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Tyndale University College & Seminary

Finding Unity in Diversity:

The Use of Appreciative Inquiry to Cultivate
Common Ground among Leaders in a
Multi-Congregational Chinese
Church in Canada

A Thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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by

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Toronto, Canada

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ABSTRACT

Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church is a large ethnic Chinese church in Toronto. Over the years it has become home to a diverse group of congregants who are of Chinese descent but who speak different mother tongues. Multiple worship services are held in three different languages. An action research project was conducted that used appreciative inquiry to cultivate common ground for the leaders of the different congregations to work together. The appreciative inquiry engaged leaders of the church to inquire and listen to one another's stories and aspirations, and to identify the commonalities, values and experiences that they had in common. It took them away from the usual business meeting agendas to pay attention to each other and to work together in unpacking the DNA and life-giving forces of their church. Through this shared experience, relationships were built and knowledge of themselves, of each other and of the church was enriched. Findings revealed interesting patterns of viewpoints and perspectives of the leaders, and unveiled a story of the church in her past, present and future. The project demonstrated how Appreciative Inquiry can be a valuable and effective tool to approach leadership development in church.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all yokefellows who bear the burden of church. Clergy or laity, known or unknown, your unwavering commitment to the local church is my inspiration.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
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CBC	Canadian Born Chinese
CRC	Canadian Raised Chinese
KJV	King James Version
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version Bible.
NLT	New Living Translation
OBC	Overseas Born Chinese
ORC	Overseas Raised Chinese
SCBC	Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church
TAMS	Text Analysis Markup System
TCBC	Toronto Chinese Baptist Church

Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotations in this paper are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard...” (Ps. 133:1 NASB). What a beautiful picture of God’s people living together in unity. But unity has never been easy even in the Early Church, as Paul so forcefully beseeched the Ephesians, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). And it has only become more difficult today as churches grow in size, complexity and diversity. In the case of Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church (SCBC) in Toronto, finding unity in diversity is a real challenge.

SCBC is an ethnic Chinese Church in Toronto. With a short history of 27 years, she has grown from a small immigrant church to a large multi-congregational church serving three language groups. Ministry demands have reached new heights. Pastors, deacons and lay leaders who serve in the different language groups work together as the leadership team. In defining leadership team, Patrick Lencioni says “A leadership team is a small group of people who are collectively responsible for achieving a common objective for their organization” (Lencioni 2012, 21). However, the leadership team of SCBC that

makes church decisions is a large team of over 70 leaders representing the interests of the groups and sub-units in the church. An action research project was engaged to use an Appreciative Inquiry to cultivate the common ground for them to work together.

Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church

The research took place in Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church (SCBC). Some basic information about SCBC, her leadership structure, leadership challenge and opportunity for change is briefly described below.

Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church (SCBC) is located in the city of Scarborough, Toronto. With a membership of about 2,000 and a worship attendance of about 1,800, SCBC is one of the largest ethnic Chinese churches in Toronto. Six worship services are offered every Sunday to Cantonese, English and Mandarin-speaking groups of congregants.

The Cantonese congregation with about 1,300 members is the largest group. While all these congregants speak Cantonese, the group is very diverse with different social, economic, educational, denominational and church backgrounds. Most are first-generation immigrants from Hong Kong and are deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture. They brought with them church practices from Hong Kong that shaped the church culture in SCBC. Furthermore, the group split into four different worship services, a traditional, a blended worship style, a young career group and an evening group.

The English-speaking congregation has an average worship attendance of about 550. They are the Canadian born and raised second or third generation English-speaking children of the Chinese-speaking congregants. Brought up in the Canadian culture, their values, lifestyles, leadership styles and practices are in many ways different from those of the other two congregations.

The Mandarin congregation is about 150 in size and is made up of more recent immigrants from China. Many of them have endured much hardship through the political upheavals in the past decades and their cultural values and customs are distinctly different from their Cantonese and English-speaking counterparts.

While each language group operates separately as a sub-congregation in independence from the others, there are commonalities that connect and unite. Except for a few non-Chinese congregants, they all share the common root of Chinese ancestry. They all have personal and family immigrant stories to tell. They all, to a certain extent and with varying degree of attachment, embrace their Chinese heritage. And they have all become immersed in the social economic life and culture of Canada. Above all, a common faith in Christ remains the strongest force and basis for unity. The congregations thus operate as one big church family under the same roof.

Leadership Structure

SCBC governance operates with a matrix organizational structure. Within the matrix structure, there are primarily the congregations of the three distinct

languages that form three people groups. There are also four overarching ministry function groups that lead and connect the people groups in worship, nurture, body life and outreach functions (Table 1).

Table 1. Matrix Structure of SCBC with Functional Teams and People Groups

4 Ministry Functions	Worship Worship Board Music Department Representatives from Cantonese, English and Mandarin groups	Nurture Nurture Board Departments: Sunday School Children Department Family Department Library Department Representatives from Cantonese, English and Mandarin groups	Body Life Body Life Board Event Committees Representatives from Cantonese, English and Mandarin groups	Outreach Outreach Board Departments: Mission Social Concern Evangelism Representatives from Cantonese, English and Mandarin groups
Cantonese Ministry Team (CMT) Pastoral Team (CPT)	Cantonese Worship Ministry Choirs Ushering Team Orchestra <u>Eruh</u> Group	Cantonese Nurture Ministry Sunday School Discipleship Word of Life	Cantonese Body Life Ministry Caring, Visitation Women, Fellowship, Small Groups Prime Timers Youth Drop-ins	Cantonese Evangelism Ministry Committees Outreach Groups
English Ministry Team (EMT) Pastoral Team (EPT)	English Worship Ministry Choirs Worship Leaders Ushering Team	English Nurture Ministry Sunday School	English Body Life Ministry Community Groups Welcome Ministry Flow Fellowship	English Outreach Ministry Hunger No More Community BBQs Pool Parties
Mandarin Ministry Team (MMT) Pastoral Team (MPT)	Mandarin Worship Ministry Choirs Ushering Team	Mandarin Nurture Committee Sunday School	Mandarin Body Life Ministry Fellowships Agape Feasts	Mandarin Outreach Ministry Evangelistic Events

The leadership of SCBC is made up of over 70 people, including pastors, deacons and ministry leaders involved in the various board, departments and teams within the matrix structure laid out above. A list of leadership offices and number of people involved is listed below (Table 2) and the functions of these offices are explained briefly below.

Table 2. Leadership Offices and Number of People involved in Leadership

Positions	Leadership Offices	Number
Pastors	Charge Pastors, Associate Pastors in shepherding, leading, teaching and preaching roles.	17 pastors
Deacons	Ordained lay leaders in shepherding, leading and governing roles	19 deacons
Joint Ministry Board: Lay leaders elected to various boards, teams and departments	Administrative Board Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Accountant, Auditor, GM, Personnel Nurture Board Chair, Family Ministry, Sunday School, Children and Library Departments Worship Board Chair, Music Department Body Life Board Chair Outreach Board Chair, Mission Department, Social Concern Department Cantonese Ministry Team: Chair and various ministry teams and departments English Ministry Team: Chair and various ministry teams and departments Mandarin Ministry Team: Chair and various ministry teams and departments Deacon Board Representation: Chair, language groups Pastoral Team Chairs	8 5 2 1 3 11 5 6 4
Total Number of Leadership Positions in SCBC		81

A team of 17 pastors provides spiritual leadership and direction. People groups and function groups are led by charge pastors with associate pastors working under them. They work closely with 19 ordained deacons. Together they form the Deacons-Pastors Team (DPT) that functions as a top leadership team

responsible for shepherding, vision casting, direction setting and ministry oversight.

Ministries are delivered through different ministry boards, teams and departments within the people groups and the functional groups. These teams and departments are headed by leaders who are elected to office by the General Assembly. They answer to both the people group they serve as well as the overarching functional group they belong. Together they form the Joint Ministry Board (JMB) where all major decisions on finance, personnel and ministerial matters are deliberated and approved. This is the body that coordinates all ministries and holds executive authority in the church.

I joined SCBC the year when she was founded 29 years ago. Initially I was involved with Cantonese ministry but soon moved over to the English side to help the younger but fast growing English ministry. I have since stayed with the English congregation. Over the years I have served in various capacities, as Sunday School teacher, career group counsellor, Sunday School Superintendent, Children Department Chair, Christian Education Board Chair, Nurture Board Chair, Body Life Board Chair and on different pastoral search teams and task forces. I was ordained a life deacon in 1989. Currently, apart from serving as Chair of the Deacons-Pastors Team and Interim Senior Pastoral Team, I am also a member of the Senior Pastor Search Team, SCBC Pathfinding Team, Joint Ministry Board and English Ministry Team. It is with such intensely active involvement and first-hand experience of the leadership challenge that I became

burdened with the leadership challenge of SCBC and decided to undertake this research.

Leadership Challenge and Opportunity

The challenge for the leadership of SCBC is one about leading a large church with a multilingual and an increasingly diverse congregation.

First, there is the challenge of uniting a large and diverse group of people to work and serve together. The team of 17 pastors, 19 ordained deacons and 38 non-deacon Joint Ministry Board members make a sizable leadership team of 74 people. They represent the interests of the three language groups and the different ministry departments. A breakdown of the leadership affiliation to various language groups is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 3. Composition of Leadership Groups by Language Groups

Leadership Groups	Language Group Affiliation			Total Number in Group
	Cantonese	English	Mandarin	
Pastors	10	5	2	17
Deacons	9	7	3	19
Joint Board Non-Deacon Members	20	12	6	38
Total:	39	24	11	74
Percentage:	53%	32%	15%	100%

Though all leaders except two pastors are ethnically Chinese, this is a very diverse group of leaders as the Cantonese, English and Mandarin groups are in fact very different sub-cultures with distinctly different operation styles and

characters. Not only there are language differences, but there is great diversity in the cultural, educational, socio-economic backgrounds, lifestyles, outlooks, values and ministry practices. So when leaders from the different groups come together to discuss church issues, differences in viewpoints and values naturally transpire. Often times leaders tend to contend for the interests of their groups or compete for allocation of resource. Disagreement is not uncommon causing frustrations, misunderstanding and unpleasant outcomes. Unresolved conflicts have led to a couple of recent resignations from the leadership with prominent leaders leaving the church. Inevitably disagreement and conflicts have an adverse effect and negative impact on the leadership team. There is a need to positively strengthen the leaders with mutual trust and understanding, and to assert the common purpose that drew them together in the first place.

Another challenge relates to the working relations and practices among the leaders. In terms of practice, since the church is complexly structured with a hierarchy of multi-level management flows, leaders are held accountable for the tasks they are given. Leaders are highly responsible and dedicated in fulfilling their duties and delivering ministry results. Preoccupied with their specific mandated tasks, the many departments and teams within the matrix structure tend to operate in isolation and unaware of what others are doing. Working relations among the leaders of these teams are primarily built around the meeting table where they gather to deliberate and make decisions on church matters predominated by finance, resources, administration and personnel business. Here leaders are loosely connected with little personal knowledge of each other. They

are cordial with one another yet weak in collegiality and teamwork. A challenge for the leadership is to build deeper relationships on solid common grounds where they can truly work together as “co-workers” (Phil. 4:3) and “true yokefellows” (Phil. 4:3 ASV), yoked tightly together with one another in Christ.

The senior pastorate of SCBC is in transition. The founding senior pastor who served 27 years in the church retired in December 2014. A pastoral search has been going on for over two years to no avail. The leaders are faced with the tremendous challenge of seeking unity, direction and leadership succession at this point in time. The impending change of leadership and the uncertainty of what lies ahead has prompted the leadership to ask questions and rethink the way things are done in SCBC. It offered an opportune time to launch an appreciative inquiry to engage leaders in a collective act of mutual discoveries and dreams sharing. Building on the positive, Appreciative Inquiry offered a platform for the leaders to work together and to build relations. To cultivate the grounds for working together would be a timely response to the challenges mentioned above.

Innovation for Action

The action project was designed to cultivate the common ground among the leaders through the use of an Appreciative Inquiry that would engage the leaders to look for common threads in their stories and experiences, to identify the DNA of the church and to co-dream about the future. Through sharing and listening to each other’s stories, the positive elements of what makes SCBC the church it is today were identified, unpacked and built upon for a collective sharing

and dreaming about the future of SCBC. The objective of the project was to facilitate a positive environment for mutual understanding and relationship building among the leaders, whereby a shared experience of working together could be facilitated and a collective dreaming about the future be generated. It took participants away from the usual business agendas that they discuss in meetings and directed them to pay attention to the personal stories and aspirations of one another. It launched them on a journey of discoveries about each other and about the church that they served together. Individual and corporate knowledge of church distinctiveness were enriched and substantiated with testimonies of personal stories. Participants discovered the commonalities they shared in their experiences and their dreams for the church. The shared experience, strengthened relationships, enriched knowledge and collective findings effectively provided a good ground for the leadership to build on and work together. The collective findings about the church DNA and the composite dreams for the church were the product of their shared experience and material outcome of their joint effort. The findings might not be conclusive or comprehensive but still offered valuable insights as a source of inputs for direction setting and ministry planning in the future.

Definition of Key Terms

Some key terms used throughout this research thesis are defined below. Connotations of meaning and interpretation shall be made accordingly in the context of their occurrences.

Working Together

The notion of working together in this thesis builds upon a Greek word taken from the New Testament, ‘Συνεργοῦντες’ (synergountes, working together) that means working together. The word is made up of two root words, ‘συν’ (syn) meaning together and ‘εργον’ (ergon) which means work. “Συνεργοῦντες δὲ καὶ”(synergountes de kai, and working together also) occurs in 2 Corinthians 6:1 and is translated as “And working together with Him” (NASB), “then, as workers together with him” (KJV), and “As God’s co-workers” (NIV). The closest English word for ‘συνεργοῦντες’ is *synergetic*, an adjective that combines ‘syn,’ together and ‘ergon,’ work to mean working together. "Working together" refers to the partnership of God's people in work together with God and with each other.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a highly participative approach widely used in organization development and transformation. The method seeks to bring out the best in an organization by engaging collaboration and participation of people to explore positive and affirmative themes that focus on the generative and life-giving forces.

Common Ground

Common refers to that which is shared, that belongs to, opens to or affects the whole group. The common ground is an analogy used to describe the things, qualities, experiences that are shared by the group, the commonalities among the people within the group.

Cultivate

To cultivate is to try to improve or develop, to foster the growth of, or to enrich. The common use of the word cultivate in gardening is to prepare and use the land for crops or gardening, which involves breaking up soil in preparation for sowing or planting, and raising and growing of plants. A close synonym is found in the verb “culture,” which means to improve by labor, care, or study.

CBC, CRC, OBC, ORC

CBC are Canadian-born Chinese, they are Canadians of Chinese ethnicity who were born and raised in Canada. CRC are Canadian-raised Chinese, they are Canadians of Chinese ethnicity who came to Canada at an early age and were raised and brought up in the Canadian culture. CBC and CRC are usually the second or later generations of immigrants and have been immersed in Canadian culture since they were young. They identify themselves more with Canadian than Chinese culture, and can be easily identified by their mother tongue in English or French but definitely not Chinese language. In the context of this research, the English-speaking congregation of SCBC is mostly made up of CBC and CRC and are treated as one English-speaking CBC/CRC group distinct from the other two Chinese-speaking congregations.

OBC are overseas-born Chinese, people of Chinese ethnicity who were born overseas but emigrated to Canada after they grew up. ORC are overseas-raised Chinese, people of Chinese ethnicity who were raised overseas but emigrated to Canada after they grew up overseas. Both OBC and ORC came to

Canada in their adulthood and are usually the first-generation immigrants who are the first in their families to settle in Canada. They identify themselves more with Chinese than Canadian culture and can be identified by their mother tongue in Chinese language, whether Cantonese, Mandarin or other dialects but definitely not English language. In the context of this research, the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations are mostly made up of OBC and ORC and they are treated together as a Chinese-speaking group OBC/ORC distinct from the English-speaking congregation.

Church DNA

DNA is commonly used to describe the fundamental and distinctive self-replicating characteristics or qualities of a person or an organization. Church DNA refers to such fundamental and distinctive characteristics and qualities that make a particular church what it is today.

Peak Contribution

Peak contribution is the subject matter of a generic question commonly asked in an Appreciative Inquiry: “Without being humble, what are the most valuable ways you contribute to the church?” It refers to the most valuable ways one contributes to the church.

Peak Experience

Peak experience is the subject matter of a generic question commonly asked in an Appreciative Inquiry. It refers to a high point or a peak moment in one’s experience in an organization.

Top Value

Top value is the subject matter of a generic question commonly asked in an Appreciative Inquiry. It refers to what one regards as the most valuable and most treasured quality or element, or something that one most values and cherishes dearly.

CHAPTER II:

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The research project builds upon the premise that the Christian church is a corporate body with a uniquely distinctive identity and mission. Members of the body share this common identity and purpose. They are fellow workers with God and with each other. They are to work together in fellowship and mission and to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). Yet this does not always happen in reality. Often times, keeping unity in the body of Christ is far from easy. As Paul says, “Now the body is not made up of one part but of many” (1 Cor. 12:14), there are many different parts in the body. Differences within the body have direct bearing on its work and unity. In the case of a large multi-congregational church, diversity gives rise to all kinds of differences among members that work against “the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace” and calls for the need to cultivate a common ground for the member parts to work together. A theological understanding of the basis for working together, the call for unity, the reality of diversity, the need to cultivate a common ground have to be established.

Apart from biblical texts, major source of reference in this section includes the work of Old Testament scholar Christopher Wright who is a recognized world

leader in world evangelical movement and a key writer of the 2010 Cape Town Commitment whereby the 4,000 leaders who attended the Third Lausanne Congress collectively affirmed evangelical faith and convictions. His books *The Mission of God* (2006) and *The Mission of God's People* (2010) expound with great depth and detail the biblical theology of the people of God, the work of church and God's mission for them. Reference is also drawn from the work of the renowned Anglican priest John Stott (1921-2011), a prolific bible scholar, author of over 50 books and leader of world Evangelical Movement. His work *Evangelical Truth* (1999) gives a succinct but clear fundamental synopsis of evangelical faith. These sources from Christopher Wright and John Stott provide a solid theological foundation for our understanding of church, church life and the work of church. Citation is also drawn form British New Testament scholar and theologian James D.G. Dunn who is acclaimed for his work in New Testament doctrine, Early Church beliefs and Pauline studies. His book *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (2006) expounds on church unity issues in the Early Church and sheds lights on the understanding of church unity. In considering how we should live and work together in church and life in Christian community, references are drawn from *Life Together* (1954) by German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), a little book that has become a classic on fellowship and communal living. *The Tangible Kingdom* (2008) co-authored by acclaimed pastors and writers Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, calls for incarnational community living and provides another valuable source about community life. The work by American theologian Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) in *Christ and*

Culture (1951) is another Christian classic regarded as one of the most significant theological writings. Also cited is the work in *Discernment* (2013) by Catholic priest Henri Nouwen (1932-1996) who wrote over 39 books on different aspects of Christian faith, spiritual life, community living, prayers and lessons. All these writings offer profoundly deep insight for a solid understanding of what Christian community is about and a theological framework to be established for this research project.

Ground for Working Together

The question needs to be asked what basis there are for the people of God to work together, what draws them together, what do they have in common and what work they have to do together.

God's People

The basis for believers to work together lies in the identity and purpose of a Christian community as summarized in 1 Peter, “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pet. 2:9). While ‘you’ in second person nominative plural addresses the plurality of believers in Christ, believers now have a shared corporate identity. The description of all designations with Greek words ‘γένος’ (genos, race, people), ‘ἱεράτευμα’ (hierateuma, priesthood), ‘ἔθνος’ (ethnos, nation), ‘λαός’ (laos, a people) using nominative singular neuter nouns signifies the collective identity

that is common to all believers. While individual Christians may have come to Christ separately, they all have the common experience of God's saving grace. Their collective identity in Christ effectuates a common purpose that they "may declare the praises of him who called [them] out of darkness into his wonderful light." Together they will proclaim his goodness and offer praises for his glory. Church is a gathering of God's people who have such common identity and purpose in Christ. In describing the people of God, Martens Elmer puts it well that they are theologically "a God-connected people", sociologically "a bonded people", ethically "a holy people" and missionally "a witnessing people" (Hafemann and House 2007, 227, 231, 242, 247).

With the common identity in Christ, the people of God bear witness for Jesus in obedience to his command, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). They become Christ's ambassadors with a message of reconciliation for the world (2 Cor. 5:19-20) and a "witnessing people" (Hafemann and House 2007, 247) who testify the saving power of Jesus. Christopher Wright explains it well that the people of God are "people who represent God to the world", "people who are called to live in response to the grace, with lives that represent God to the world and that show the difference between the holiness of the living God" (Wright 2010, 127). People who have experienced God's grace will fulfill their holy priesthood role and identity by living in biblical holiness and ethical obedience. Such collective identity and common purpose provides the ground for believers to gather as church and to work together therein.

