the factors that result in retention of the younger Vietnamese generation within the Vietnamese church and the Montagnard church. The researcher randomly selected only 50 out of the 150 responses that came from Group A.

The other two groups, those who are attending non-Vietnamese churches (Group B) and those who are no longer attending any church (Group C), were invited to participate in this research project through e-mail. The invitations were extended electronically via e-mails, and a letter was attached to the e-mail explaining the purpose of this research, which was to help the researcher discover the factors that result in retention of the younger Vietnamese generation in their heritage churches (A copy of the invitation letter is available in Appendix B). All who participated did so voluntarily through personal invitation of the researcher, and they were all guaranteed complete

For Group C, Question 6, the responses indicate that fourteen percent *strongly disagreed* that during periods of regularly attending a Vietnamese church, they could relate to the church's vision, especially its vision for reaching Vietnamese unbelievers for Jesus Christ, whereas fifty-four percent *disagreed* that during periods of regularly attending a Vietnamese church, they could relate to the church's vision. Thirty-two percent were *neutral*, no one selected *agree*, and no one selected *strongly agree* as their answer. The average score that Group C selected, based on SA=5, A=4, N=3, D=2, SD=1, is 3.18.

On the additional Question 6A, for Group A, the responses indicate that sixty-eight percent *strongly agreed* that it is important to them that the church should reach out to Vietnamese unbelievers, whereas thirty-two percent *agreed* that it is important to them that the church should reach out to Vietnamese unbelievers. No one selected *neutral*, no one selected *disagree*, and no one selected *strongly disagree* as their answer. The average score that Group A selected, based on SA=5, A=4, N=3, D=2, SD=1, is 4.68.

For Group B, Question 6A, the responses indicate that thirty-two percent *strongly agreed* that it is important to them that the church should reach out to Vietnamese unbelievers, whereas sixty-six percent *agreed* that it is important to them that the church should reach out to Vietnamese unbelievers. Two percent were *neutral*, no one selected *disagree*, and no one selected *strongly disagree* as their answer. The average score that Group B selected, based on SA=5, A=4, N=3, D=2, SD=1, is 4.3.

For Group C, Question 6A, the responses indicate that seventy-two percent *strongly agreed* that it is important to them that the church should reach out to Vietnamese unbelievers, whereas twenty-eight percent *agreed* that it is important to

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Issue #1: Performing tasks on a regular basis for the Sunday worship service

The results collected from the three participant groups in response to this question were surprisingly consistent: Group A had an average score of 4.42 (Q1)/4.06(Q1A), Group B had an average score of 4.42(Q1)/4.58(Q1A), and Group C had an average score of 4.56(Q1)/3.56(Q1A). These results demonstrate that all three groups were regularly involved in tasks for the Sunday worship service (4.42, 4.42, and 4.56). In addition, the first two groups agreed that this participation was important to them (4.06, 4.58); however, the third group average (3.56) suggests involvement in the Sunday worship service was somewhat less important to them. In summary, it does not appear that the responses to Issue #1 yield strong evidence that this is a factor in retention. The ones who left the church were as involved in the worship service as the ones who stayed; hence, the data is inconclusive.

Issue #2: Older Vietnamese valued my active involvement in church events

The responses to Issue #2 show much more variety. Group A had an average score of 4.58 (Q2)/4.64(Q2A), Group B had an average score of 1.3(Q2)/4.28(Q2A), and Group C had an average score of 1.38(Q2)/4.36(Q2A). The variation in these results opens the possibility that the participants in Group A (4.58) are retained because they believe the older Vietnamese valued their active involvement in the church events, whereas the other two groups (B, 1.3 and C, 1.38) strongly did not believe that the older Vietnamese valued their active involvement in the church events. Therefore, the data suggests that valuation of active involvement is an issue in retention since it was present in the retained group and not present in the non-retained groups. In other words, the data

indicate that when the church leadership values the active involvement of the young people, this valuation may positively contribute to retention. In fact, all three groups (4.64, 4.28, 4.36) say that it is important to them that the older Vietnamese church leaders value their active involvement in church events.

Issue #3: My leadership abilities were valued by church leaders

The responses from Issue #3 showed similar variations as Issue #2, with Group A exhibiting an average score of 4.42 (Q3)/3.8(Q3A), Group B exhibiting an average score of 1.36(Q3)/4.34(Q3A), and Group C exhibiting an average score of 1.22(Q3)/4.34(Q3A). These results point to the likelihood that participants in Group A (4.42) are retained because during periods of regularly attending a Vietnamese church, they believed that their leadership abilities, whether they served in leadership or not, were valued by the church leaders, whereas the other two groups (B, 1.36, and C, 1.22) believed that during periods of regularly attending a Vietnamese church, their leadership abilities were not valued by church leaders. Given these results, Issue #3 also appears to contribute to the retention of young people in the church, especially since all three groups (3.8, 4.34, 4.34) indicated that it is important to them that Vietnamese church leaders value their leadership abilities.

Issue #4: Church leaders made it easy for me to talk about my spiritual needs

Responses to Issue #4 also show some differences between the three groups. Group A had an average score of 4.56 (Q4)/4.86(Q4A), Group B had an average score of 1.46(Q4)/4.64(Q4A), and Group C had an average score of 1.3(Q4)/1.38(Q4A). The results of Group A (4.56) suggest that these young people are retained because during periods of regularly attending a Vietnamese church, they believed that the church leaders

made it easy for them to talk about their spiritual needs. Conversely, the other two groups (B, 1.46, and C, 1.3) believed that during periods of regularly attending a Vietnamese church, the church leaders did not made it easy for them to talk about their spiritual needs. In addition, only two groups (A, 4.86 and B, 4.64) say that it is important to them that they can talk to church leaders about their spiritual needs. However, Group C (1.38), those participants who no longer attend church, indicated that it was not important to them to talk to church leaders about their spiritual needs. The data suggests that the ability to talk to church leaders about their spiritual needs is an important concern for those who continue to attend church, but not for those who have dropped out of church. In other words, for those who remained committed to God and church, it is an important issue, and for those who are not committed to God and church, it does not appear to be significant.

Issue #5: Vietnamese church leaders treated me as their equals

Responses to Issue #5 also revealed variation across the groups. Group A averaged 4.64 (Q5)/4.5(Q5A), Group B averaged 1.16(Q5)/4.22(Q5A), and Group C averaged 1.26(Q5)/4.44(Q5A). Group A (4.64), the participants who remained in the Vietnamese church, indicated that during periods of regularly attending a Vietnamese church, they believed that they were treated by church leaders as their equals, whereas the other groups (B, 1.16 and C, 1.26) felt that during periods of regularly attending a Vietnamese church, they did not believe that they were treated as equals by church leaders. As the matter of fact, all three groups (4.15, 4.22, 4.44) say that it is important to them that Vietnamese church leaders treat them as equals. In other words, the data

