Bridging Intergenerational Gaps within Ethnic Immigrant Churches

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An Example of Intercultural Ministry: Jesus & the Samaritan Woman by the Well (John 4: 7-39)

John 4 7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” ... 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” ...25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” 26 Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

39 Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.” (NIV)
Distinctive Reality of Ethnic Immigrant Churches (EICs):

*Intergenerational Issues* are overlaid with *Intercultural Issues*.

*Congregational Life* is intertwined with *Family & Social Relationships*

*Spirituality* intersects with *Cultural Dynamics*
Sociocultural & Contextual Forces that Shape Asian EICs

1. **Acculturation** – Different degrees of cultural learning b/w 1\textsuperscript{st} Gen & 2\textsuperscript{nd} Gen

2. **Asian Familism & Traditionalism** – Hierarchy, Honour, Obedience, etc.
3. **Transnational Immigration – 1st Gen Preservation of Heritage Culture vs. 2nd Gen Fully Integration into the Dominant Culture**

4. **Financial Resources & Independence** (or lack thereof)
Diverse Models of Ethnic Immigrant Churches (Shin & Silzer, 2016):

1) ‘Room for Rent’ Model: 2nd Gen under 1st Gen Leadership – Child-Parent Relationship

2) ‘Duplex/Triplex’ Model: 2nd Gen & 1st Gen side-by-side but under one senior leadership – Tenant-Landlord Relationship

Shin and Silzer (2016), Tapestry of Grace: Untangling the Cultural Complexities in Asian American Life and Ministry
3) ‘Townhouse’ Model: 2\textsuperscript{nd} Gen & 1\textsuperscript{st} Gen side-by-side under the same root with separate, individual leadership – \textit{Neighbour-to-Neighbour Relationship}

4) ‘Commune’ Model (‘\textit{Open House}’) : Pan-Cultural Church/Multiethnic Church ??
Common Intercultural Challenges Faced by EICs

Communication Barrier: Language Barrier

Divergent Values & Worldviews

Acculturation Gap

Cultural Identity (Identification)

Divergent Views in Worship Style, Visions for Ministry, & Theology
Common Intercultural Challenges Faced by EICs (Cont.)

Additional Societal Factors

**Aging Trend** – mostly of 1st Gen

**Immigration Pattern** – diminished new immigrants from the heritage culture
“I think the biggest challenge is the generational disconnect. Although being under the same roof is better than complete independence of EM (English Ministry), there is a lack of common ground between the EM and KM (Korean Ministry). Sometimes it feels like there are two separate entities under one roof.” (S. Y. – 2nd Gen. Korean Canadian)

“They have a lot of conflicts with one another because they sort of have different values in a sense, even though we’re Chinese but Cantonese and Mandarin, we come from different parts of China. So everything is very different.....” (S. – Chinese/Cantonese 1st Gen.)
Potential Strategies to Bridge Intergenerational Gaps for EIC Going Forward

There isn’t a ‘1-size-fits-all’ solution!!

1). Engage in Futuristic Thinking & Planning:
Focus on where an EIC wants to be in the future (20-25 years from now) & work towards it.
2). Seek the Assistance of ‘Cultural Broker’ for 1st & 2nd Gens. Someone who understands both congregants, culturally, spiritually, & relationally.

3). Adopt Missiological Mind-set with 2nd Gen. Church Planting & Ministry (e.g., Kim, 2019):
Shift in outlook by both gens to acknowledge that:

“We don’t know the other ministry as well as we think we know.”

Promote intercultural understanding between 1st & 2nd congregants.
Discussion:
THANK YOU!
MERCI BEAUCOUP!
謝謝!

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