God's Work

What is it that the people of God need to work on together? In *The Mission of God's People*, Christopher Wright writes, “It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God’s mission” (Wright 2010, 24). Rightfully Wright puts things in the right perspective. It is God’s work and God’s mission that the people of God are charged to do.

First and foremost, the people of God must work in obedience to the Great Commandment “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30-31). Compelled by the love of Christ, God’s people respond in total surrendering and submissive obedience to the will and way of God. “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19), so God’s people walk in love and manifest God’s love in action. This is exactly what Wright describes in *The Mission of God's People*, that God’s people are, among others, “people who represent God to the World”, “people who bear witness to the living God”, and “people who attract others to God” (Wright 2010). These are things that God’s people need to work on together.

God’s people must also work to fulfill the Great Commission. Church is the gathered people of God, charged and commissioned by Christ, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have

commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). Church ordinances, programs and activities are designed towards this end. Various ministries like evangelism, discipleship, teaching, caring and others are built into the common life of a church with God’s people serving in different areas. The Spirit bestows different gifts to each one in the church body, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7) that “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Pet. 4:10). So the people of God, whether laity or clergy, take on different tasks and responsibilities in service to one another as they together take part in fulfilling this Great Commission. These are also things that God’s people need to work on together.

Ephesians 2:10 offers another perspective in understanding the work of the church. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). The collective “we” are created to do good works. This echoes the theology of work that builds upon the fact that the Creator-God is a god who works. Humankind, created in his image, also works. And charged with the love for God and in obedience to His call, we surrender in total submission to do the works that he has for us. What the “good works” are is not elaborated but they are good and they have been prepared in advance for them to do. They are works that God wills and desires his people to do, purposes that they are to fulfill. The people of God have good works to do for their God is good. It is what Wright talks about in “The Way of the Lord” that entails God’s ethical agenda and that formulates a model of God’s mission

(Wright 2010, 362). The scope of work will not be confined to only work within or work driven by church but opens wide to include God's good will and commands as stipulated in the Scriptures and directed in the lives of his people. It must be noted that good works have no merit in one's salvation as Paul says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith... it is the gift of God - not by works" (Eph. 2:7-8). But works in obedience to God are an expression of one's faith and allegiance to God and a reflection of God's character and good will. As written in James, "Faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26), so God's people are workers of good work.

Moreover, using a nominative singular neuter noun, Paul also asserts that believers in Christ are "God's workmanship". The workers themselves are pieces of work in God's hands. They are the work made by God. On this note, in his book *Leading Me*, Steve Brown talks about how one must lead one's own self in "partnering with God and others to become the whole person he created and desires us to be" (Brown 2015, 17). Not only is each person individually created and shaped, but they are created new in Christ. As they take on the new identity in Christ, they become "fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Eph. 2:19). They join together to become the temple that is being built with Christ as cornerstone. Like living stones, they are "being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). Here the active workers become the work. The subject becomes an object. The worker is the work. And this is a work that should not be neglected by the people of God.

Ephesians 2:10 invites a deeper and broader view of the work of church. Attention needs to be paid to what God is doing apart from what the people want to do. The work of church therefore goes beyond the active strivings and labor to accomplish the Great Commission. It goes even beyond the work of obedience to do the good works commanded in the bible. These are work that God's people must keep on doing. Yet over and above these is the work of God that involves the mysterious moving of the Spirit and the crafting, shaping, growing and forming of member parts and the corporate whole of the body. The people of God must abdicate from their commanding posts to give way to the higher thoughts and ways of God (Isa. 55:9). They must pay attention to, embrace and celebrate the workmanship of God for the praise of his glory. On this point, Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini speak about the need to 'stay off the task treadmill' in that "an ever increasing preoccupation with ministry activity that can kill the leadership-development process" (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, 205-206). Leaders must guard against becoming so task-oriented that they forget to tend their being and becoming as God's workmanship.

Hence I submit that the work of a church not only involves the active "doings" and strivings of the members in ministry activities, but also the "being" of the body, the ongoing changes taking place in the formation of character and identity of individuals as well as the corporate whole that is continually being shaped and built by God. Thus the question to ask is not only "what shall we do" or "what work must we do." The questions must also be asked: "what is God

doing with us and in us,” “how is God shaping us,” and “what workmanship of God is being displayed through us.”

Furthermore, as it is God’s work and not our work, the outcome lies not in our hands but in God’s. Gary Nelson describes how God surprised the confused and frightened disciples in the upper room with Pentecost in Acts 2, and charges us with the warning: “Churches that lose their sense of anticipation, that no longer live open to the surprise of God, simply dry up waiting. They become predictable and stale. When this happens, they lack the ability to anticipate God at work and to recognize God’s actions when they happen” (Nelson 2008, 127). Churches must live “open to the surprise of God.” God’s people must be watchful and attentive to what God is doing with a willingness to anticipate the unpredictable and be surprised by God.

As written in Psalm 123:2, “As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God,” God’s people must be attentive and open to what their master is doing. It is a trust that is open to uncertainty, as Charles Foster and Theodore Brelsford say, “The capacity to trust in the gracefulness of an open-ended future has an eschatological dimension to it” (Foster and Brelsford 1996, 19). It is a faith that embraces ambiguity, uncertainty and change, “a faith that does not rely on what is, but lives instead with multiple possibilities and imagines what might be” (Foster and Brelsford 1996, 159). It is a faith that transcends our expectation and human controls, for it is not our work, but God’s work that is unfolding for us to anticipate and partake.

Working Together

With a common identity and purpose, the people of God together become active participants of God’s work. The word used for working together in the New Testament is ‘συνεργοῦντες’ (synergountes, working together), a Greek word that is made up of two root words, ‘συν’ (syn) which means together and ‘εργον’ (ergon) which means work. The closest English word for ‘συνεργοῦντες’ is ‘synergetic’, an adjective that combines ‘συν’ (syn, together) with ‘εργον’ (ergon, work) to mean ‘working together’. ‘Συνεργοῦντες’ (synergountes, working together) is to be done with God as well as with fellow believers. The people of God work not only separately on their own but also work together in fellowship with one another.

Working Together with God

In Paul’s view, people working for God are “God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor. 3:9, 2 Cor. 6:1). The phrase is also translated as “working together with him” (NASB), “laborers together with God” (KJV), “God’s partners” (NLT). Here a new perspective is added to the notions of servanthood and stewardship. The people of God are not only servants and stewards. They are also fellow workers with God. “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants – as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.... but only God who makes things grow.... For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:5-9). The servants are assigned with different roles. They are servants in servitude to God their master.

The work is not theirs but God's in fulfillment of God's will and purpose. The servant of God is now in partnership with God, working together with him in his work.

Working Together with One Another - Yokefellows

God's people are also fellow workers with one another. In Philippians 4:3 Paul used the term "loyal yokefellow" ('σύζυγε', suzigos, yoke-fellow) to beseech believers in church to work together. The word yokefellow means literally a person co-yoked, referring to the believers in Philippi being co-yoked with Paul. The word yoke in Hebrew בֶּן (ol, yoke) refers to the wood beam that braces draft animals together so they have to move jointly as a pair to work in the field (Figure 1).

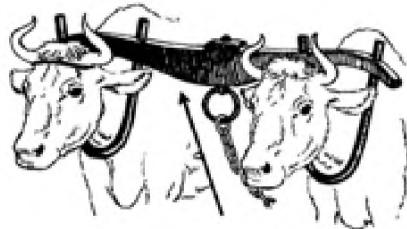


Figure 1. Drawing of a Yoke on Draught Animals (Foresman, 2011)

The word is commonly translated in the LXX with the Greek word 'ζυγός' (zygos or zygon, yoke) which refers to the yoke that not only beasts bear, but also slaves wear. The word is also used to mean the act of coupling and pairing, or applied to mean a pair, as used in a yoke of oxen (1 Sam. 11:8), 500 yokes and 1000 yokes (Job 1:3, 42:12). The yoke is therefore widely used to mean a burdensome subjection to servitude. As explained by Colin Brown, the word

‘zygos’ (ζυγός, yoke) “came to stand for bondage and the burdensome servitude of the nation, and became a symbol for suppression and has its *Sitz im Leben* (life settling) in the political realm of enforced subjection and tyranny” (Brown 1971, 1161). Paul’s use of “yokefellow” implicates a close partnership of the people of God in church. They are like one person who is co-yoked with him and with one another. Like a pair of cows under one yoke, together they journey and work, bearing the burden of church together in submission and servitude to their master. That is why cohesiveness in teamwork with a common objective and creation of clarity in achieving alignment are named by Patrick Lencioni as the first two disciplines for a healthy organization (Lencioni 2012, 21, 73). Yoked together with God and with one another, God’s yokefellows need to move together in alignment and in steps towards where God is taking them.

Working Together in Fellowship and Communion

Relationship of God’s people is not only a working relationship but a partnership in fellowship. The first time the use of the word *koinonia* (‘κοινωνία’, koinonia, fellowship) is found in Acts 2:42-47, describing the communion of believers in the early church. The Greek word *koinonos* (‘κοινωνός’, koinonos, partner) refers to a companion, a partner or a joint-owner. *Koinonia* describes such an alliance and partnership of people in communion and fellowship with one another. It is an intimate relationship of bonding, mutual belonging and sharing described in Philippians 2:1, 2 Corinthians 9:13, Romans 15:26-27, Hebrews 13:16.

In his book *Life Together*, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains this bonding relationship:

We belong to him because we are in him. That is why the Scriptures call us the Body of Christ. But if, before we could know and wish it, we have been chosen and accepted with the whole Church in Jesus Christ, then we also belong to him in eternity *with* one another. (Bonhoeffer 1954, 13)

So believers gathered and redeemed by Christ enter into the whole church body where they belong to Christ as well as to one another. The life together is a life of *koinonia* (fellowship) where sharing, caring, giving, service take place in communion with Christ whose love and power are manifested. *Koinonia* is the mark of a Christian community.

And it is this unity in life that connects us with believers and churches of all times and places, like what Henri Nouwen sees when he writes, “a vision of who you are, and who I am, and who we are together” and that “The unity of life among us is even deeper and stronger than the diversity between us” (Nouwen 2013, xxiv). With this unity of life in Christ, we belong to one another. It follows that working together is an integral part of the common life in the body, taking place in fellowship and communion with one another. It does not happen outside of *koinonia* nor does it operate in isolation without fellowship with others. It cannot be a mere work association with no personal attachment or mutual relationships. Rather, fellowship and work go hand in hand in the body. Working together takes place in fellowship and fellowship takes place in working together. It is therefore of utmost importance that fellow workers in church do not reduce the relationships of mutual belonging and communion to mere tasks,

responsibilities, or dealings with transactions of service, administration or managerial duties. Work relations must be built on the union of fellowship through Christ and in Christ.

Working Together in Unity

Bonhoeffer strongly asserts that fellowship is not a choice, but a reality. “We *are* members of a body, not only when we choose to be, but in our whole existence. Every member serves the whole body, either to its health or to its destruction. This is no mere theory; it is a spiritual reality” (Bonhoeffer 1954, 68). The bond has already been established through and in Christ. Believers belong to Christ and to each other in the body of Christ. The fellowship is not something for a believer to visit and observe as a by-stander, or come and go as one pleases. It is a spiritual reality for believers.

Paul implores believers to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). As if knowing how unity of the Spirit can be threatened and lost, Paul asserts that “every effort” must be made to guard and protect the unity of the Spirit. Reasons why unity is important are given in Ephesians 4:4-6 that there is only one God, one Lord and one Spirit. The church is told here to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace which has been made possible through Christ’s work of reconciliation. The bond of fellowship prevails and underlies the relations and activities in church while unity testifies the work of the Triune God. Working

together is of no exception. The people of God are to work together in unity, keeping unity in the Spirit and making sure that the bond in Christ is not broken.

Unity in Diversity

In the setting of a large multilingual multi-congregational church, differences among members can be a major force causing disagreement and discord in church. This is not something new as diversity has always been present in church. History and early kerygma both attest to the fact and challenge of cultural diversity in early churches. With diversity comes differences and disagreement which can adversely impact the unity of the body and impede the working together of its members. An understanding of differences and discord is necessary for them to be properly addressed.

Diversity a Reality in Church

We get a glimpse of how ethnically diverse the Roman Empire was in the First Century from the many dialects that were present in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:8-11). The early church is made up of believers from diverse ethnic backgrounds, Jews, Greeks, Scythians and others as cited in Paul's letters (1 Cor. 12:13, Col. 3:11, Gal. 3:28). Every time Paul speaks of the church as "one body," he emphasizes that the unity of the body is a unity in diversity (Rom. 12:5, 1 Cor. 12:12, Eph. 4:15). Speaking about the different member parts in a body, Paul concludes, "If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body" (1 Cor. 12:19-20). The body could not exist as a body

if there is only one part and no others. On this point British New Testament scholar and theologian James D.G. Dunn develops further as follows:

Without diversity the body could not exist as a body. The body only exists as a unity by virtue of its diversity.... Diversity is not a regrettable rationalization of a basically unsatisfactory state of affairs, nor a decline from some higher ideal for which repentance is necessary. On the contrary, diversity is integral to the pattern of community which God has established. Without diversity there cannot be unity, the unity which God intended. (Dunn 2006, 542)

So there would not be unity and the body would not even exist as a body if there is no diversity. Diversity is intended and established by God to be an integral part of the community. For a church like SCBC with different language groups and cultures, Dunn's words are a good reminder that diversity is a distinct feature of the body where unity can shine through to display the glory and power of Christ.

Diversity in Early Church Kerygma and Traditions

A look into the preaching records in the gospels, Acts, and the Epistles reveals that the preaching contents, styles and presentation of the same preacher may vary greatly according to the different contexts, audiences and situations. Research into Paul's kerygma reveals that "From other letters of Paul, it becomes clear that so far as he was concerned there was *no standardized pattern, no extended outline of Christian proclamation*.... Paul varied his proclamation of the gospel according to circumstances" (Dunn 2006, 24-25). The same is found in the kerygma (the preaching) and the kerygmata (act of preaching) of Jesus, of Acts and of John. While there is unity in the central basic confession of faith and the

exaltation of Jesus and his work of redemption, the diversity in early church kerygma is so great that it has been noted that,

There is unity of the post-Easter kerygma.... but in the event of proclamation no two kerygmata were exactly the same. Not only so, but the diversity means differences and disagreement - differences for example over the significance of Jesus' earthly ministry and his death, disagreement over the continuing relevance of the law, on the eschatological dimension of the gospel, and on its ethical outworking.
(Dunn 2006, 31)

While there is unity in the central basic confession of faith and the exaltation of Jesus and his work of redemption, there is much diversity in the expression of the gospel and the confession of the Christian faith.

Not only kerygma and kerygmata vary greatly in the New Testament church, diversity also exists in church traditions among the earliest believers. Examples are many, such as “diversity of form and pattern in conversion initiation in Acts - baptism prior to Spirit, Spirit prior to baptism, Spirit without baptism, baptism followed by laying on of hands” (Dunn 2006, 171). The same diversity occurs in the use of Old Testaments, traditions of Jesus and confessional formulae. There is diversity not only in kerygmatic traditions but also in church traditions, ethical traditions, traditions about Jesus, confessional formulae, liturgical patterns, sacraments, ministry traditions as different streams of early Christianity including Jewish Christianity, Hellenistic Christianity, Gnostic tendencies, early docetism, apocalyptic Christianity and early Catholicism began to surface. Such a huge range of fundamental diversity, as James Dunn suggests, is attributed by feature that, “the diversity of situations and human contexts in which the gospel came to expression, and the fact that every expression of the

gospel was conditioned by its particular situation and context in some degree or other” (Dunn 2006, 449). As human life settings and situations have a direct bearing on the expression of the gospel and of Christian faith, earliest believers in New Testament are no strangers to diversity and differences in church.

Dunn’s study on the character of earliest Christianity concluded that there are many different expressions of Christianity within the New Testament that would eventually lead to disagreement and conflicts, as he explains:

Our study has also forced us to recognize a marked degree of diversity within first-century Christianity.... there are many different expressions of Christianity within the NT.... In different situations and environments that strand was woven into more complex patterns, and when we compare these patterns we find that by no means did they always complement each other; on the contrary, they not infrequently clashed, sometimes fiercely. (Dunn 2006, 406)

Nevertheless, the great diversity in early church kerygma and traditions demonstrates an important aspect about how church runs its course in history. In working with his people, God has allowed a high degree of freedom as church navigates through history. God works with and through his people freely and differently according to human setting and situations. God’s work through church prevails and advances despite all the disagreement and differences that exist.

Boundaries for Diversity in Christian Faith

Related to differences and diversity is an important question: How much diversity is acceptable? Where is the line drawn for preaching and teaching to become inadmissible heresies? With no ambiguity Jesus says, “I have not come to abolish them (the Laws) but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and

earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:17-18). The gospel is anchored upon justification and righteousness by faith in Jesus. The words of Jesus will stand. The gospel of the Christian faith is, in Paul’s words, “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:20). Teaching and preaching must fall within the boundaries of truth laid down in the Scriptures. Heresies that teach a gospel outside the boundaries of Scriptural and apostolic teachings are absolutely unacceptable. On this point Paul forcefully asserts, “For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted. We have made this perfectly clear to you in every way” (2 Cor. 11:4-6), “Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” (Gal. 1:8).

The church needs to be able to discern the essentials and non-negotiable truths of faith from the non-essential and negotiable elements of expressions and traditions. in his book *Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness* (1999), John Stott distinguished evangelical essentials and non-essentials as follows:

We need a greater measure of discernment, so that we may distinguish between evangelical essentials which cannot be compromised and those *adiaphora* (matter indifferent) on which, being of secondary importance, it is not necessary for us to insist. (Stott 1999, 116-117)

He succinctly sums up evangelical essentials under three big headings, the revelation of God, the cross of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. As for

adiaphora (matters indifferent) which can be a very long list, he cites twelve examples that have long been subjects of disagreement and disputes among Christians, namely, baptism, the Lord's Supper, church government, worship, charismata, women, ecumenism, Old Testament prophecy, sanctification, the State, mission, and eschatology (Stott 1999, 117-118). Many of these have long been subjects of heated debates that led to conflicts, confrontations and divisions and caused damage to the name of church. Unfortunately, disputes on some of these are still ongoing on scales big and small. Work still needs to be done for Stott's "Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness" (Stott 1999) to be heard.

Addressing Differences and Discord

Working together in a church does not mean doing the same thing in the same way at the same speed at the same time. As much as diversity is a mark of the body, differences is a reality of church. In the context of a multi-generational and multi-congregational church like SCBC, internal differences are huge among the three congregations. Ministry philosophy, liturgical forms and styles, leadership practice, ministry approach, church direction and priorities are all grounds for possible dispute and disagreement. Unresolved differences are seeds for discord and conflict. A good understanding and appropriate actions are necessary to prevent the damage that differences may cause within the church.

First, it must be accepted that as diversity and differences are an intrinsic part of church, disagreement is bound to happen. When disagreement occurs,

member parts of the body must be careful to refrain from passing judgment and accusing opposing parties as perpetrators or enemies from an evil source. As Dunn proposes, “Christians will simply have to accept the fact of different expressions and interpretations of ‘the kerygma’ and live with them - accepting the *necessity* and the *validity* of these different expressions, and not being upset over them or grieving over them as ‘sinful divisions’ or ‘heretical schisms’” (Dunn 2006, 33).

Lessons can be learnt from the New Testament churches in Acts where the church charged on despite differences and disagreement. As Dunn explains, the main thrust of Acts is not to establish a certain cultic or ritual phenomenon, but the manifestation of God’s free acts:

The primary concern was *not* to establish a particular ritual procedure, far less to determine the action of God in accordance to a cultic action. On the contrary, the evidence of Acts serves to underline the freedom of God to meet faith when and as he pleases, and *what we see in Acts is the early churches adapting themselves and their embryonic ritual in accordance with God's manifest action through the Spirit.* (Dunn 2006, 171)

This resonates with what Richard Niebuhr suggests in *Christ and Culture*:

The full realization of the kingdom of Christ [does] not, then, mean the substitution of a new universal society for all the separate organizations of men, but rather the participation of all these in the one universal kingdom of which Christ is the head. It meant transformation through humiliation and exaltation; through the humiliation which comes when members of the body willingly accept the fact that they are not the head, and through the exaltation which results from the knowledge that they have been given their own particular, necessary work in service to the head of the body and to all its other members. (Niebuhr 1951, 226)

Both Dunn and Niebuhr firmly assert that the kingdom of Christ is not about establishing human organizations, ritual procedures or cultic traditions, but we are

called into his kingdom, his lordship and his work. The primary concern of SCBC shall not be the establishment of a certain cultural tradition or ethnic interest group within the church. Human traditions and establishment shall never become the agenda of the church. Church work must not be driven by the vying interests of groups and congregations. Rather, the church must seek together how God is working freely in their midst, what he is doing and where he is moving with them. The church must adopt a more inquiring and reflective approach in seeking to understand what God wants to achieve through them and with them where they are. Like the churches in Acts, the church of today must adapt in accordance to God's work through the Spirit.

A good example is given by Paul in the way he deals with rivalry when he says, "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached and because of this I rejoice" (Phil. 1:18). Paul was able to see some common good even where integrity and motivations were questionable. In working together, it is important that fellow workers find points of commonality and common good despite their differences and this is what the proposed inquiry is about. Participants will together discover commonality in their shared faith journeys and aspirations for the church that they together belong.

On the same note, Paul implores Euodia and Syntyche to agree with one another, "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest

of my fellow workers” (Phil. 4:1-3). Not only the parties who disagree need to work for agreement, the people around are also called upon to help. It is also the duty of the community to help in resolving personal disagreement. The plea is set within the context of working together, with those in disagreement having contended at Paul’s side with others. As they are yokefellows bonded to work together in the Lord, they must strive for agreement lest the yokefellow relationship be broken.

Disagreement and Agreement

It has been noted that “Organizational fragmentation is most of the time rooted in human fragmentation” (Lawrenz 2009, 62). In the setting of a local church today, unresolved differences and disagreements can lead to fragmentation in the body. In the case of SCBC, church governance provides protocols for decision-making regardless of differences in opinions. But often times, disagreements can remain unresolved even though debates and disputes are settled. On a personal level, unresolved disagreements can give rise to grievances and resentment that breed conflicts and dissension.

Disagreements between two parties or individuals are hard to resolve since technically, in order to strike accord in agreement, either one or both parties have to change. However, in the spirit of *koinonia*, each member is called and redeemed by Christ and enters into relationship with others who are also called and redeemed by Christ. As Christ died for one, Christ died for the other. One has

to receive and accept the other as Christ did. No one stands superior to another in the fellowship of Christ. As Bonhoeffer says,

Because Christ stands between me and others, I dare not desire direct fellowship with them.... This means that I must release the other person from every attempt of mine to regulate, coerce, and dominate him with my love. The other person needs to retain his independence of me; to be loved for what he is, as one for whom Christ became man, died and rose again, for whom Christ bought forgiveness of sins and eternal life. (Bonhoeffer 1954, 22)

With this understanding, each member in the body must accept the independence of others. One must not assume one is right and others are wrong. One must refrain from setting out to change others, even if it is out of one's good will and loving care. As one relinquishes from one's willful desire to change others, one is also freed from the need to change by pressure from others. Rather, one has to accept and respect differences and disagreements from others. In fellowship with Christ and with one another, God's people must recognize and accept differences and disagreements in the body without undermining the *koinonia* bonding in Christ.

However, this tolerance and acceptance of one another in disagreement is not enough. Active steps must be taken at the same time to strive for agreement. Hurling questions "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified?" at a quarreling church in Corinth, Paul adamantly calls for unity, "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Cor. 1:10-13). He was literally asking for perfect agreement in mind and thought. The body of Christ must work in unity amid the

diversity. And the one unifying force is found in the risen Christ who gathered the people in the first place.

The One Unifying Strand

Amid the diversity of Christianity in the first century, there was “one unifying strand” that stands undisputed and in agreement by all Christian traditions. As Dunn summarizes:

The surprising extent to which the different unifying factors in first-century Christianity focus again and again on Christ, on the unity between Jesus the man and Jesus the exalted one.... the unity of first-century Christianity focuses (often exclusively) on Jesus the man now exalted, Christ crucified but risen. (Dunn 2006, 405-406)

This common unifying strand remains distinctive until it gets elaborated and applied to different situations. As Dunn explains “It is important to also realize that the *unity* of faith in a particular situation depends to a large extent on the simplicity of the confession.... But further definition becomes quickly divisive – *unnecessarily divisive*” (Dunn 2006, 63). The further faith gets elaborated and defined in specificity by different people in different situations, the further this unifying strand gets diluted. In an effort to work on unity amid diversity and differences, it would be important for a church to recover and strengthen the unifying strand that binds her people.

Primarily the unifying strand lies in Christ the center and head of church. The body of Christ cannot and must not be bound by ethnicity, language or cultural commonalities. Christ is the one unifying strand. The unity of life, the common identity, the common work of God and workmanship that we all share

and partake need to be strengthened. As Bonhoeffer says, “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ” (Bonhoeffer 1954, 10). Believers enter the community through Christ and in Christ. They enter into a relationship with another believer all because of Christ who died for them both. Christ is the link. Bonding between fellow believers is built through Christ and in Christ.

Thus there is a vital link that qualifies and effectuates fellowship and unity of believers. First and foremost, believers must abide in Christ. As Jesus says,

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit unless you remain in me... apart from me you can do nothing... If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you... Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. (John 15:4-7)

Using the image of the vine and the branches, Jesus paints the picture how we must abide in him. The abiding is a love relation that is cradled in the Great Commandment and in the call to do good works in accomplishing God's workmanship. The abiding is expressed in the abiding or dwelling in his words and in his love. This portrays a beautiful life-begetting union with Christ.

This leads us to a most profound mystery about the unity of God the Father, the Son and the Spirit and how our indwelling and abiding in the Triune Godhead makes our fellowship with one another possible, as Jesus unpacks for us in the High Priestly Prayer:

I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all

of them may be one. Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have love me. (John 17:20-23)

That “all of them may be one” is only possible as Christ dwells in them. As “I in them and you in me” so believers stay in the Father and the Son and that “they may be one as we are one.” We can be brought to complete unity because there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit in them. As described in Ephesians, “There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6). We must first personally, individually and separately abide in Christ. Without entering into union with Christ, a true fellowship with one another is impossible.

I therefore submit that for a church to overcome disagreement and reach agreement, the members must work on the unifying strand that binds the people through Christ and in Christ. For unity to happen, members of the faith community must remain in Christ with an authentic, ongoing and growing love relationship. Then in Christ we bond. And in Christ we work. The work of Christ both in the past and the present will be told, shared and exalted. Christ’s agenda will be the people’s agenda, his cause shall be their cause, and his work shall be their work.

Cultivating Common Ground to Work Together

The body of Christ belongs to all and not to a chosen few. The work of church also does not lie with a selected few but in the hands of all. Hugh Halter and Matt Smay say it well, “Ministry in the Pauline churches belonged to *all*, and each depended for his life within the body of Christ not just on some special ministry of a few, but on the diverse ministries of all his fellow members” (Halter and Smay 2008, 120). As members of the body belong to each other in the body, each ministry is dependent on the diverse ministries of all others members. For a large church with diverse ministries, it is especially important to cradle the collective ownership and mutual belonging of all workers inclusive of lay and clergy.

Accepting the differences and at the same time striving to strengthen the unifying strand is pivotal in keeping unity in diversity. In the case of SCBC where there are cultural, language and congregational differences, it is imperative that leaders can hold the interest of not only their own groups but also of other groups in pursuit of what Christ wants to achieve through them all together as a church. A common ground for their working together needs to be cultivated so that the unifying strength be strengthened and *koinonia* with God and with one another can be truly realized.

Strengthening the Unifying Strand

As Christ is the center and unifying strand of the church, his work of redemption as well as his ongoing work among his people must be upheld and

exalted. Too often in a large church setting where ministries have become departmentalized into streams of specialty and workers become absorbed in their foci of work, members have little time to come together to reminisce on Christ's doings in their midst. The unifying strand needs to be recovered and strengthened.

To this end, Halter advocates the building of incarnational community that heeds Christ's call, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life." (John 6:54) It follows that "Each church should hear the call from God as to what they are or aren't to be about. Each pastor or pastoral team needs to adjust their structures to fit the collective call" (Halter and Smay 2008, 124). The mission of Christ is to be embraced as the collective call and the people of God becomes the missional people. According to Halter, there are four practices that incarnational community does, namely, leaving, living among, listening to, and loving with no strings attached (Halter and Smay 2008, 124). Applied to the diverse setting of a multi-congregational church, it is important to ensure that focus is directed to the collective call of Christ. Workers are to relinquish their individual agendas or interests and those of their particular ministries, and to come experience incarnational living among one another with Christ as the centre. Attention of the community is to be directed towards the work of Christ, both past and present, to what he has done and is doing anew in the community, and to what he wants to do through them and with them collectively.

Working in Fellowship, Fellowship in Working

Working together with God and with fellow yokefellows is something that happens within the fellowship of believers. The work is done within and not independent of the fellowship of the community. Hence, working together and fellowship are intertwined with one another. The two go together. Fellow workers need to be in fellowship with those they work with together. Working together should be set in fellowship and vice versa, fellowship set in working together.

Furthermore, we do not pick and choose with whom we like to work or to enter into fellowship. For fellowship is made possible through Christ. Bonhoeffer explains the basis of fellowship in a Christian community:

Because God has already laid the only foundation of our fellowship, because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients... Even when sin and misunderstanding burden the communal life, is not the sinning brother still a brother, with whom I, too stand under the Word of Christ. (Bonhoeffer 1954, 16)

A believer is in no position to reject whom Christ has saved and called. Bound with one another by Christ, believers enter into the common life and into fellowship with one another in a community. Such a bonding relationship through Christ and in Christ is the foundation of Christian community.

Thus relationships among members are pivotal to a community. Community building hinges on relationship building. And not simply relationships need to be built, but “a movement of relationships” needs to be initiated, as suggested by Mel Lawrenz, “Building community is not just a matter of herding people into a room and calling it community - it is to initiate a

movement of relationships that access the power of God to reconcile” (Lawrenz 2009, 62). This is especially applicable for the leadership team of SCBC. For here, with different groups and congregations as well as a full range of ministries, workers and leaders alike may only know a small circle of people whom they work closely with. The different leadership teams hardly mix or mingle even though they do come together in the same room for business meetings. Fellow workers may be working together with shallow or no relationships with others and there can be no fellowship in their working together. There is much need for such “a movement of relationships” so that the full power of God’s reconciliation can be manifested.

Such relationship building is especially important in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural church setting as differences can be more distinct and complex. Mark DeYmaz, an expert in developing multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural churches, proposed seven core commitments for multi-ethnic churches. Among others, developing cross-cultural relationships and promoting spirit of inclusion are listed as must-do for a multi-ethnic church (DeYmaz 2007, 81, 108). For the leaders of SCBC to work together in fellowship with one another, fostering “cross-cultural relationships” and “spirit of inclusion” across culturally different language groups, and promoting Lawrenz’s “movement of relationships” will be most helpful.

Compatibility of Appreciative Inquiry with Christian Worldview and Values

First proposed in 1987 by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva,

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) offers a new affirmative approach that totally forgoes the conventional problem-solving approach in organizational change and management. AI has since been widely adopted worldwide with acclaimed recognition as a change agent. According to Cooperrider, “Summing up AI is difficult – a philosophy of knowing, a methodology for managing change, an approach to leadership and human development” (Cooperrider, 1999, 5). So AI is not simply a research method, but it also conveys a distinct philosophy of learning as well as a means for leadership development. In adopting AI for use in a church setting, it must first be ascertained if the method with its principles and underlying philosophy is compatible with Christian beliefs. This section will examine the principles of AI and its underlying beliefs, its employ of inquiring and listening practices, and the AI experience of cohesion in the light of Christian worldview and values.

AI Principles and Christian Values

AI method is built upon several distinctive principles that are founded on some essential beliefs and values about human and organizational change. As explained by Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom, “the principles suggest that human organizing and change is a positive, socially interactive process of discovering and crafting life-affirming, guiding images of the future” (Whitney

and Trosten-Bloom 2010, 49). These principles provide the foundational theoretical basis of AI method. Detailed accounts of these principles can be found in various AI resources (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2010, Watkins and Mohr 2001, Mohr and Watkins 2002, Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011) and are briefly outlined below. An understanding of the key AI principles and their compatibility with Christian worldview and values is most important as they are pertinent to the design and use of AI in church.

Social Constructionism and Simultaneity

First and foremost, AI is rooted in the theory of social constructionism. Social constructionism holds that the world of meaning is complex and is related to actions and relationships. Worlds of meaning “are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell 2003, 8). The theory believes that ideas and imaginations emerge when people interact. Related to this is the principle of simultaneity in knowledge. People’s minds and thinking change simultaneously when questions are posed and when inquiries take place. So knowledge, meanings and realities are not static but multiple and dynamic. They are socially and dialogically constructed simultaneously in human interactions and situations.

Christians view that reality and meaning are found in God and God alone, “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct them?” (1 Cor. 2:16, Is 40:12). It is only by work of the Spirit and God’s revelation that we can

get a hold of reality and grasp the true meaning of things. As Paul says, “but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.” (1 Cor. 2:10) We grapple with reality and meaning, but in our depravity we never have a full grasp of them. They are in God and God alone. As Paul says, “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12). What we see and what we know are limited, partial, sketchy and incomplete. In faith, we seek to understand the dynamic and ever-evolving reality in our world as God reveals to us. Human situations and social interactions are, among many other means, ways that God uses to speak and impart to us revelation of true meaning and reality. We are called into the fellowship of believers and to dwell in communities, social construct definitely plays a huge part as we journey together in faith seeking understanding.

Participative Principle

To generate social construct and simultaneous emergence of new ideas and meanings, AI is highly participative. The method involves the active participation of people to investigate and discover subject matter through dialogues and real time relations and interactions. As Jane Watkins and Bernard Mohr say, “When worlds of meaning intersect, creative outcomes may occur. New forms of relating, new realities, and new possibilities may all emerge” (Watkins and Mohr, 2011, 39). Using interviews and various interactive and

dialogical means, AI engages people to inquire, listen and interact with one another.

Peter teaches about the priesthood of believers (1 Pet. 2:9). God speaks to us all. We are told in Proverbs, “let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance” (Prov. 1:5) and that “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak” (James 1:19) and to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). A participative principle that employs the practice of inquiring, listening and interaction aligns well with Christian values.

Poetic Principle

AI also embraces the poetic principle which holds that human experiences are like poems that are open to different interpretations. The past, present and future are open for meaning and possibilities. Storytelling becomes a major and important component of AI because stories of experiences are open for interpretations and meanings.

Poetic principle is not foreign to Christians. The bible is full of poetic writings. The Book of Psalms presents songs and prayers in poetic genres that freely express outpours of human emotions under different life situations and circumstances, be they words of praise and thanksgiving, or outcries of despair and raw anger. Life is an open book for interpretation and we are invited to read and interpret life and history with godly wisdom and understanding, just as Paul prays, “that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of

insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ” (Phil. 1:9-10).

Anticipatory Principle

An anticipatory principle is also central to AI approach. The method is forward looking in anticipation of new possibilities. AI process often involves a co-dreaming or co-creation component that seeks to explore future possibilities and meanings.

Christians live in anticipation of God’s acts and deeds in history and in our daily living. As stated in Hebrews, “Now faith is the assurance (or substance) of things hoped for (or expected), the conviction (or evidence) of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1 NASB), we embrace the unseen and the unknown future with hope and assurance of faith in God. We believe that “God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect” (Heb. 11:40) and “that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6), so we live in anticipation and expectation of God’s will to be unfolded and God’s work to be done in us and through us. New possibilities are embraced as we seek and wait in hope.

Positive Principle

Last but not least, in stark contrast to a conventional problem-solving approach that delves into the heart of problems, AI adopts a positive principle. As the name suggests, AI is nothing but appreciative from beginning to end. The inquiry sets out to draw the best, the high points, the peak experience and the best

memories and imaginations out of people. It holds on to the positive principle that new possibilities and change will be brought out through what is affirmative and positive.

This is in line with Christian values as Paul exhorts us, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (Eph. 4:29). We are urged to build each other up, “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Rom. 14:19) and “in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Phil. 2: 4). By engaging participants to affirm and appreciate each other, AI method puts Paul’s teaching into practice.

Christian Values in AI Principles

Summing up, AI principles are in many ways in line with Christian worldview and values. The principles affirm Christian beliefs in priesthood of believers and the value of individual members in a community. AI engages believers to appreciate each other and to collectively explore and anticipate meanings of the reality that they live in. In spirit of positivity and appreciation, it embraces Paul’s call, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Phil. 4:8). Through facilitating relationship building, interactive fellowship, and communal participation, it puts into practice how fellow believers need to relate

with one another in incarnational community living. AI offers a very compatible approach for use in a Christian context.

Practice of Inquiring and Listening

To do an AI in SCBC was an initiative to answer the above-established calls for strengthening the unifying strand and for a movement of relationship. Leaders from different congregations were invited to inquire what God has been doing in each other's life and what he might be doing collectively in SCBC.

One simple straightforward means of making inquiries is to ask questions and listen for answers. Pertaining to AI approach is one very important aspect of Christian life that must not be neglected: the ministry of listening. Listening is a practice of incarnational community (Halter 2008, 124). Bonhoeffer speaks of the importance of listening:

But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too.... Brotherly pastoral care is essentially distinguished from preaching by the fact that, added to the task of speaking the Word, there is the obligation of listening. (Bonhoeffer 1954, 75)

So listening is an obligation, not a choice. For true fellowship life to be realized, believers must not only listen to God but also to each other in Christ. One must have time alone with God but also devote time to others in fellowship. Solitude time with God needs to go hand in hand with fellowship time with others. As Bonhoeffer so aptly asserts, "Blessed is he who is alone in the strength of the fellowship and blessed is he who keeps the fellowship in the strength of aloneness" (Bonhoeffer, 1954, 68). The practice of listening is crucial in a

community as fellowship cannot happen without listening. The discipline of listening must be cultivated in the community for *koinonia*, the fellowship in Christ, to happen.

An appreciative inquiry would do just that, to generate dialogues and listening among members of different groupings, so that through the experience the unifying strand of church can be fostered and fellowship relationships can be built.

Promoting Experience of Cohesion

In talking about the dynamics of cohesion, Lawrenz suggests that one way of promoting unity in the body of Christ is “to promote experiences of cohesion... our bond in Jesus Christ must be the basis of unity, and to experience it we need to bring people together in bonding experiences” (Lawrenz 2009, 108). And that is exactly what AI was about: promoting “experiences of cohesion” and “bonding experiences” by gathering people for a shared experience. The experience involved dialogues and mutual listening, discovering and dreaming about church together so that common ground among the leaders and the unifying strand in church could be strengthened.

It must be emphasized that the AI experience is not an end in itself. It is not done for the sake of an establishment nor for the promotion of tradition, culture or human organization. The people of God must work together in obedience to God’s commands in accordance to his will for the exaltation of

Christ and his work. The end goal lies in fulfillment of God's will and purpose for church.

Appreciative inquiry to cultivate the common ground for working together was but a tiny step to move forward in this direction. It was only one of the dozens and hundreds of "experiences of cohesion" that were needed for unity in church. As Lawrenz well puts it, "A garment isn't held together by a few irregular stiches, but by long lines of carefully placed ones" (Lawrenz 2009, 111), the ground for working together warrants regular care and nurture in the long run. The unifying strand, the fellowship bonding, the listening, the reflective discerning of God's work all need to be intentionally and continually nurtured with care.

CHAPTER III:

PRECEDENT SOCIAL SCIENCE

LITERATURE AND CASES

In establishing the theological framework for this research, Chapter 2 took us down the road to biblical concepts of work, working together and unity. On the other hand, SCBC presented us a reality of church that pointed in a different direction. To have a better understanding of the challenge for the leadership in a multi-congregational Chinese church, we need to dig deeper into what it is in the local church that makes working together difficult.

The cultural diversity within a Chinese church in North America has long been known as a major challenge and a factor that directly or indirectly causes tensions and conflicts. Studies on the inherent cultural diversity and complex make-up of a Chinese immigrant church will be examined. Literature on the challenge for working in a multicultural setting and propositions for working together in such environments will be drawn. We will join the discussion on the need for finding and building a common ground for the diverse groups to work together. How Appreciative Inquiry can help in fostering unity and working together in a multicultural setting and various precedent cases will be examined.

Major source of reference in this section includes the work of Chinese scholar Paul Wang who researched on inter-generational cross-cultural conflict in Chinese churches in Canada (2003). His understanding about Chinese culture and the issues pertaining cultural differences within ethnic Chinese churches is most relevant to this research. Citations are also taken from *Invitation to Lead: Guidance for Emerging Asian American Leaders* (2003) by Paul Tokunaga, and from *Faithful Generations: Race and New Asian American Churches* (2005) by Russell Jeung who both wrote about the inter-generational dynamics and cultural diversity within Asian American churches. Though their works were about immigrant Chinese churches as well as Korean, Japanese churches in the States, the cultural heritage, struggles and challenge of these American churches have a lot in common to those found in a Canadian Chinese immigrant church like SCBC. Another major source is found in *Churches, Cultures and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (2011) co-authored by Mark Lau Branson and Juan Martinez, faculty members of Fuller Theological Seminary who are known for their work on church cultures, intercultural and leadership issues. Mark Lau Branson teaches practical theology, congregational leadership and community engagement while Juan Martinez specializes in diversity and international ministries. Their book takes an interdisciplinary approach in examining cultural diversity and division in church with a theological framework integrated with sociology, cultural anthropology and other disciplines. Various aspects of church cultures, congregational divisions and leadership are expounded with such rich analysis and profound insight that it offers a very valuable source

for this research. Another book by Mark Lau Branson entitled *Memories, Hopes and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (2004) gives a detailed account of an Appreciative Inquiry that Branson conducted with a congregation of Japanese descent in California. The story demonstrates the use of AI to bring about transformation in a church and provides a precedence reference case for SCBC to follow. In considering divisions in a large church, the work of Mel Lawrenz is cited. Mel Lawrenz is Minister-at-Large of a mega church with 6,000 average attendance in Wisconsin, the Elmbook Church in Brookfield. His book *Whole Church: Leading from Fragmentation to Engagement* (2009) examines church unity and fragmentation issues with great insight. Another major source is the work of Harvard scholar Todd Pittinsky who specializes in the study of diverse community with a special focus in positive inter-group relationships. His book *Crossing the Divide* (2009) is especially helpful and relevant for SCBC as it explores sub-groups and inter-group dynamics in an organization and offers practical advice on how barriers between groups can be crossed. Regarding leadership development, reference is drawn from the work of leadership experts Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini. Aubrey Malphurs teaches leadership and pastoral ministry in Dallas Theological Seminary and is a renowned author of over 20 books on leadership and a well-known church consultant and leadership coach. Together with leadership consultant and coach Will Mancini, they co-authored *Building Leaders* (2004) in which they lay out blueprints for church leadership development with great clarity, insight and practical advice that all align well with the need for leadership development in SCBC. Another major

source on leadership and teamwork is found in *The Advantage* (2012) by Patrick Lencioni, a well-known conference speaker and writer who specializes in organizational health and team development, both highly pertinent to the challenge that SCBC is facing. Mark DeYmaz, founder of multi-ethnic Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas and recognized leader of Multi-ethnic Church Movement, writes about developing multi-ethnic, multicultural and economically diverse churches in his book *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church* (2007) which gives valuable and practical advice relevant to the multilingual and multi-congregational context of SCBC.

Division in a Chinese Immigrant Church

In many ways, SCBC is no different from other Chinese immigrant churches found in Canada. Over 99% of her members are of Chinese descent. At different points in time, Chinese Christians gathered from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, south-east Asia, East Asia and other parts of the world have chosen to settle in this place and gathered as church. Chinese-speaking congregants form the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations. The English congregation is made up mostly of their descendants. Whether second, third or fourth generation, they are the English-speaking CBC and CRC (Canadian born Chinese and Canadian raised Chinese) distinctly different from their Chinese-speaking counterparts made up of OBC and ORC (overseas born Chinese and overseas raised Chinese). Some questions need to be asked: What comprises the Chinese heritage in a Chinese church that draws people together and how strong

is it a commonality shared by the different congregations? What underlies the differences between the different language groups and between the OBC and CBC? Studies on the cultural distinctiveness and diversity within a Chinese church, discussions on acculturation and assimilation, and the intergenerational and intercultural dynamics and tensions within a Chinese immigrant church like SCBC will be examined below.

Chinese Heritage – How Strong a Tie?

According to Russell Jeung, “Ethnicity is a socially constructed group around a common ancestry, shared history and culture, and shared symbols of peoplehood” (Jeung 2005, 7). In many ways Chinese around the globe share a common ancestry, history and a shared Chinese identity. So when immigrants of Chinese descent from different parts of the world gather themselves in churches in the diaspora, it can easily be perceived that the Chinese immigrant church is not only homogeneous ethnically but also culturally homogenous. But what exactly comprises the Chinese heritage that connects Chinese around the world and to what extent do members of a Chinese immigrant church share the same Chinese culture?

In his study on cross-cultural conflict patterns and intervention in Chinese churches in Vancouver, Paul Wang traced the development of Chinese civilization all the way back to Xia Dynasty around 2000 B.C. and explained how Confucianism has come to shape Chinese culture in the past 2000 years (Wang 2003, 85-87). Confucius lived around 551-479 B.C. and after serving the ruler of

Lu in his hometown, he wandered about from state to state and spread his teachings to over 3000 followers according to tradition. Over time, the teachings of Confucius became a powerful force that shaped the moral and social conduct of the people. It became the state principles upon which state legislation and social traditions were built. As Wang explains, “By the end of the Song dynasty (A.D. 960-1279) the Confucian tradition was so firmly ingrained in Chinese way of life and cultural values that even when foreign rulers from central Asia and Manchuria conquered China, they brought little change to Chinese society” (Wang 2003, 87). Wang concludes, “Today, Confucian ethical values still broadly define the nature of Chinese culture and Chinese distinctiveness” (Wang 2003, 92). Wang outlines the eight virtues in Confucianism that “have become the moral and relational filaments of the Chinese culture” (Wang 2003, 112), namely, honor (xiao 孝) towards parents, brotherhood (ti悌) towards siblings, faithfulness (zhong 忠) towards the superior and the country, trustworthiness (xin 信) towards friends and in business, respect (li 禮) with courtesy and propriety, uprightness (yi 義) in society, modesty (lian 廉) with material possession and lifestyle, and shame (chi 恥) in saving one’s face and dignity (Wang 2003, 111-112). Another branch of philosophy that shaped Chinese culture is Daoism (also spelled Taoism) that abides to the teachings of 6th Century master teacher Lao Tsu who advocated humility, lowness and passivity. Wang also explains how Daoism teaches:

The way to reduce evil and increase virtue in the society is not to raise the standards for defining virtue, but rather through passivism. A person should reverse the societal process and return to unity with the tendencies of the natural world by means of “non-action” (wu wei 無為), which is

also a political ideal. The art of "wu wei" is to let nature take its course. (Wang 2003, 89)

This trace merges with Buddhist teaching of the "middle way" or the path of moderation in translating to a passive, peace loving, harmony seeking Chinese way of doing things. Samuel Ling outlined how these traits transpire in personal outlook, dealings with people, leadership in formulating a Chinese way of doing things (Ling 1984, 1999). To understand the unity and diversity issues of SCBC, it is necessary to ascertain how much of these traditional Chinese values, Chinese thinking and Chinese way of doing things still remain and prevail within a Chinese immigrant church setting.

One question that Wang asks in his study on Chinese churches in Vancouver is: How much is this cultural heritage shared by the Chinese immigrants gathered from different parts of the world? In the summary statements of his study, Wang states:

We have determined that there is a set of common cultural values or mindsets that are shared by Chinese immigrants, whether they are from Taiwan, the Mainland, Hong Kong or other Southeast Asian Chinese communities. Although there are some variations as to the degree of significance, the key core cultural trait preferences are alike. (Wang 2003, 137)

Wang affirms that the core cultural traits built around Confucianism are present and commonly shared by the Chinese immigrants regardless of where they have come from.

In like manner, in his study on Asian American churches, Paul Tokunaga also identified that Confucianism is a key "Asian DNA" and that "Koreans, Chinese and Japanese are Confucian-based people" (Tokunaga 2003, 35). He saw

that Confucianism holds strong value in parental authority, social hierarchy, male dominance, duty and obligation, and education (Tokunaga 2003, 37). Tokunaga explains that ‘Li’ (respect) depicts “a combination of morality and etiquette, custom and ritual” (Tokunaga 2003, 36). Together with ‘Ren (仁)’ which refers to goodness, human-heartedness and kindness, ‘Li’ dominates as a central concept of Confucianism. Likewise, Paul Chao in his study on Chinese Culture and Christianity also describes the one element ‘Li’ as the “Ultimate Principle” that connects Confucianism, Taoism and Neo-Confucianism with an emphasis on “ceremony, ritual, decorum and rules of propriety. It is the ultimate principle of harmony of man and nature, and each man with all men and all things” (Chao 2006, 52). Tokunaga noted that there are definitely values in Confucianism which are comparable with Christian teaching, like the call to honor parents, brotherhood and the importance of relationships. However not all aspects of Confucianism are consistent with Christian teachings, such as its over-emphasis on education and its take on equality and the status of women. Tokunaga offered insightful discussion on how factors like shame, suffering, families and liminality may impact Chinese Christians in North America (Tokunaga 2003, 37-51). In his studies on Chinese Christians in North America, Fenggeng Yang found that most Chinese Christians still hold a positive view that Confucianism is comparable with Christianity, that it is valuable for life and that a positive favorable attitude towards Confucianism still prevails in Chinese churches in North America (Yang 1999, 147).

Likewise, in his study on cultural solidarity in Asian American churches, Jeung studied fifty ethnic-specific contemporary congregations in San Francisco Bay Area and found that “contrary to expectations, Chinese and Japanese American churches are not dying out or becoming open to all but are adapting by becoming Asian American” (Jeung 2005, 2). Commenting on these congregations, Jeung says:

Although these congregations differ in theology, denomination, and age, they all organize themselves around an ethnic tie that is based on a shared culture. According to their ministers, ethnic culture is an intuitive, taken-for-granted way of behaving and viewing the world that is transmitted generationally through families. These shared cultural traits foster a sense of comfort and familiarity among the people when they gather” (Jeung 2005, 29).

The shared ethnic culture has not become extinct in time but has been passed down through families and stays as a strong force in Asian immigrant churches. Further probe into the ethnic bonds within Chinese American churches reveals that “Despite sociologists’ predictions, cultural solidarity around kinship systems persisted among the Chinese” (Jeung 2005, 26). Jeung also found that “Confucian virtues that include family harmony, obligation to the group, and a strong work ethic geared toward education and career” continue to shape group behaviors and set Chinese Asian churches apart from mainstream social values (Jeung 2006, 33). Exceptional strong family and kinship ties are described by both Jeung and Chao in their books (Jeung 2005, 26, 32-33, 56, Chao 2006, Ch. 2). Jeung also described how family loyalty, hierarchical relations, face-saving and harmony seeking play out in Chinese churches (Jeung 2005, 54, 57, 59).

No doubt Confucian virtues have firmly established in the Chinese DNA and shaped Chinese culture. A look into the cultural traits of the congregants of SCBC affirms the presence of this common strand of Chinese heritage. The largest group in SCBC consists of Cantonese-speaking immigrants who have mostly come from Hong Kong. The Mandarin-speaking congregation is made up of immigrants mostly from Mainland China. However geographical origins extend beyond Hong Kong and Mainland as there are many within both groups who have come from Malaysia, Taiwan, India, Singapore, Latin America and Europe. But common to all the first generation of OBC and ORC who have immigrated to Canada is the shared Chinese core values and cultural heritage described above. These family and social core values dictate relational and behavioral expectations. Family and kinship ties are extremely strong. There is common emphasis on education and success. Children, no matter how old in age, are to show honor and respect to their parents and people older than themselves. Loyalty to friends and country is of top priority. Harmony and peace within the community is of utmost importance. Respect and propriety are to be displayed regardless of negative feelings or disagreement. Shame factor shapes a social norm wherein one's honor and family name are carefully protected. How people think is of great importance and that care must be taken to save the face of oneself and that of others. Respect and submission to pastors and people in authority are expected at all times. Some Chinese pastors still feel uncomfortable if addressed by first names and not respectfully with 'Reverends'. Disagreement and true feelings are suppressed for the sake of harmony and for face-saving reasons.

Even though these traditional Chinese cultural values connect all the OBC and ORC regardless where they are from, there are inherent deep-seated differences between the Cantonese and Mandarin groups in the way things are done and the way people relate. Majority of the Cantonese-speaking OBC have come from Hong Kong. They were raised and educated in a stringently demanding and competitive yet free and prosperous city under the British rule. On the other hand, most of their Mandarin-speaking counterparts were raised in the atheist environment of China. Many have experienced first-hand life in a state of fear under the political turmoil of a communist regime, survived the Cultural Revolution and witnessed the Tiananmen Square protest and rampage. Behind many of them were incredible stories of hardship, courage and determination in how they made their way to Canada, not uncommonly by way of other countries. Moreover, there are great differences within the Mandarin group. Early immigrants who went through the Cultural Revolution in the ‘60s are more reserved, private and guarded with a higher level of distrust of strangers. Recent immigrants include many professionals and business people who grew up in a much freer but highly competitive socio-economic climate. In the same way, within the Cantonese speaking group, there is great diversity in education, economic and denominational backgrounds. There are distinct differences among groups who have come to Canada in different time periods. The earlier immigrants who have been around since the ‘60s and ‘70s carry great pride in their being forerunners in the city and do church the old Chinatown way. And most recent immigrants show traits and values of a very different kind as Hong

Kong has undergone so much economic and political changes in the last two decades. All in all, though Chinese heritage is in general commonly shared by all OBC and ORC, the diversity between and within both the Cantonese and Mandarin congregations cannot be overlooked.

OBC/ORC vs CBC/CRC

The next question is: How strong is this Chinese cultural heritage a tie between the Chinese-speaking first generation OBC/ORC and the English-speaking second or subsequent generations of CBC/CRC? How differently has the English-speaking congregation evolved and in what ways are they different from the Chinese-speaking counterparts?

In his study on cross-cultural conflicts between two generations of leaders in Chinese churches in Vancouver, Wang reported that the CBC/CRC generation has diverged from the strong Chinese cultural heritage and failed to keep the core values held by first generation immigrants. Referring to the core values of Confucianism that are ingrained in Chinese culture, Wang comments:

These eight virtues have become the moral and relational filaments of the Chinese culture for the last twenty-five hundred years. Nonetheless, these core values, which have been deeply entrenched in the ways of thinking of their forbearers, are sadly unknown to and unappreciated by the CBC/CRC and recent generations. One can see why conflict in the CCC (Canadian Chinese Church) can arise between a misguided ORC traditionalist and a culturally unattached CBC free-spirit thinker. (Wang 2003, 112)

To find out how the Chinese cultural heritage can be lost, Wang delved into the subject of ethnic acculturation and assimilation theories of primordialism and circumstantialism. Primordialism theory states that ethnicity is fixed and bound

with unchangeable circumstances of birth, while circumstantialism theory claims that ethnic outcomes are determined by non-ethnic forces and that, like culture, ethnicity changes continually with circumstances of situations and experiences. Neither theory was found to be sufficient to explain the state of Chinese ethnicity in North America, as Wang reported:

Data clearly indicates that ORC are more primordial culturally while CBC/CRC are more circumstantial. The measurement on the Canadian Chinese Church intergenerational, bi-cultural setting from the information gathered strongly indicates the Non-Uniform Approach to the theory of assimilation particularly for the Chinese Christians in North America. (Wang 2003, 136)

Ethnicity is such a complex process that it cannot be accounted for by one theory. Wang also examined Fenggang Yang's "invention of ethnicity" that suggests ethnicity as a process of invention:

an ongoing process of invention that incorporates, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories. In the process, ethnic group boundaries are repeatedly renegotiated and expressive symbols of ethnicity are repeatedly reinterpreted. (Wang 2003, 74-75)

In the case of intergenerational differences among Chinese in North America, "communal solidarities", "cultural attributes" and "historical memories" all come into play. Here, Chinese ethnicity is impacted by both Chinese culture as well as western culture. Cultural attributes as well as ethnic boundary are continually being reinvented, renegotiated and reinterpreted. Wang summarizes well: "Both generations of Chinese in North America are "on the move" somewhere along their bi-cultural continuum, ranging from Chinese-ness on one end, to North American-ness on the other range of spectrum" (Wang 2003, 135). This well

depicts how OBC, ORC, CBC and CRC may differ greatly in their Chinese cultural heritage and how their Chinese-ness and Canadian-ness may keep on changing as they move along the bi-cultural continuum.

Studies on acculturation among Chinese Canadians done by Ai-Lan Chia established that the extent and pace of shift in cultural heritage is subject to the interplay of various internal and external factors. In her research, Chia isolated internal and external Chinese and Canadian dimensions in the cultural contacts of Chinese students who have lived in Canada for over two years. Internal Chinese dimensions include things like “ethnic affirmation and belonging, ethnic identity achievement, ethnic kinship and common fate, Chinese cultural values, and collective self-esteem” (Chia and Costigan 2006, 311-324). These contribute to the extension of cultural contacts and heritage. Her findings reveal that Chinese and Canadian dimensions emerge as two separate and independent constructs and that internal Chinese dimensions is the strong component in the extent of cultural contact for these students. Chia’s study affirmed that acculturation is multidimensional. Undoubtedly, the shift in Chinese heritage for all Chinese Canadians, CBC/CRC and OBC/ORC alike, is a complex process that involves an intricate interplay of all internal, external, Chinese and Canadian dimensions.

No matter what, the fact is, while the first generation OBC and ORC generally cling on to the ethical Chinese heritage with which they were born in and stay on the Chinese-ness side of the bi-cultural continuum, the second generation CBC and CRC have moved on to the North American-ness end. The gap between the OBC/ORC and the CBC/CRC results in two different cultures

with very different values, outlook and ministry practices and which so often becomes the cause for conflicts between the two generations. Wang extrapolates the many differences between Asian and western cultural profiles and how ministry translations between the two generations render major differences in cultural, ministry and leadership values (Wang 2003, 95-110, 145-146). Wang offers these general tendencies to describe the differences. While ORC desire to foster the Chinese culture and protect Chinese heritage, CBC value Christian values before heritage and traditions. While ORC are pragmatic and task oriented, CBC are idealistic and relational oriented. While ORC expect honor and respect be given to leaders, CBC value equality and empowerment. While ORC value harmony and are committed to church-based ministry, CBC are committed to social justice, community and world issues. Differences like these and many others can be potential and direct causes of disagreement and conflicts. Tension between overseas-born and locally-born Chinese in Chinese churches has been a topic of discussion in the last four decades (Yau 1986, Yang 1999, Ling 1999, Alumkal 2003, Wang 2003, Muse 2005). Unfortunately, it remains a major challenge for multi-generational Chinese churches and reports of intergenerational conflicts leading to separation and church splitting are no strange news among Chinese churches.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that some traditional cultural traits stay strong within the second generation while some become obsolete. On this point, Russell Jeung offered an explanation:

The very cultural traits considered and promoted as quintessentially Chinese or Japanese today—family unity, education, hard work—also are legitimated by the American capitalistic system and its ideology of meritocracy and individualism. Thus, the traditional values that are selectively maintained, passed on, and highlighted tend to be those that are also adaptive and prized in this society. Other traditional customs, such as being buried with ancestors, become obsolete and are no longer practiced. (Jeung 2005, 33)

Though Jeung is referring to an American context, this is also true in Canada, as traits like family ties, diligence, emphasis on education, discipline, and those that work well in the society, or those that align with western values naturally stay strong among the second generation.

As ties and selective traits stay strong and continue to be passed down in families, second-generation ethnic Chinese continue to gather and thrive as a community. CBC and CRC continue to stay in a Chinese church as an ethnic group. As Jeung describes, “These shared cultural traits foster a sense of comfort and familiarity among the people when they gather... ethnic congregations build upon and cultivate a cultural bond that seems natural, comfortable, and familiar to its members” (Jeung 2005, 29). The eventual cultural heritage link becomes one of symbolic ethnicity, as Jeung explains:

By the third generation, the ethnic identities of white immigrants tend to be more symbolic and optional so that involvement with an ethnic congregation, if any, is intermittent at best. Symbolic ethnicity is a new form of ethnic behavior and affiliation in which the old culture is only an ancestral memory and provides no useful function. Because regular practice and participation in ethnic communities is not essential for the maintenance of symbolic ethnicity, identification with a group can be developed through allegiance to group symbols that are visible and clear in meaning. These symbols may include ethnic festivals, foods, and political representatives or sports figures. (Jeung 2005, 8)

This very well describes the case of the English-speaking congregation in SCBC. The group grows in size and continues to thrive as CBC continue to gather and develop its group identity as a distinctly Chinese ethnic community. In a recent church-wide consultation on whether to drop the word “Chinese” and to replace it with the word “community” in the name “Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church”, many CBC surprised their Chinese-speaking counterparts by passionately opposing the motion and expressing their embrace of the common Chinese identity.

Division in a Large Multi-Congregational Church

The challenge of a large ethnic immigrant church like SCBC is accentuated by the presence of three congregations each with its own distinctly different language and culture. Literature on how language and cultural diversity create barriers between groups, the intergroup dynamics, and the need for removing barriers and crossing boundaries in a multicultural setting will be examined in this section.

Language, Cultural and Structural Barriers

On the topic of organization fragmentation, Lawrenz suggests, “Organization fragmentation is most of the time rooted in human fragmentation” (Lawrenz 2009, 62). Fragmentation is an outcome of the dynamics of human disintegration of the whole. Owing to our partiality “we stick to our own group, become entrenched in our own limited opinions, build walls, define ourselves by

what and whom we are against" (Lawrenz 2009, 63). Church is no exception as these human dynamics work against unity. In the case of SCBC, even though there is strong embrace for unity in the big church family, primarily congregations run their own course and take care of their own business. Day-to-day operation of each congregation is separate from and independent of other congregations. Definitely there are walls and boundaries as each group protects its interests and strives for its own well-being and growth.

One obvious barrier came out of the above-described cultural diversity and cultural differences between different generations and language congregations. Even though Chinese descent and Chinese heritage is common to all congregations in SCBC, distinct cultural differences in values and practices among the different generational and language groups result in natural demarcations and divisions.

One big cross-congregational barrier is the language factor that is so intricately intertwined with and inseparable from the cultural differences described above. With an unstoppable determination to translate the bible into laymen's English, William Tyndale recognized the importance of teaching the truth in one's native mother tongue:

It was not possible to stablish the lay people in any truth, except the Scripture were so plainly layde before theyr eyes in theyr mother tongue, that they myght see the processe, order, and meaning of the text: For els what so euer truth shuld be taught them. (Pollard 1911, 89)

One always learns and understands better in one's mother tongue. Juan Lau Martinez affirms the importance of mother tongues not only in learning but also

in praying when he asserts that “Native languages are usually the best tool for effective communication of the gospel and for an understanding of communicating with God” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 127). As native language is one’s heart language and the best and most effective tool for communication, it is natural that people of the same language would gather to worship and do church together in their own language.

Yet there is more in language that sets people apart, as Martinez also notes:

But language is much more than a (mechanistic) tool that humans utilize for communication. It is a complex system that weaves perceptions, meanings and imaginations into a “system of representation”. Language is a means of sorting out reality at the boundary between objects (out there) and concepts (constructs in our mind). (Branson and Martinez 2011, 115)

Hidden behind the language differences are the different perceptions and preconceptions that demarcate and divide. Martinez writes, “People who are monolingual and usually interact solely with other people who speak only their language seldom have occasion to question their mechanistic assumptions about language” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 116). So when the Cantonese, Mandarin and English-speaking people disperse and dwell comfortably in their own groups, there is little need for them to interact with other groups.

The language issue becomes even more acute when we take into account of the many dialect groups that gather in their own circles speaking their native tongues like Taiwanese, Taishanese, Hakkanese and others too many to name. Each group develops its “*emic* (insider’s view) and an *etic* (outsider’s view)” and “this creates various types of complexities in intercultural settings. The most

common is the inability to perceive (or process sensory stimuli) as people from other cultures do” and “recognize the difference between an *emic* (insider’s view) and an *etic* (outsider’s view) of a culture” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 174). The result is that people become increasingly segregated, groups can see things differently from each other and may head off in different directions.

But no matter what, for convenience, effectiveness and practicality reasons, language is a natural criterion for demarcation in a multicultural church. So language division is structured in the organization as separate entities. On this point, Martinez comments:

Most “successful” churches in the United States are based on some version of the homogeneity principle or a market-oriented strategy.... This pragmatism also tends toward antistructuralism, the inability or unwillingness to recognize how structures shape access or create barriers, no matter what people and societies say they want. (Branson and Martinez 2011, 164)

Here we are reminded that structural set-up can directly impact the shaping and creation of barriers and division. With a structural set-up of three distinct language congregations under one roof in SCBC, there are clear boundaries and barriers that divide and segregate. The structural division based on language reinforces separation of the groups and actually heightens existing walls and barriers. How to move together as one whole church and advance the interest of member groups is an ongoing challenge for the leadership.

That leads us to the question of organizational structure in a church. Understandably, ministry demand in a large multicultural church with two thousand members is extremely high and structures have to be put in place for

operation, management and accountability. But the pitfalls of modern management need to be noted, as Morton Hansen writes on modern management:

a decentralized system with clear lines of responsibility, a great deal of accountability, and rewards for those who perform.... The problem is that each manager becomes increasingly independent and tries to maximize his or her unit... Over time, decentralization risks turning a company into a loose collection of units, which become fiefdoms or silos. (Hansen 2009, 49)

This well describes the case in SCBC with its complex matrix organizational structure for ministry operation and management. For ministry efficiency and effectiveness, there is extensive division of labor to keep things running. As staff and lay workers are directed into different specialty areas of ministry, the silos phenomenon is exactly what has surfaced as a force that works against collaboration and unity. As Lawrenz says, “if ministries become silos, and believers only associate with people just like themselves, they miss the influence of the diversity of the body” (Lawrenz 2009, 63). The silos mentality fuels existing demarcation and reinforces segregation of the whole body. Hanson listed four barriers to collaboration, namely, ‘why not-invented-here’, ‘the hoarding barrier’, ‘the search barrier’ and ‘the transfer barrier’ (Hansen 2003, 50-63). The presence of these barriers is not unknown to SCBC. Understandably groups and units often find working on its own easier than in joint collaboration with other groups. In the day-to-day operation and decision making of church matters, these barriers can be invisible forces that work against the strive for unity of all groups for the common good of all.

Intergroup Dynamics and Dual Identity

Speaking about intergroup dynamics, Todd Pittinsky sums it up well, “Group boundaries, however, also have fundamental intergroup consequence. Whether they are defined by culture, race or ethnicity, or role within an organization, group boundaries distinguish who is “in” from who is “out”. Moreover, interactions between groups involve greater fear, and mistrust than interactions between individuals” (Pittinsky 2009, 3). This certainly explains how often times disagreements and disputes in SCBC get out of hand not because the issues are so contentious that they cannot be resolved, but because of misunderstanding and mistrust fueled by intergroup fear. How to navigate among the different groups with all the different interests is for sure not an easy task.

While collaboration is a concern and steps need to be taken to facilitate the working together to promote unity of the whole, it is equally important that the groups within the whole can function and thrive and not be slighted. Pittinsky writes about the challenge of a dual identity for a subgroup within a bigger group and the dynamics of minority and dominant cultures within a multicultural setting:

Whereas minority group members typically want to retain their cultural subgroup identity (pluralistic integration, multiculturalism), majority group members favor the assimilation of minority groups into one single culture (a traditional “melting pot” orientation) - the dominant culture. (Pittinsky 2009, 11)

Such dynamics are something that needs to be considered in SCBC as each subgroup is at the same time a member of the big group. Leaders are often caught in

such dual identity dilemma of having to vouch for the interest of both the language group they represent and that of the whole church to which they belong.

Martinez observes that majority-culture leaders must take care that the majority-culture is not imposed upon minority cultures, “When majority-culture church leaders are not able to recognize systemic social, cultural and class issues, they are unable to develop structures that allow congregations to thrive among those that do not share their assumptions” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 166). In SCBC, Cantonese is the majority-culture with the largest membership and the loudest voice. A good understanding of the intercultural dynamics and recognition of the interest of other groups would be essential to alleviate further disintegration of the whole. This would be in line with what John Berry says about the psychological conditions that underlie successful multiculturalism policy, “a sense of cultural security for all who wish to maintain a degree of cultural distinctiveness, and at the same time providing opportunities for all to participate equitably in the economic and political life of this country” (Berry 1997, 60). This is another dimension that must not be overlooked in navigating through the intricate cultural dynamics of a large multicultural church.

Removing Barriers and Crossing Boundaries

The challenge for a large multicultural church is that it is one church and not three or many churches sharing a building. Lawrenz says it well in *The Whole Church*, “A Whole Church is a local congregation believing that it is called to the whole purpose of God in and through the church, rather than to some

specialization” (Lawrenz 2009, 4). To address the differences and tendency to disintegrate, the above language, cultural and structural barriers must be taken down and intercultural boundaries be crossed before unity can be built. But to remove barriers, they must first be recognized and acknowledged. Diversity must first be acknowledged as urged by acclaimed church historian and life fellow of Fitzwilliam College of University of Cambridge Professor David Thompson. In his Presidential Address, Thompson addressed unity issue in the broader context of the Church of England:

It is difficult to see the unity issue going away and it will not be resolved without some acknowledgement of necessary diversity.... Until the Church of England as a whole is prepared to acknowledge in principle the diversity which it recognizes empirically, and even glories in from time to time, it will be impossible for it to unite with any other Church. So long as that is so, unity will be the ‘pleasing dream’, which was Andrew Fuller’s description of William Carey’s idea for missionary co-operation, rather than the ‘common calling’, which the constitution of the World Council of Churches declares it to be. (Thompson 1996, 530)

Two important criteria are embedded in Thompson's plea for unity, first, the need to acknowledge the diversity that is empirically present, and secondly, the need for a ‘common calling’ which will be discussed later when we consider common ground and shared meaning for the church. But first, the diversity and differences must be recognized. In like manner but referring to a multicultural church context, Martinez suggests:

Successful interethnic relations in the life of the church recognize that people have different understandings of problem solving; various approaches are suitable for different challenges. The key issue for leaders will be to use methods that take people into account as steps and procedures are considered. (Branson and Martinez 2011, 148)

This offers a first step in addressing the diversity and unity issue. Differences must be acknowledged and respected, and people are taken into account. Pittinsky captures this notion well with the little phrase “together but not the same” which he explains further, “Intergroup leadership honors that tension; it is concerned with bringing subgroups together without trying to eliminate their differences - or even wanting to” (Pittinsky 2009, xvi). This offers a great guiding principle for working with intercultural groups.

Such acknowledgement, respect and understanding will not be achieved by legislation, enforcement or by merely putting people to work together. As Hansen puts it, “Bad collaboration is worse than no collaboration. People scuttle from meeting to meeting to coordinate work and share ideas, but far too little gets done” (Hansen 2009, 1). On the same note, Lawrenz writes, “Building community is not just a matter of herding people into a room and calling it community - it is to initiate a movement of relationships that access the power of God to reconcile” (Lawrenz 2009, 62). It takes much more than merely putting people to work together in meetings and projects. To acknowledge intercultural differences, there must be intercultural communication and intercultural relationships.

As Branson explains, “intercultural communication must be constantly attentive to the embedded barriers - the assumptions about superiority or inferiority, the habits of procedures, and the imaginations about what is good” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 201). To acknowledge diversity and to break through barriers, what needs to be done is far more than just a verbal admitting of the differences. It calls for a constant attentiveness to the unspoken presumptions

and perceptions that lie underneath and behind the barriers. Thus Branson talks about “crosscultural communication” and “communicative action rather than just strategic action” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 192). As to the work of church leaders, Branson says, “The work of leaders to shape intercultural communication in faith communities is a complex and multifaceted task. The goal is attentiveness - to God, to congregation, to oneself, to cultures, to power, to consequences” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 206). The call for attentiveness in leadership is in stark contrast to what we find in a large Chinese church like SCBC. Here leaders are usually loaded with ministry meetings, busy running around fulfilling ministry duties and become consumed in trying to meet the demanding needs of a large church. Attentiveness to God is usually reserved as a private matter of personal spiritual pursuit. The attentiveness described here pays attention to also the cultures, the congregation, the power dynamics and consequences in the context that intercultural communication has to be shaped and is being shaped. This is something that is new but what SCBC leaders would need to learn. As suggested by Branson, “intercultural life” needs to be enhanced “which can often be embedded in times for food and prayer. Churches, as communities of primary relationships, should be contexts for the complexities of many-layered communication” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 203). The proposed appreciative inquiry would be one of the many possible channels that incorporates both social and personal communication components for such a purpose.

Finding Unity in Diversity – The Need to Cultivate Common Ground

The question was once asked, “How diverse can the Church be and yet still be one?” (Thompson 1996, 507). This question needs to be asked of SCBC, with the diversity of three languages, multi-dialects, and a multicultural, multi-generational and multi-congregational church family under one roof: How diverse can SCBC be and yet still be one?

A key understanding to this question can be found in the positive stand that Pittinsky posits, “subgroup identities are not necessarily the obstacles to unity” (Pittinsky 2009, xvii). Pittinsky talks about, “Intergroup leadership that brings groups together” (Pittinsky 2009, xii). Existence of many groups and the holding on to sub-group identities may not be the culprits that obstruct unity. What needs to be done is to find ways to bring groups together for intercultural communication.

Another truth about unity lies in Thompson’s words, “unity depends on consent: it cannot be imposed from above” (Thompson 1996, 526). True unity in church will not be achieved by enforcement, legislation or structures. Instead common grounds need to be found and cultivated for intercultural communication to take place and intercultural relationships to grow.

Common Ground, Shared Ground - What “Common” Means

Working for unity in a diverse setting, the terms ‘shared’ and ‘common’ are often used as in ‘shared memories’, ‘shared meaning’, ‘common dream’,

‘common vision’ and ‘common ground’. But what actually do we mean and what do we really expect? Linda Stout offers good insight on this:

Sometimes I have used the words “common” and “shared”, but I’m always ready to make clear that what I’m talking about is not total agreement but a vision that many different people are willing to work toward together, often with different issues and strategies. (Stout 2011, 15)

In other words, ‘shared’ and ‘common’ need not be full total agreement or an identical thought and understanding. But that what is shared and common is strong enough for the people to be willing to commit to working together. She further develops that, “To prepare people to work together, you need to understand how to do the prework to build trust and bring together a diverse group; how to create an inclusive, welcoming space; and how to facilitate” (Stout 2011, 37). The pre-work to build trust and bring people together is exactly what this proposal is about. Stout’s view aligns well what the proposed AI intends to do in offering a tool for the people to cultivate that shared, common ground, to build trust and relationship in preparing and furthering the working together of the people.

Common Ground for Relationship Building

We are reminded above by Lawrenz that the basis of unity lies in “our bond in Jesus Christ”. This bond should not stay in our cognitive understanding and our talks alone but must be realized in “bonding experiences” as suggested. Bonding is about relationship. As Mark DeYmaz says, “Authentic relationships are foundational to transforming an otherwise healthy but homogeneous congregation into a healthy multi-ethnic church” (DeYmaz 2007, 166). For a

multicultural multi-congregational environment like SCBC, how to break down all the barriers, cross group boundaries and effectively building authentic relationships is a huge challenge. When people have their own different groups to go to, there is little need or opportunity to bond with people from other groups. A common ground for relationship building needs to be found.

Chris Ernst and Jeffrey Yip talk about the need for a “Third Space—*decategorization*” to bridge groups together (Ernst and Yip 2009, 89). By this they explain, “In creating a third space, leaders establish a suspended neutral zone where personal relationships can be developed, assumptions can be brought to the surface, values can be safely explored, and new language can be created” (Pittinsky 2009, 89). The notion is about a neutral space where categorization does not exist or function. One of the specific means suggested is to reframe or activate a shared identity. Such a third space is very much needed in the case of SCBC, as on the rare occasions when people from different groups meet together, whether in joint functions, business meetings, or even in celebrative events, people are labelled and identified by their groups and recognized as such representation. What is called for here is a neutral setting where no representation is warranted and no group interest is dealt with but where people can be freed from their group identity to build personal relationships with one another. Rosabeth Kanter listed some propositions that will help the creation of common ground, such as the holding of a transcendent value, a future orientation, the building of a new identity, and interpersonal norms and emotional integration which refers to the “interpersonal bonds that solidify good feelings among

people” (Kanter 2009, 77-81). Coincidentally, most of these elements can be found already embedded in the rationale, design and even generic questions of an Appreciative Inquiry method. It is therefore very fitting that this method be used for the cultivation of a common ground that can offer that safe, neutral third space for relationship building.

Personal and relational transformation is one of the seven change agendas that Appreciative Inquiry is purposed to do (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2010, 26). The method is designed for relationship building and attitudinal transformation. As Whitney and Trosten-Bloom explain, Appreciative Leadership is relational and positive and has “the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power - to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm and performance - to make a positive difference in the world” (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom and Rader 2010, 3-4). The method and what it entails will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Common Ground for Communication

There are literatures that offer strategic actions for promoting unity. Hansen takes a tactical approach in asking a different question, “How do we cultivate collaboration in the right way so that we achieve the great things that are not possible when we are divided?” and offers “disciplined collaboration” for an answer (Hansen 2009, 3). With this he suggests a strategy for collaboration to unify people through three things, to create a unifying goal, to create a core value of teamwork and to create a language of collaboration (Hansen 2009, 74-87). He

further suggests that “Collaborative leaders redefine success and focus on goals bigger than their own narrow agendas. They seek common ground, look for pragmatic solutions, and compromise” (Hansen 2009, 148). In a way this is in line with the research approach of this thesis in that a common ground was sought so that a common base can be strengthened for collaboration. So leaders were invited to come together to cultivate a ‘common ground’. Yet this research was not adopting a tactical approach in looking for “pragmatic solutions and compromise” as Hansen suggests. The goal of this research was not the material outcome of “a unifying goal”, “a core value” or “a language of collaboration” which would definitely be good but beyond reach for SCBC at this point. The ground for working together in SCBC needs to be loosened and the better prepared for the people to work together. So people were brought together to seek common ground, and just that at this point. Hence, instead of choosing the path for strategic tactical action, the research was taking the above-discussed route of communicative action that Branson proposes (Branson and Martinez 2011, 192).

Lawrenz presents communicative approach in a different way. Speaking about the dynamics of cohesion for unity, he suggests two ways:

There are two ways of achieving unity in a church. One is to appeal to the principle of unity as the spiritual reality of the body of Christ; the other is to promote experiences of cohesion - dozens of experiences, hundreds of experiences. ... we need both. Like the pooling of water in the physical world that happens at the molecular level, the essential attraction that is our bond in Jesus Christ must be the basis of unity, and to experience it we need to bring people together in bonding experiences. (Lawrenz 2009, 108)

The first way points to the basic biblical teaching on unity and the spiritual reality of fellowship in Christ. The approach to strengthen teaching and to nurture this in action is also what Wang refers to as a “nurturing approach” that he offers as answer for addressing the crosscultural intergenerational conflicts in Chinese churches (Wang 2003, 155-156). The second way that Lawrenz suggests is to promote experiences of cohesion by bringing people together for bonding experiences and this is what appreciative inquiry can deliver and what will be further explored below.

Common Ground for Conversation

Of all the means and media of communication, face-to-face conversation stays the simplest and most direct. In talking about the power of conversation, it has been suggested, “Conversation is a human experience between two or more people, which, by the expression of thoughts and feelings, results in the creation of new ideas, perspectives, understandings, and an increased potential for action” (Lewis, Passmore and Cantore 2008, 72). Conversation is a powerful tool that not only conveys expression and exchange of thoughts and ideas, but also generates ideas and understanding that may eventually lead to actions and changes.

It must be emphasized that to Sarah Lewis, conversation is not dialogue or talk and must be distinguished from them. The conversation Lewis talks about involves an experience of, among others, a sense of being listened to and of listening to others, an atmosphere of trust and openness, an affirmation of our self-value and the value of others, and the development of shared meanings and

understandings (Lewis, Passmore and Cantore 2008, 73). A mere meet-and-greet in passing, a casual dialogue or chit-chat are discounted as failing to meet the criteria of conversation. Instead, a conversation is an experience that involves attentive listening, openness, trust and mutual affirmation. To cross over intercultural barriers, such conversation is what is called for and what it will take in communicative action for intercultural communication.

Lewis further expands on “the power of conversation” and talked about “the common ground with the conversation-based approach to organizational change” (Lewis et. al. 2008, 85). According to him, “To have a systemic understanding of relationships and organizations is to recognize the interaction between people as being of the greatest interest when observing organizational life. These interactions are, correspondingly, seen as the potential site for influence or intervention” (Lewis et. al. 2008 85-86). As conversation has the power to change, interaction between people can generate influence and intervention to bring about changes in an organization. With such transformational effects, a conversation-based approach holds great potential for changes in an organization. Common ground needs to be cultivated for such true This corresponds perfectly with the communication action and intercultural communication approach that we discussed above and what appreciative inquiry entails.

The Use of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method has been widely used for different purposes, ranging from organizational change to behavioral change in daily life (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 175-183). What AI can do and how it may address the pressing needs to find and cultivate common ground among the leaders in SCBC are discussed below.

Appreciative Interviews in AI

An important component of AI is the appreciative interviews, as David Cooperrider says, “At AI’s heart is the *appreciative interview*” (Cooperrider 1999, 11). AI method is characterized by appreciative interviews that engage participants to conduct interviews around affirmative themes. Diana Whitney and Trosten-Bloom also write about the importance of appreciative interviews:

People often ask us, “What are the non-negotiable aspects of Appreciative Inquiry? What are those things that differentiate Appreciative Inquiry from other approaches to organization change? What are those things that must be done for an Appreciative Inquiry process to succeed?”

Appreciative interviews are at the top of our list - an essential success factor for any Appreciative Inquiry process. (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003, 147)

Appreciative interviews are central to AI method. Interviews are designed around positive themes and conducted in person in an appreciative manner. They engage communicative actions with face-to-face conversations that require attentive listening and mutual affirmation.

Appreciative interviews can take different forms. One common form is paired interviews in which participants are paired up to interview and be

interviewed. Such one-on-one paired interview format in particular engages interactive inquiring and attentive listening in the process. It is commonly used in AI and is found in many precedent AI cases. Examples include the Appreciative Inquiry in Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) where paired interviews were the dominant activity in both Day 1 and Day 3 (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 203-207), the case of a transnational pharmaceutical company (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 153-155), and the case of “A Four-Hour Design” for the leadership team of a school (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 123-128). Paired interviews were also used by Mark Branson in First Presbyterian Church, Altadena (Branson 2004, 73). While appreciative interviews may be conducted in many ways such as the usual one-way interviews, focus group format, workshops or others formats, they always stay central in an AI as the primary inquiry tool.

The use of appreciative interviews in AI matches the need in SCBC very well. As discussed above, common ground can be cultivated through conversations and communicative actions. Relationships can be built as well, As Cooperrider attests, “This interview helps people taste the power, the effect, and what some people have described as the intimacy of the AI process. The interview begins to build relationships within the team that later become the driving force for a whole-system inquiry” (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, 51-52). This affirms what has been discussed above about the effect of conversations and communications in generating transformation in relationships.

The Power of Storytelling in AI

Storytelling is another key component of AI. Guided with the underlying poetic, participatory and positive principles, AI commonly uses a storytelling approach in carrying out the interviews. Participants would share their personal or collective stories as they explore an affirmative theme.

In offering a blueprint for leadership development, Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini calls for the need to create a leadership culture and asserts that stories, symbols and shared experiences are basic tools of a cultural artist, while connecting the dots by asking questions and offering appreciation is a “brushstroke for creating culture” (Malphurs and Mancini 2004, 216-222, 229). The use of storytelling in AI is an answer to this call.

In talking about collective visioning, Linda Stout also expounded on the power of storytelling:

Our own stories ground us in the present while empowering and motivating us or, in some cases, providing healing and connection. Unless we connect with our own stories and truly listen to those of others, we won't be able to vision collectively into the future. In the process of telling our stories, a form of emotional release happens. Asking people to tell stories can lead them to a place of self-reflection and create a deep feeling of kinship and love for self and others, culminating in a joy that feeds the soul. Telling our own stories not only empowers us personally but empowers others around us, too. It builds understanding and trust. It breaks down barriers between people of different races, classes, genders, and cultures. (Stout 2011, 87-88)

What Stout presents is that starting with each one having one's own stories to share, storytelling can have great impact on all three areas. First the story-teller will be changed as he or she undergoes self-reflection and emotional release. Secondly, the listener will be empowered and changed. Thirdly and most

importantly, relationship will be changed as understanding, trust and connection are built. Conducted in groups, the seemingly small-scale storytelling can create a rippling effect that trickles down to impact and bring changes to the whole community. The use of storytelling can therefore be a powerful tool in trying to unite a diverse team of leaders from the different congregations in SCBC.

Memories Sharing in a Community

While Stout talks about the importance of telling one's 'own stories', Branson and Martinez takes it one step further in that not only just one's own stories, but more importantly the cultural narratives of a community must be told (Branson and Martinez 2011, 240). Referring to the work of philosopher Josiah Royce, they talk about the importance of memories:

Josiah Royce wrote that the elements of memory, cooperation and hope are essential for community. First, *memories*, arising from the narratives of a specific group of people and their life together, contribute to a group's understandings about itself, its world, its priorities, its ways of doing things and how it envisions the future. But in order to be a community, a specific group of persons must also have memories of their own shared lives - births and deaths, joys and sorrows, comings and goings, sin and forgiveness and ministry, and mercy and love. These stories accumulate, and the identity and activities of the community are continually renegotiated in the weaving of such narratives. Second, Royce specifies that a community of persons live together with a kind of cooperation that requires that shared meanings be expressed in common side-by-side tasks... Third, a group is not a community unless it shares hope - which means that they use the pronoun *we* in reference to an imagined and realizable future. (Branson and Martinez 2011, 81, 86)

Here the importance of memories sharing in a community is affirmed. Memories and narratives accumulate to shape the identity of the community and provide shared meanings and hope for the future.

The narrative approach used in AI leverages on such memories sharing to help bring healing and change to communities. For an ethnic immigrant church like SCBC, memories of uprooting from one's birthplace to start anew on a foreign soil, and narratives of arbitrating between Chinese and western cultures will definitely reverberate and connect to formulate "that shared meanings expressed in common side-by-side tasks". Memories sharing and co-dreaming are actually incorporated in the generic design of core questions in an AI in line with what is described here.

A good case of such use of AI can be found in Mark Lau Branson's book *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (Branson 2004). Here Branson told of how he used an appreciative inquiry to invigorate First Presbyterian Church, an ethnic Japanese American church in Altadena, California. A typical AI using a narrative approach with generic core questions was conducted with the congregation. The sharing of stories and memories brought healing and hope to the community and attested to what AI can do. This case is especially significant since, for various reasons, there are very few cases that AI was done in church contexts. This is a rare church case using AI.

Change Agendas - What AI Can Do

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom listed seven Change Agendas that AI can generate, namely, organizational change, inter-organizational capacity building, community development, global transformation, small group development, inter-

group change and personal/relational transformation (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2010, 26). Examples for personal/relational transformation include leadership development, performance appraisal, employee orientation, career planning, relationship enrichment and spiritual development. The pressing needs in the leadership of SCBC are examined below to ascertain the AI change agenda for SCBC, followed by a discussion on what AI can do, and a summary of the benefits and limitations of AI.

Establishing Change Agendas for SCBC

In considering the needs among the leadership of SCBC, the following areas of concern were identified. First, as asserted above, while diversity is a reality, unity is imperative, and the one unifying strand for church is founded in Christ and Christ alone. In the case of a multi-congregational church like SCBC where the leadership team is made up of leaders from the different language groups, even though the leaders are earnestly committed to the common good of the church, it is natural that often times they may tend to act in the interest of the groups they represent over that of the whole church. To be able to function as one unit in one church body, there is the need to strength a common identity and purpose which must be unified in Christ alone and not by ethnic, language or cultural affinity and affiliation. There is a need to find commonality in their faith in Christ.

These leaders from various congregations and ministry areas have come to know each other only in business meetings apart from which they may never run

into, see or talk to one another. But they are put together to work as a team on church matters. Tension, contention and disagreement frequently arise due to lack of communication or trust, misunderstanding and differences in viewpoints and values. To be able to discern and make decisions for the whole church, the leaders need to know what's going on in groups and areas other than their own.

Furthermore, the working relationship among the leaders though polite and cordial are far from the ideal yoke-bearing, the working together, the fellowship bonding, the “working in fellowship, fellowship in work” described above. The relationships within the group need to be improved. Overall, there is much to be improved on teamwork.

For a multi-congregational, multilingual and multi-generational setting of SCBC, there is great need for the leadership team to work together in unity as a cohesive team. There is the great need for mutual knowledge and relationship within the team to be strengthened and common ground to be found so they can work together. An appreciative inquiry method engages participants to inquire and listen the importance of which in generating communication, relation and team building has been discussed in the previous chapters. It was therefore most fitting and appropriate to use an AI to cultivate the common ground for working together, to build “experiences of cohesion” and to strengthen the unifying strand in church

Considering the above needs in the leadership, the change agenda for SCBC would be primarily one of personal/relational transformation pertaining to leadership development and relationship enrichment in line with the objective of

the research. What AI can do in this respect will be considered next. However, it should not be ruled out that inter-group change and organizational transformation might eventually be brought about as leaders learn and use AI method in ministry.

Crossing Intercultural Barriers

The use of story sharing in AI for crossing barriers and community building is especially important for a multicultural church with all its complexity and diversity. Similarities and differences between different groups need to be identified for mutual understanding so that the groups can work together. Intergroup conversations would need to be kept going as the memories and stories mentioned above continue to shape the community. Referring to the context of a multicultural church, Branson and Martinez prefer to use the term intercultural and explain why:

We prefer the term intercultural as a way to emphasize a continual, dynamic relatedness of diverse peoples. We want to pursue an agenda that acknowledges the ever-changing nature of our churches, relationships and contexts; that specifies real engagement and mutuality; and that pays attention to the narratives of large and small similarities and differences. (Branson and Martinez 2011, 93)

Here Branson and Martinez very well describe the dynamic ever-changing nature of a large multicultural church. The term intercultural draws attention to the inter-relationships and as stated, “the narratives of large and small similarities and differences.” For SCBC, there remain many such narratives that need to be told and shared, and many large and small similarities and differences that need to be identified.

AI for Leadership Development

The use of AI has been used extensively for leadership development.

Raymond Calabrese reported how AI was used in a collaborative study on school administration practices in a diverse suburban school district in Ohio (Calabrese 2015). Eleven school administrators came together and used an AI over a 10-week period to inquire issues of school administration practices. The experience generated changes in perceptions, attitudes and led to the formulation of new administrative practices in the district (Calabrese 2015).

M.R. Keefe and D. Pesut reported how an AI was used in University of Utah College of Nursing at a time of leadership transition with the induction of a new dean (Keefe and Pesut 2004). The faculty was engaged in an AI to envision and co-create a strategic plan to guide the future directions of the college. The report illustrates how AI effectuates as a “leadership strategy to navigating change and a leadership transition” (Keefe and Pesut 2004, 103). Along the same line, Mark Simons and M. L. Havert reported how AI was used during a transition period before and up to a year after the hire of a new university librarian to engage conversation about the cultural environment. The outcome included specific actions on the introduction of a scorecard approach but more importantly major recommendations were made and the need for a major culture shift in the libraries was recognized (Simons and Havert 2012). There are many more AI cases reported and cited in various publications beyond what can be included in this section and will not be discussed here (Neville 2008, Watkins et. al. 2011, Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2010).

AI for Organizational Transformation

To illustrate the transformational power of AI for organizational transformation, Lewis, Passmore and Cantore cited many case examples, including the use of AI in Nokia in 2003, World Cafe leading to a summit in 2005, and corporations like BP Castrol Marine, Orbseal Technology Center, All Saints' Academy and projects like The Circle, Open Space and Future Search. (Lewis et. al. 2008, 86). They all illustrate how AI is an effective tool for organizational development and change management.

Another good example is reported by Matthew Fifolt and Lori Lander in “Cultivating Change Using Appreciative Inquiry” published in *New Directions for Student Services*. Here AI was used in University of Oregon and University of Alabama for assessment and organizational improvement. In both cases, personal stories were shared, conversations were facilitated and multiple channels of communication were developed in the student body. Report of the inquiries is extracted below:

Personal stories revitalized organizational cultures at both institutions by tapping into the abundant pool of knowledge and experiences that existed among organizational members. Throughout the AI process, individuals were able to share keen insights and observations, many of which had never been considered before, to articulate organizational values. These values, in turn, enabled student affairs members to define and build on organizational strengths and align programs, services, and activities with core institutional priorities. (Fifolt and Lander 2013, 26)

Such positive outcome affirms how communities can be transformed with the use of AI.

But a notably interesting example is found in the case reported by Mark Bechtold about how AI was used by the management to improve worker morale in the Arab-led organization (Bechtold 2011). The inquiry was initiated in 2009 in the context of a large oil refinery in the Middle East. The manager appointed a team of young engineers known as the Red Team to “re-imagine the organization” so it could be a happy place for the 1,600 workers to work in. The team decided to use an AI to “solicit input on the inherent strengths and possibilities for the future from the employees themselves” (Bechtold 2011, 27). Stories were shared on the success of the organization and also on the cultural distinctiveness of Arab culture that they experienced and lived in. The exercise resulted in multifaceted impact as reported and extracted below:

The sharing of stories as part of the AI approach served to bond employees to each other and served to instill a shared sense of ownership for the past and future success of the organization.... As a result, employees are experiencing a stronger sense of belonging and commitment to a better future for the refinery, as evidenced by participant feedback and an increased number of employee-generated ideas for improving the workplace. Perhaps the greatest benefit of the AI approach is the goodwill and commitment that results from the positive affirmation that gives life to an organization. (Bechtold 2011, 25, 28)

This case demonstrates the possible transformational power of AI. All these relational and attitudinal aspects like bonding, sense of ownership, sense of belonging, commitment to the organization are things that a diverse multicultural community like SCBC need for unity to be realized. An understanding of the cultural distinctiveness and differences, and the overall heightened morale and contributions would indeed give life to the organization.

Benefits and Limitations of AI

The above discussion examined the need for common ground and the appropriation of AI method to foster unity among diverse groups in an organization like SCBC. The full impact and effect of the AI conducted in SCBC are assessed and presented with the findings and outcome of the project. A summary of benefits and limitations of AI established thus far is outlined below.

Benefits of AI

First and foremost, AI offers to churches a leadership approach that is compatible to Christian values. As presented in Chapter 2 (pages 60-65), the underlying principles of AI align well with biblical teachings. The format and scale of AI is flexible and can be easily adapted for use on different population size and for different.

The method actually invites and mobilizes members to actively participate in the inquiry process. Appreciative interviews engage participants to interview others and be interviewed as well. Participants are respondents who provide answers for the interview questions. They are also agents who discover and collect answers for the inquiry. Such participative approach gives people a sense of ownership and partnership. It affirms the value of individuals and also the worth of their inputs and contributions.

The dialogical approach of appreciative interviews demands active listening of the inquirer and the sharing of the one being interviewed. This

engages participants to talk and listen to one another. This is in effect a corporate effort to practice ministry of listening in the Christian body.

Storytelling is commonly used in AI. As discussed above, storytelling can be a powerful tool that brings about transformation and healing. Individual stories of affirmative experiences foster positive attitudes and behaviors. Memory sharing of collective stories can bring healing, restoration, reconciliation and shared hope for the future. Collective recall of shared memories brings people together to cherish what define and unite them in the first place and what may hold for them in the future.

The use of appreciative and positive themes in AI targets to draw out the life-giving forces and the best of an organization. A lot can be learned from the findings of AI as they reveal the thoughts and feelings of the people. New meanings and knowledge can lead to new understanding and insights. In a church setting, positive themes will direct participants to focus on what God is doing in their midst. For the leaders of SCBC, as they inquired and listened to one another, their attention was directed away from their usual business agendas and whatever disagreement or division there might be, and drawn towards what God has been doing in each other's life and in SCBC as a whole.

On a personal level, a focus on an appreciative and positive theme helps participants to reflect and recall what God has done in one's life. The probe for answers from personal stories and experiences engages participants to reflect and contemplate on one's own journey and experiences. For the leaders of a church, a

reflective approach in ministry can be an important discipline to ensure continual personal growth and leadership formation.

AI provides a tool to cultivate common ground among individuals and groups. As it can be designed to mobilize members of a diverse community to participate, it can be a tool for inter-congregational and inter-group communication as well as a tool for people to cross congregational and sub-group boundaries. It provides the "third space," the neutral zone that gives a common ground for cross-communication and conversations as Ernst and Yip suggest (Ernst and Yip 2009, 89). In SCBC, the AI brought the diverse group of leaders together into this AI "third space". Here sub-group identities were relinquished. Leaders offered their personal stories and views not as representatives of their groups but on their own behalves. This was boundary crossing in action.

One huge benefit that comes out of all these is relationship building. The personal dialogues, the interviews, the listening, the storytelling, the shared memories, the boundary crossing all work towards helping participants to get to know each other on a personal level and in building personal relationships. For the leaders of SCBC, the AI provided a platform for the leaders to fellowship with one another. It moved the leaders from merely being co-workers in the same organization to becoming closer personal friends and fellow partners who "work in fellowship" and "fellowship in work" in the body of Christ.

AI offers a fresh approach in addressing differences and divisions in an organization. By directing people to see the positive and bringing a personal touch to relations, AI softens the people dynamics and facilitates appreciative

encounters and dialogues. For the diverse team of leaders in SCBC, AI facilitated a change to the normal board room encounters by delivering a positive shared experience of mutual discovery and collaboration.

All in all, these benefits work well together to make AI a good tool for leadership development and organizational transformation. It offers a non-threatening and effective participative tool for the leaders of SCBC to move towards building a leadership culture that is built on mutual trust, deep fellowship and unity in the Spirit.

The AI was carried out in SCBC at a point of juncture with no senior pastor in office. As uncertainty loomed over the leadership while the search for a senior pastor took place, leaders were asking each other questions about the future. The climate was primed for research and action to facilitate dialogues and relationship building. To cultivate common ground among the leaders through shared experience and relationship building at this point in time was a timely response to the leadership challenge at hand.

Limitations of AI

AI has some obvious limitations. First, the approach uses only the positive elements as themes. The whole inquiry revolves around all that are positive, life-giving and affirmative factors. In excluding negative and problem-based elements, the method does not directly address any problem or pressing issues in an organization. This pertains to the whole design and philosophical basis of AI that changes be brought about through appreciative interaction and co-creation of

a positive image of the future. AI is a very different approach from the conventional problem-solving approach.

Secondly, as the method is built on social constructionism and the poetic principle, the whole inquiry is wide open for participants' inputs and their co-creation of meanings. There are no set boundaries for personal views and interpretation of experiences. There is little assurance and control of what may come out. If the participants do the interviews among themselves which is often the case, there are even more variable factors in affecting the quality and the way in which the inquiry is delivered. Overall, there are more unknown and uncontrollable factors that can come into play in the process. As inquiry questions are usually left wide open to invite personal stories and are not narrowly defined to look for specificity, findings represent subjective personal views and feelings and need to be treated as such. Findings also need to be understood in the context of the stories behind. Thus the use of AI for fact finding needs to be seen in this light.

One obvious limitation of AI is that it does not directly address or solve any problems. AI does not directly do any problem-solving nor does it institute any immediate operational, tactical or structural change. The co-dreaming and co-designing segment in AI give valuable insight and ideas for strategic planning that leads to transformative actions for change. As a tool for leadership development and organizational transformation, AI needs to go hand-in-hand with strategic planning and actions. It must be reiterated that the AI in SCBC was not designed to drive for any physical, technical, structural reformation and changes. Rather it

was an attempt to tackle cultural, attitudinal and relational issues across intergroup boundaries.

Last but not least, the value and impact of AI approach will not be felt by one stand-alone AI project. Relationship building, intergroup communication and understanding cannot be accomplished by a single encounter or one single shared experience but need to be repeatedly reinforced and nurtured so that it becomes an integral part of the leadership culture and practice. For SCBC to reap the full benefit of AI, the approach and method of AI would need to be repeated and integrated into different levels of leadership and different realms of church life.

The AI that was conducted in SCBC was a small step in a large church that hopefully could initiate a fresh wind of change. But such change will not happen overnight. One AI project will not produce the change in leadership culture and practice. Stout explains well on this point:

Change happens when collective consciousness leads to cultural shifts. It happens when the expression of different thoughts and ideas becomes part of the community. These cultural shifts show up not only in ways of doing things differently but also in art, poetry, and music. Change also comes when people organize, work for reform, and develop alternatives. (Stout 2011, 115)

Stout suggests that change comes when people organize, work and develop alternatives. This is exactly what this AI for SCBC is about: an effort to organize an alternative to initiate change. But for change to happen, as Stout says, collective consciousness needs to change and cultural shifts need to be brought about so the expression of change becomes part of the community. For the identified change agendas for SCBC to be fulfilled and leadership transformation

to happen, what AI offers is one helpful tool that complements other tools and avenues for change. Like spiritual formation, leadership nurture, training, strategic planning, structural reforms and all other ministry initiatives and efforts, AI is one valuable means "to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12).

CHAPTER IV:

METHODOLOGY AND PROJECT

This project employed the use of AI to engage the leaders of SCBC to search for commonality and to identify the DNA of the church. The methodology of AI is explained below, followed by a descriptive account of the project that took place in SCBC.

Methodology

Appreciative Inquiry was first developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva in 1980s as a theory-building process in the academic world. The term Appreciative Inquiry was first introduced in 1987 and it soon became a major approach and method for organizational change and development e (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 24). The AI methodology can be explained by exploring some definitions, the process and the different formats.

What is Appreciative Inquiry

The underlying philosophical principles behind AI have been outlined and discussed in the Theological Foundation chapter and their compatibility with Christian worldview established. But what exactly is AI? David Cooperrider gives the following definition:

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system “life” when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to heighten positive potential. It mobilizes inquiry through crafting an “unconditional positive question” often involving hundreds and sometimes thousands of people. In AI, intervention gives way to imagination and innovation; instead of negative, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design. AI assumes that every living system has untapped, rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. (Cooperrider 1999, 5-6)

So AI method involves the art and practice of asking questions that focus on the positive. It operates out of participative, anticipatory and positive principles. It breaks away from the conventional problem solving approach that addresses the negative, to focus on discovering the positive life-giving factors in people and organizations. Jane Watkins, Bernard Mohr and Ralph Kelly give the following definition of Appreciative Inquiry:

Appreciation Inquiry is essentially, a collaborative and highly participative system wide approach to seeking, identifying and enhancing the “life-giving forces” that are present when a system is performing optimally in human, economic and organizational terms. It is a journey during which profound knowledge of a human system at its moments of wonder is uncovered and used to co-construct the best and highest future of that system. (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 22)

This explains well the philosophical basis of AI in social constructionism, simultaneity and poetic principle, that meanings, knowledge and imaginations will emerge from the collaborative participation of people.

Jane Watkins and Bernard Mohr use the analogy of a map and a compass, in that maps paint the picture of the known world while compasses are helpful in charting an unknown world when one doesn’t know where one is or where one

should be heading” (Watkins and Mohr 2011, 9). “Appreciative Inquiry is all about being a “compass”. It provides a process for exploration, rapid prototyping, and constant exploration through continuous dialogue that focuses on what one is learning and how that is a precursor for the next exploration” (Watkins and Mohr 2011, 9). Such a “compass” tool using continuous dialogues to learn and explore was most fitting for use in this research as the future of a multi-congregational Chinese church in Canada like SCBC is in many ways like a world that has not been charted before. As the leadership grappled with leading the church forward and charting a course for SCBC, AI was found to be a most helpful tool.

AI Process: 4-D Cycle and other Models

A typical AI involves a 4-D cycle that flows through four processes: Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. Affirmative questions are asked in each step looking for positive life-giving elements in an organization. ‘Discovery’ engages in appreciating “What is” or “What gives life”, ‘Dream’ involves envisioning “What might be”, “Design” with dialoguing “What should be”, and “Destiny” with innovating “What can be” or “How to empower” (Cooperrider 1999, 6). The inquiry engages participants to appreciate the strengths and the best of an organization so they can work towards dreaming and co-creating a future together.

Different models have since been proposed (Watkins and Mohr 2011, 83-91). Three different AI models described by Watkins and Mohr are compared below (Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of Three Different AI Models

AI Models	1	2	3	4	5
5 Core Process of AI by Watkins and Mohr	Choose the positive to focus	Inquire	Identify themes	Create shared images	Find innovative ways to create
4-I Model by Mohr/Jacobsgaard	Initiate	Inquire	Imagine	Innovate	
Gem Initiative 4-D Model	Discovery		Dream	Design	Delivery

The various models offer slightly different emphases and foci in the process flow. However, basically they engage the same progression from inquiring about the past and present to co-creating meaning and new possibilities for the future. The same affirmative appreciative approach is maintained throughout all models.

It must be emphasized that there is no fixed formula for AI process. As stated by Cooperrider, “Each AI process is homegrown – designed to meet the unique challenges of the organization and industry involved” (Cooperrider 1999, 6). The processes can be adapted for different purposes according to the situation of an organization and the purpose of the inquiry. Format designs and cycles of

AI processes can therefore vary greatly and there is no one rigid formula for AI process.

Watkins and Mohr presents a model that connects the 5 generic AI core process to the other models, the Action Research model, the "4-I" model and the "4-D" (Watkins and Mohr 2001, 47). Adapting the model, a paradigm connecting all these models is developed for an AI project in SCBC (Figure 2).

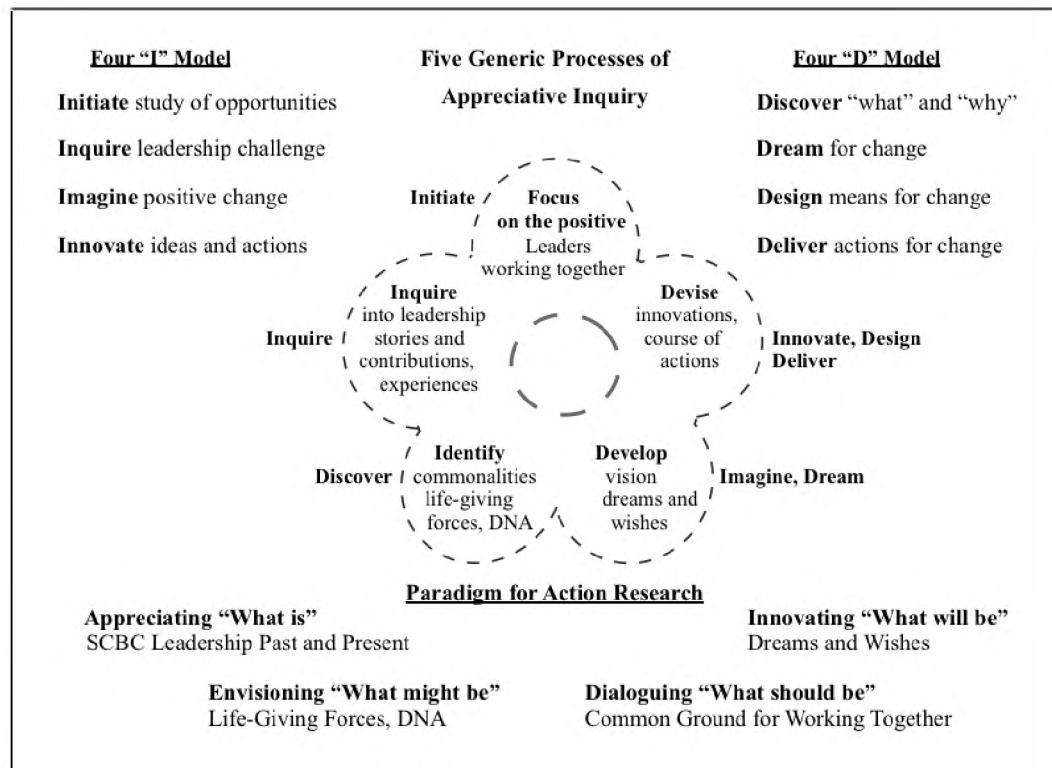


Figure 2. A Paradigm for an AI Project in SCBC that Connects All Models

This paradigm gives an overview of how inter-relating components described in different models are connected and can be incorporated in an AI model for SCBC.

But in the actual design of an AI for use, there was actually no need to engage all the models with all the components. The objective of this project was to use AI to facilitate leaders to dialogue and build relationships so the common ground among them could be cultivated. For this purpose, the 5 core AI process proposed by Watkins and Mohr was most appropriate and adapted for use (Watkins and Mohr 2011, 82-83). The table below shows how the SCBC AI applied the 5 core process (Table 5).

Table 5. Application of 5 Core Processes for an AI in SCBC

AI Process	1	2	3	4	5
Core Process by Watkins and Mohr	Choose the positive to focus	Inquire	Identify themes	Create shared images	Find innovative ways to create
AI Process for SCBC	Cultivate a common ground	Inquire stories of positive experiences	Identify commonalities and SCBC DNA	Create shared images of SCBC	Co-dream and co-create SCBC future

AI Formats

Since there is no fixed formula for an AI process, the formats of AI can range greatly in scale and size. As Cooperrider asserts, “The AI cycle can be as rapid and informal as a conversation with a friend or colleague, or as formal as an organization-wide process involving every stakeholder” (Cooperrider 1999, 6). They can happen in short informal conversations involving just a few people or in big formal events like conferences or summits.

Central to all AI formats is the appreciative interviews that operates on the core AI principles of social constructionism, simultaneity, participatory, poetic, anticipatory and positive principles. So interviews are conducted in which participants are engaged in active dialogues on affirmative, life-giving factors and themes. Through inquiring and listening to one another, that engage participants to inquire about affirmative life-giving factors and themes. Participants are engaged in active interactive dialogues to inquire and listen to one another.

AI Interviews can be conducted in many ways, ranging from paired interviews that engage participants to do one-on-one interviews in pairs (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008, 52), to Core Group Inquiry, Whole-System 4-D Dialogue, or Mass-Mobilized Inquiry of a much larger scale (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom 2003, 32). The scale of inquiry may vary greatly also, from a very small-scale brief personal interview to a extensive inquiry involving hundreds or thousands of people over a span of months involving large conferences and summits.

The Project

An action research project using an Appreciative Inquiry was carried out in Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church in (SCBC) Toronto. Leaders from the three congregations were invited to participate in an AI that aimed to cultivate the common ground for working together through discovering commonalities for working together. Research commenced in the summer 2014, spanned over a period of 18 months and was completed in the spring of 2016.

Setting Up an AI for SCBC

Research on an action research project for the leadership of SCBC started in the summer of 2014. Apart from context research, needs assessment and the pragmatic knowledge claims held by the researcher based on first-hand personal experience as a life-ordained deacon and involvement on the leadership team through the 30-years history of SCBC, various resource materials were consulted, including different Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analyses (SWOT) done by the Deacons Board over the years, a Nurture Board study report on the critical state of leadership succession done in 2014, and various unpublished Deacon Board meeting minutes and documents on various leadership issues. Research on theological and social literature was carried out throughout the implementation of the AI project.

Information and Invitations were sent out to Joint Board leaders and ministry leaders from the three groups in August 2015 inviting them to participate in an AI in the fall to cultivate the common ground for working together and to discover the core values and DNA of SCBC (Appendix A). Mass email invitations were followed up with personal invitations. As anticipated, scheduling for a time was a challenge for these leaders but eventually, dates were set for the AI appreciative interview sessions and the Mini-Summit.

Consent was sought from participants in compliance with the policy and ethical principles prescribed in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2) for Canada and the Information Letter and Consent Form (Appendices A and B). As the

scenario stated in Article 3.12 that “for some groups or individuals, written signed consent may be perceived as an attempt to legalize and may be interpreted by the participant as a lack of trust on the part of the researcher” (Appendix B) applied to this research, respondents were approached personally for appropriate oral consent in compliance with Article 10.3 as a gesture of respect for free and voluntary participation, and with the good will of fostering openness and transparency. The procedures for consent seeking and confirming were carefully documented accordingly. Consent to participate in this research project was also sought in each session as the AI process was explained and instructions given. Verbal consent was sought again when participants were approached again personally and invited to give individual evaluation feedback in anonymity.

Purpose Defined: What it is and What it is Not

The primary objective of the AI project for SCBC was that the common ground among leaders be cultivated with stronger mutual understanding, relationship building, enriched knowledge of SCBC and sharing of dreams and aspirations. The main purpose was to make use of the unique method of AI to engage participants to practice inquiring and listening, and to leverage the unique AI process that facilitates social construct of meaning, shared images and co-dreaming. The goal was to generate a richer sense of togetherness through the shared experience and discovery of commonalities. Here AI was instrumental, more a means than an end in itself.

Through the process, top values, DNA elements that reflect the life-giving forces in SCBC and dreams for the future were collected. The gathered data and findings provided a useful resource of information for the church, but these were only secondary to the experience of the participants. These were by-products and not the primary target.

Except for two leaders known to have taken part in AI from work in the corporate world, AI was totally new and unknown to the leaders of SCBC. So this AI experience was the beginning of something new. It was also the intent of the project to introduce to SCBC this new AI method with its underlying philosophical principles. Hopefully it might generate awareness and thoughts on the leadership culture.

So this AI was therefore just a tiny first step into something new and a first taste of something different. This AI was not a stand-alone event, but rather the start of a journey. As Watkins and Mohr said about an attempt to initiate change in the context of a medical center, “Evolving something as complex as an inner city emergency department from good to great, is a journey, not an event” (Watkins and Mohr 2011, 225). The AI initiated in SCBC was also the start of a journey. Hopefully the journey towards newness would continue and there would be more cycles of AI in the days to come.

Designing an AI Format for SCBC

In deciding the AI format for SCBC, there were two major considerations based on pragmatic knowledge claims and the transformational nature of the

project. First, for the common ground for working together for the team to be strengthened, and for enough commonalities and meaningful core values and DNA to be discovered together, there must be a broad enough participation so the impact of shared experience and commonality could be felt together. Yet at the same time, for mutual knowledge and relationships to be strengthened, certain depth of personal interactions would be necessary to allow for a deep enough inquiring and listening to take place. In order that the AI for SCBC could facilitate a broad participation and allow for the AI dialoguing to take effect, the AI in SCBC was designed to incorporate the use of both focus groups format for group interaction and shared experience as well as paired interviews for some one-on-one deeper conversations.

Secondly, the target participants are the busiest group of people in SCBC as they are all heavily engaged in different ministries. Scheduling for a mutually available time was anticipated to be a huge challenge as weeknights and weekends in SCBC are always filled with business meetings and ministry activities in which different groups of leaders are involved. To request leaders to commit to several sessions of AI which they have never heard of before was a big challenge. To address this practical consideration, the AI format engaged two separate gatherings, first an evening gathering for three consecutive rounds of paired appreciative interviews to take place and then a half-day gathering in the form of a Mini-AI Summit that used focus groups to do co-dreaming and co-creating of the future.

Gathering 1 employed the use of three consecutive rounds of paired interviews. The format of paired interviews was suggested by Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros:

Each person finds a partner to interview, each partner conducts an interview of the other person for at least 20 minutes. After the 40-minutes interview session, the whole group reconvenes to discuss the experience. (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008, 52)

This format engaged participants to dialogue in pairs to do appreciative interviews so the essential inquiring and listening of an AI method could take place, knowledge and meanings be created and interactions and relationship among the participants could be enhanced. The way to do consecutive paired interviews was adapted from the case of “Four-Hour Design to Initiate an AI-Based Process” cited by Watkins, Mohr and Kelly in which an AI was done in four hours for the leadership team of a school using paired appreciative interviews followed by group sharing and co-creating (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 123-128). Based on these designs, three rounds of paired interviews could take place in one evening with a three-hour time span, making it more practically viable for the leaders to participate.

Gathering 2 was conducted in the format of a Mini-Summit that was adapted from the case of “Introducing Appreciative Inquiry into a Community Network Project in Liverpool, England” wherein an AI Mini-Summit was held after initial appreciative interviews were done (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 266 - 272). The Summit was a more elaborately planned leadership event that took place in a morning.

Population

The target group of the study was a select group of leadership in SCBC which included pastors, deacons and Joint Board ministry leaders from the three different language groups. They represent the most influential and active leaders who drive ministries in the three language groups and who jointly participate in church decision-making and direction setting. The chart below gives a list of target participants for this project with their language group affiliations (Table 6).

Table 6. Target Participants and their Language Group Affiliations

Leadership Role	Number	Language Group Affiliation		
		Cantonese	English	Mandarin
Pastors	17	10	5	2
Deacons	19	9	7	3
Lay Ministry Leaders (non-deacon Joint Ministry Board members)	38	20	12	6
Total No. of leaders (% of Total)	74 (100%)	39 (53%)	24 (32%)	11 (15%)

It was hoped that at least 24 leaders would take part in the AI as 24 would give a broad enough sample base for the impact of collective common shard experience to take effect. There was no gender or age exclusion and deliberate effort was made by open and personal invitation to get a good cross-section of leadership across the three congregations to participate in this AI.

The first big challenge was to enlist leaders to participate in an evening of AI interviews. The target population is the busiest people in church. Pastors, deacons and lay ministry leaders were all heavily involved in ministry.

Weeknights in SCBC were filled with different ministry meetings and activities.

Moreover, most of them have never heard of or participated in an AI.

Understandably AI was not in any way a priority compared with other pressing ministry, work and family obligations. Initial invitation was not met with enthusiasm, and had to be followed up with personal contacts and explanations. Mandarin-speaking leaders were few in number to start with and several of them were involved in night shifts jobs. So no Mandarin ministry leaders took part in this evening gathering. Nevertheless 24 leaders from the English and Cantonese sides responded positively so the target population size was met.

Table 7. Population of AI Participants and Their Language Group Affiliations

	Number	Language Group Affiliation		
		Cantonese	English	Mandarin
Gathering 1- Paired-Interviews: (20 of this group also attended Gathering 2)				
Pastors	1	1	0	0
Deacons	2	0	2	0
Lay Ministry Leaders (non-deacons)	21	12	9	0
Gathering 1 total:	24	13	11	0
Gathering 2 - Mini-Summit:				
Pastors	11	5	4	2
Deacons	13	6	5	2
Lay Ministry Leaders (non-deacons)	29	13	12	4
Gathering 2 total:	53	24	21	8
Total number of leaders involved in AI:				
Pastors	11	5	4	2
Deacons	13	6	5	2
Lay Ministry Leaders (non-deacons)	33	17	12	4
Total AI participants:	57	28	21	8

Deliberate effort was made to ensure that more leaders from all three congregations could be enlisted to take part in the Mini-Leadership Summit. The Summit was promoted as an off-site special half-day Leadership Fun event for the leaders of the three congregations to build relationship and teamwork. Invitations were sent way ahead of time and followed up with personal contacts. Pastors were approached and asked to not only attend themselves but also help encourage their ministry leaders to join. Special effort was also made to encourage Mandarin-speaking leaders to participate. Words got around, leaders got excited and a total of 53 people signed up for the event. Leaders from all three language groups were proportionately well represented with good attendance of pastors, deacons and lay ministry leaders. The table below summarizes the population that participated in the AI project (Table 7)

The AI Event

The AI event in SCBC was carried out in two separate gatherings. Activities for each gathering was carefully planned to ensure that the inquiry could be completed within a tight time schedule.

Schedules for both gatherings are summarized in the chart below (Table 8). An outline of all AI sessions and their corresponding inquiry questions is detailed in Appendixes C and D.

Table 8. Schedule of AI Events in SCBC

Event	Activities	Time
Gathering 1: Paired Interviews	Introduction – AI method, goals, process	10 min.
	Round 1: Sharing stories of making SCBC home Discover commonalities, identify DNA	50 min.
	Break	5 min
	Round 2: Personal peak experience, top contributions Discover commonalities, identify DNA	50 min.
	Break	5 min
	Round 3: Share top values, core values Discover commonalities, identify DNA	40 min.
Big Group Debrief		20 min.
Gathering 2: Mini-AI Summit	Light breakfast, meet and greet, games	(before)
	Introduction – AI method, goals, process	10 min.
	Focus Groups: Brief sharing of top values Dreams and wishes for SCBC Co-create, co-design for future	90 min.
	Big Group Debrief	20 min.
	Lunch and fellowship time	(after)

Gathering 1 took place in the evening of September 22, 2015. Three rounds of appreciative paired interviews were done in a 3-hour time span. 24 leaders participated in these paired interviews. The AI approach and method was introduced and explained. Participants were then split into groups of two to do paired interviews using the inquiry interview tools. They interviewed each other in pairs. Participants were instructed to give attentive presence in the inquiring and listening process, and to take note of any commonalities they might discover in their stories. As suggested by Cooperrider and explained above, a 20-minutes per person, 40 minutes per interview time frame was allocated for each interview

round (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008, 52). Each round was followed by a big-group debrief for immediate feedback on their experience. Participants then changed partners for another interview round. Participants went through three rounds of paired interviews, so each person actually got to meet, interview and be interviewed by three different people through the night. The focus for the evening was to discover and inquire with each other using the designed interview tools. The three interview rounds were completed in a three-hours time span. The evening went smoothly as planned and all participants were actively engaged in personal dialogues with other participants through the process.

Gathering 2 was a Mini-Leadership Summit that took place on a Saturday morning on October 24, 2015. A light breakfast was served, warm-up games played, followed by the Mini-Leadership Summit, and finished with lunch. Leaders were invited to register beforehand and a total of 53 leaders took part in the Summit, including among them 20 leaders who took part in both Gathering 1 and this Summit. AI approach and method was briefly explained and participants were split into 8 focus groups to inquire each other using the Inquiry tool. The AI questions focused on the inquiring of SCBC dreams and wishes for the future of SCBC. As this event involved a much bigger population and was well represented by all groups including Mandarin ministry leaders who were totally absent in the paired interviews, a question on top values was included in order that a more complete database of SCBC leadership information could be gathered. To ensure that everyone got to speak and be listened, participants were told to first spend a couple of minutes to think about the theme questions. 90 minutes was allocated

for the focus group inquiries. With pre-registration, grouping could be done beforehand. Leaders from the same congregation as well as pastors and deacons were split up into different groups. Great care was taken to divide the participants into 8 focus groups with a good mix of leaders from all three language congregations, as well as a mix of pastors, deacons and lay leaders in each group. So each group has at least one person from each language group, one pastor, one deacon and one lay leader. A debriefing time and fellowship over lunch completed this Mini-Leadership Summit which was extremely well-received.

Participants were encouraged to take this appreciative inquiry approach to their teams and groupings for innovative use in strengthening mutual relationship and teamwork. The research therefore did not discount the possibility that actions may trickle down to engage a wider group of leaders. But this would not be incorporated in the report as it was not in the research design.

Inquiry Instruments

The choice of questions is a key component in an AI as questions hold the key to align the inquiring and listening with the philosophical principles of AI and ensure that the process can generate the desirable positive social construct of meaning and possibilities. On the choice of questions, Cooperrider says, “First, they need to experience an appreciative interview that includes some variation of the four generic AI questions” (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros 2008, 51). The four generic AI questions are: 1. Describe a peak experience or high point in your organization; 2. What is it the you most value about yourself, your work, your

organization? 3. What are the core factors that give life to your organization? 4. What 3 wishes do you have to enhance the health and vitality of your organization?

These four generic questions are the foundational questions proposed by Cooperrider, in his Sample Interview Guide - Service (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, 36, 229-231). The same generic questions were listed by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2010, 136), and in the Generic Interview Guide described by Mohr and Watkins (Mohr and Watkins, 2002, 6). They were also the exact questions that Mark Branson actually used in an AI conducted in a Japanese church (Branson 2004, 68-71). These four generic core questions provide a smooth flow from discovery process to the design and co-dreaming process and were most basic and fitting for the purpose of the project. So these generic core AI questions were adapted for use in the project (Appendix C).

The AI for SCBC involved three paired-interview rounds and a Mini-Leadership Summit with inquiry questions developed around positive and affirmative themes adapted from the most commonly used generic AI questions (Appendices C and D). Round 1 interview focused on sharing what positive elements and factors helped participants in their decision to make SCBC their spiritual home (Appendix E). Round 2 interview focused on sharing peak experience or a high point in SCBC and the most valuable way one contributes to church (Appendix F). Round 3 interview focused on sharing what three things one values most in SCBC (Appendix G). The Mini-Leadership Summit focused on the

sharing of dreams and wishes for SCBC in co-dreaming about the future (Appendix H). Participants were asked to identify commonalities in their stories and to take note of church DNA that might surface in their stories. Approaching from different angles using different contexts, these inquiry questions were designed to target and seek out the positive life-giving forces that exist in SCBC.

Since the primary objective of the AI was the shared experience that could enhance mutual knowledge and relations among the leaders, an open-ended question was posed to the participants at the end of each session to ask about their immediate feedback on their immediate experience of a method that was unknown to almost all of them. Such a brief question on the experience was also modeled after the format found in the “Four-Hour Design to Initiate an AI-Based Process” (Watkins, Mohr and Kelly 2011, 127).

Evaluation Tools

A formal evaluation feedback questionnaire was designed for the participants to complete (Appendix I). Open-ended questions were designed to ask about the experience and feedback of participants. The main focus of the evaluation was to see if the goal of this project is achieved, that participants find more common ground for working with one another, that shared commonalities and dreams are discovered, individual and corporate knowledge of church distinctiveness enriched, relationships strengthened and mutual understanding

among leaders enhanced. For ease of completion 25 ranking questions were also set to go with the open-ended questions.

Participants of the AI were approached individually for their feedback and evaluation with SCBC AI Evaluation Questionnaire (Appendix I), which took place as planned in the first quarter of 2016. Responses from 29 participants in anonymity were returned. Data analysis was carried out after returns for feedback were closed in April 2016.

Data Analysis

Worksheets with guiding AI questions were handed out to all participants doing the paired interviews in Gathering 1 (Appendices E, F, G) and to all participants at the Summit in Gathering 2 (Appendix H). By applying the principles of AI and using the generic AI questions on the worksheets, leaders inquired each other and noted down their answers to the questions. The answers they gave on the positive elements and key factors in their decisions to make SCBC home, their peak contributions, their experiences and to identify commonalities, top values, DNA and dreams for SCBC, as well as the evaluation they gave on the evaluation questionnaire (Appendix I) provided a wealth of data for analysis.

All responses, feedback and evaluation were collected and recorded in anonymity. Written responses were collected from the three paired interview rounds and the Mini-Leadership Summit session and from the overall evaluation questionnaire returns. These supplied a total of 29 Likert scale survey responses

and 143 text files for data analysis and interpretation. The chart below gives a summary of the source of text data files gathered in this AI project (Table 9).

Table 9. Summary Chart of Data Source and Text Files for Analysis

Date collected	Source of Data	Data Form (Text Files)	No. of Text Data Files	Code Counts
Sep. 22 2015	Paired Interview Round 1	Worksheet (Appendix E)	24	246
Sep. 22 2015	Paired Interview Round 2	Worksheet (Appendix F)	24	214
Sep. 22 2015	Paired Interview Round 3	Worksheet (Appendix G)	24	179
Oct. 24 2015	Mini-Summit Focus Groups	Worksheet (Appendix H)	48	450
Jan-Mar 2016	Evaluation Questionnaire	Questionnaires (Appendix I)	23	252
Total No. of Text Data Files analyzed using TAMS:			143	1361
Jan-Mar 2016	Evaluation Questionnaire	Likert Scale Questions (Appendix I)	29	---

Qualitative data analysis was done on the 143 text files using the software Text Analysis Markup System Analyzer (TAMS Analyzer). An Init File named “DMin init.rtf” was created in a TAMS Analyzer project entitled “DMIN AI SCBC”. 143 rtf files were created from the hand-written responses in text forms. A total of 136 codes were created, defined under headings: Experience, Knowledge, Relations, Commonality, DNA, Dreams, Stories, Values, Peakcontribution, PeakExp, WishesToRealize (Appendix J). An output of 1,361 data were coded, counted and studied. Different searches were done for comparison and consideration.

The 136 codes were categorized for comparison, analysis and interpretation. 4 categories of codes were of particular interest because of their prominence in occurrence, namely, “Background”, “Relations”, “Ministries” and “Serving”. These four categories provided a useful framework for comparison of responses from the different sessions. Apart from these, prominent occurrence of other coded categories or single data would be highlighted separately if they were noticeably dominant in the response.

Results of findings were exported to Excel files for further processing, analysis and graphic presentation. Responses on the 25 Likert-scale survey rating questions were analyzed using Excel. All data were analyzed and recorded in a Summary of Data (Appendix K).

Other sources of feedback from observation, personal contacts and verbal feedback from participants were also noted and discussed in the Findings.

CHAPTER V:

OUTCOMES, FINDINGS AND

INTERPRETATION

In finding unity in diversity among the leaders in SCBC, this research project set out to use Appreciative Inquiry to cultivate the common ground for them to work together. It was the first time an AI was conducted in SCBC. It totally diverged from the familiar conventional problem solving approach that the leadership was familiar with. Instead of probing into the differences and barriers within the diverse group of leaders, AI focused on finding what they shared in common and the positive life-giving elements in SCBC through engaging participants to inquire about one another and about the church.

4 main categories of factors called for special attention because of their varying degree of prominence in different sessions:

1. “Background” – Factors pertaining to personal journeys and background, predetermined by personal preference and inclinations, for example, desires for Chinese heritage, immigrant experience, connection with TCBC the Chinatown mother-church, denominational preference, etc., such personal factors are grouped into “background factors”.

2. “Relations” - Relational and connections factors that have to do with friendship and relationships, for example, making new friends, bonding, fellowship groups, feeling welcome and at home, community life, family members are here, etc., such relational factors are grouped under “Relations”.
3. “Ministries” - Factors that relates to ministry programs that SCBC offers and appeals to participants, for example, strong biblical teaching, Sunday School, strong pulpit, worship service, children programs, youth programs, Christian Education programs etc., structured programs and services that SCBC offers are grouped under “Ministry”.
4. “Serving” - Factors about one’s getting involved in ministry, having opportunities to serve, serving in different capacities, being able to use one’s gifts, serving in leadership, accomplishing tasks, etc. are categorized as “Serving in Ministry”.

These four categories of factors provided a good frame of reference for the comparison of responses from the different sessions and would be highlighted throughout our discussion. Other prominent or noticeably dominant factors would be brought out and highlighted separately where they surfaced.

The heart of the research question lies in how AI as a tool could help a diverse group to build a common ground for unity. What this AI accomplished and what it revealed were pivotal in assessing the extent to which the objective of the research was achieved. The key lies in whether commonalities and life-giving elements were found and whether this AI experience was conducive to achieving

what it set out to do. These would be ascertained by examining outcomes and findings in light of the following questions:

- Did the group of participants reflect the diversity of the leadership in SCBC with people from different language congregations?
- Did responses from participants of different language congregations show distinct differences or were there similarities in their answers?
- Could participants find commonalities that they shared with each other? What commonalities did they find?
- Were participants able to work together and identify SCBC values and DNA?
- How did participants find the AI experience and how did they evaluate the effect and helpfulness of the AI?
- In what ways was AI helpful in building the common ground and strengthening the unifying strand for the leaders to work together?

The outcomes, findings and interpretation of the AI project in SCBC were therefore presented below. They would provide answer to these questions and shed light on what the AI in SCBC actually did and what AI could do.

A Diverse Group of Participants

One of the first things that needs to be ascertained is: Did the group of participants reflect the diversity within the leadership of SCBC or even the diversity of SCBC at large. A total of 57 leaders participated in the AI. The group of participants was made up of 11 pastors, 13 deacons and 33 ministry leaders. Though ethnically all were of Chinese descent except for 2 pastors, it was culturally a very mixed group gathered from the leadership of the three language congregational groups. Not only did they speak different languages, but even

within the same Cantonese language group, they attended different worship services held in different places and time slots. And they were all involved in different leadership positions in their groups, like ministries for children, family, Sunday School, caring, fellowship groups, small groups, body life, outreach, mission, social concern, worship, music, administration and other ministries as outlined in the church matrix governance structure outlined in Chapter I. They represent the diverse interests of the many groups in SCBC.

As shown below (Figure 3), percentage distribution of participants by language groups with a Cantonese: English: Mandarin ratio of 49:37:14 aligned very well with the ratio of 53:32:15 ratio of overall leadership affiliation to

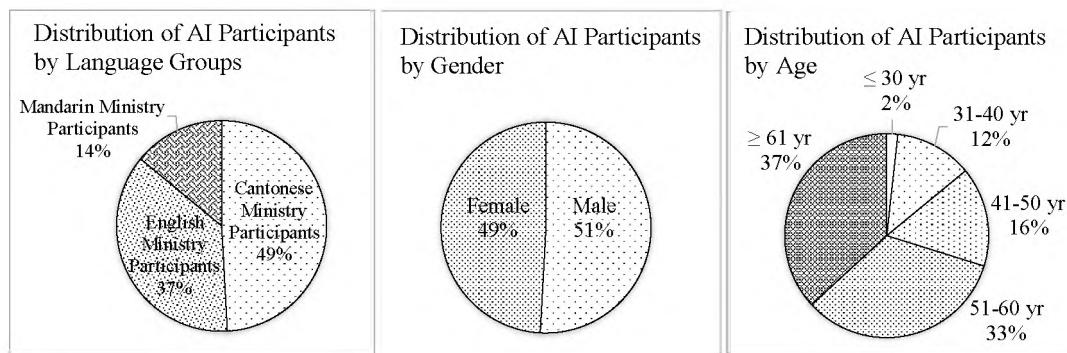


Figure 3. Distribution of AI participants by Language Groups, Gender and Age

language groups presented in Table 2. With 29 men and 28 women, gender distribution was close to equal. Age distribution also well reflected the current leadership situation dominated by leaders in their fifties and sixties.

Figure 4 gives a clearer picture of the composition of the participants and their age distribution in the three language groups.

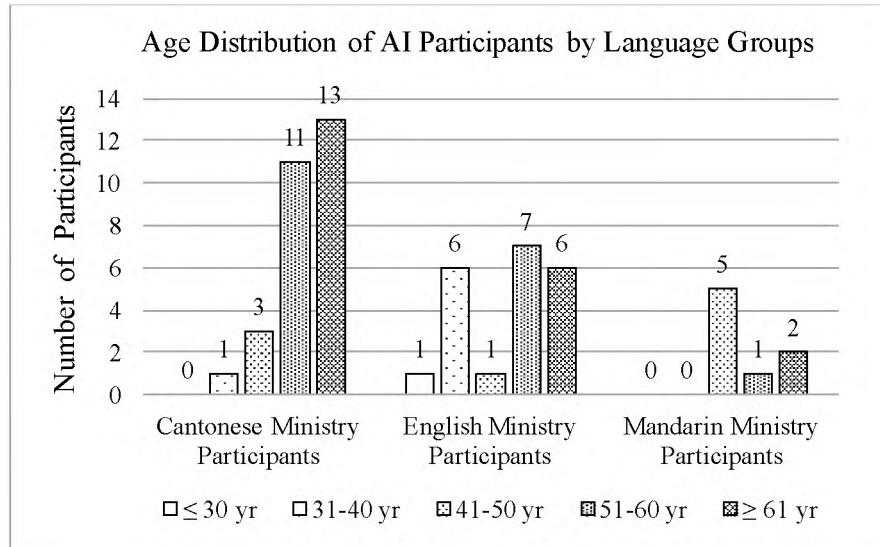


Figure 4. Age Distribution of AI Participants by Language Groups

This actually aligned not only with the leadership demographics but also the overall population demographics of SCBC. Obviously the Cantonese-speaking group is the dominant culture in SCBC, English the emerging sub-group and Mandarin the minority sub-group.

The dominance of participants who were 51 years and over in age reflected the overall aging leadership situation discussed before. Both the Cantonese and English groups of participants showed a proportionately huge drop in number in the 40s age group as this is an age group very much preoccupied with careers and young families. While the Cantonese leadership had very few people under the age of 40, the English congregation showed an emerging group of young leaders in their 30s and even in the 20s. The Mandarin congregation had a relatively small group of leaders as the Mandarin worship service only started about 10 years ago. The age group of Mandarin-speaking leaders reflected the crop of Christians that

emerged after the political turmoil of Cultural Revolution in China some 40 years ago and those who came to Canada in recent years.

Figures 5a and 5b show the composition of participants for the paired interview Rounds 1-3 and the Summit sessions. A diverse group of 24 leaders, 13 from the Cantonese and 11 from the English ministry groups participated in Rounds 1-3, with equal number of men and women and a good spread of age distribution in line with what was discussed above. Imagine the English-speaking participant in his 20s being paired with a Cantonese-speaking leader much older than him, inquiring each other of their personal stories and experiences, then putting their heads together to identify commonalities and church DNA factors. This was exactly what these paired interview rounds were designed to accomplish.

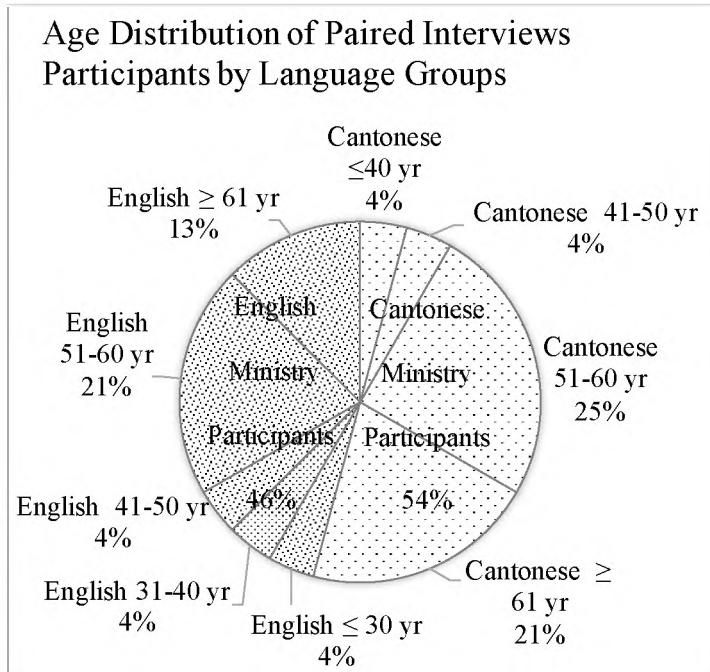


Figure 5a Composition of Paired Interviews and Summit Participants by Age

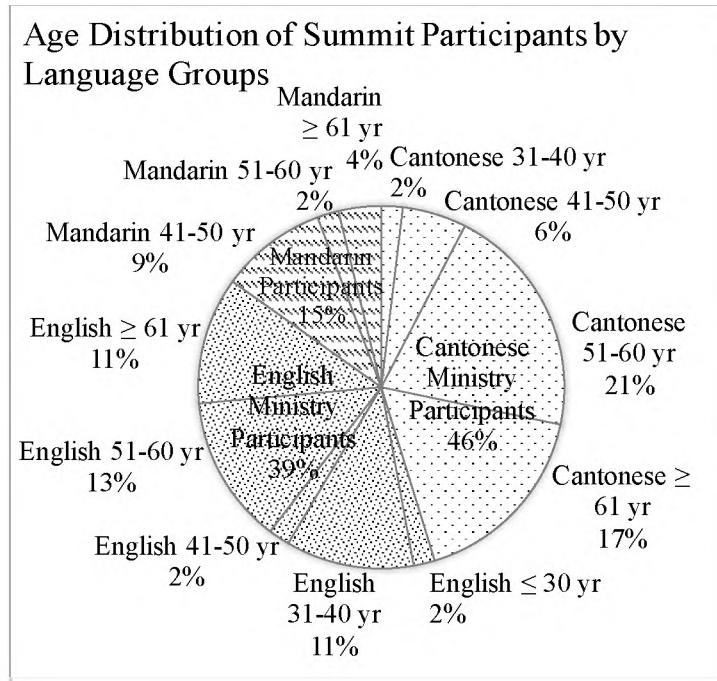


Figure 5b. Composition of Paired Interviews and Summit Participants by Language Groups

The Summit was able to draw a much larger group of 53 participants, with good attendance from all three language groups. Together with the four Cantonese ministry leaders who were in Round 1-3 but could not join the Summit, they made up the 57 total AI participants whose composition was outlined above.

Composition of the group matches the diversity of the leadership in SCBC.

Detailed breakdowns of distribution by language groups, gender, age, as well as participants' number of years in SCBC, number of years in ministry and in leadership are listed in Summary of Data (Appendix K).

Assessing Inter-Group Differences

Another question that needs to be ascertained is: Were there differences in the responses among participants from the three language groups, and if there were, how different were they? The following summarizes the comparisons of responses to the different questions from the different language groups. Detailed counts of responses to all the questions can be found in Summary of Data (Appendix K).

Participants' Decisions on Making SCBC Home

Responses from the two groups to the AI question about positive factors in their decisions to make SCBC home came out noticeably different (Figure 6). For the Cantonese group, background factors pertaining especially to connections to TCBC and Chinese heritage topped the list as revealed in the itemized breakdown numbers. Impact of immigrant experience on their decisions was also more prominent a factor than their English counterparts.

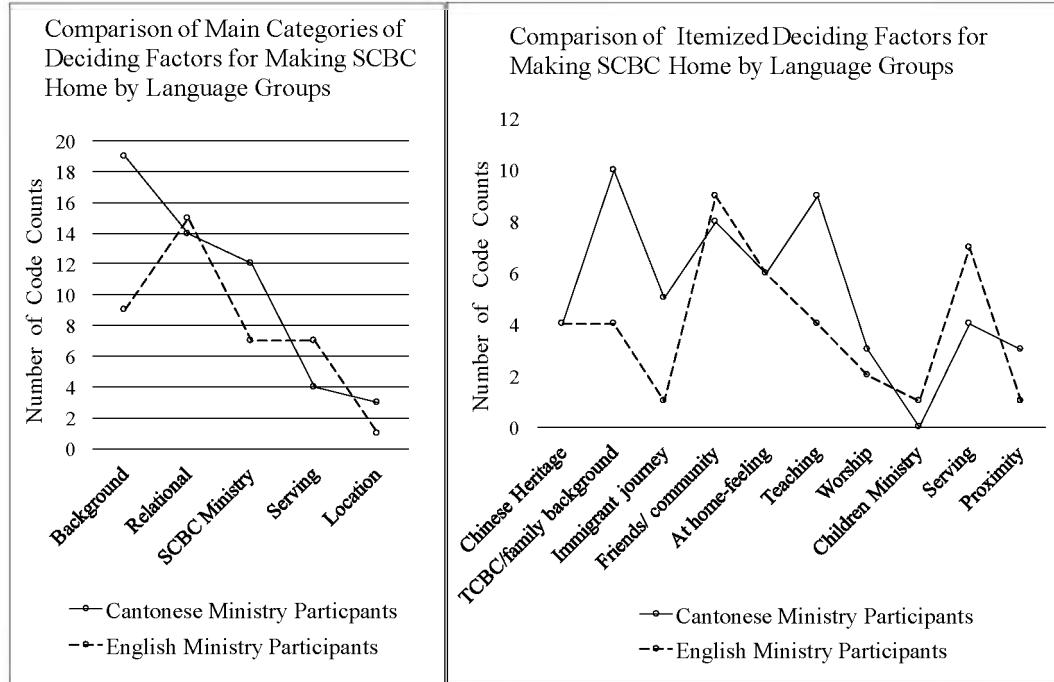


Figure 6. Comparison of Decisions on Making SCBC Home in Categories and Itemized Details

This actually revealed the inherent characteristics of a Chinese immigrant church. SCBC was founded by Cantonese-speaking immigrants gathered first in Chinatown but later moved uptown, by people with strong ties to their Chinese heritage who have become the dominant majority group in SCBC.

Differences between the two groups on “Teaching” factor was in line to the cultural differences in learning styles between the two groups. A strong desire to learn and an appreciation for biblical teaching has always been prevalent among the Cantonese group, which may be attributed to the test of faith through immigrant experience when one uproots one’s life to move to a new land. Sunday School and other teaching ministries have always been well attended and a main

ministry focus in the Cantonese group. On the English side, response to formal structured teaching ministry has been a constant struggle.

While the English-speaking participants also cited immigrant experiences and ties with Chinese heritage in their stories, relational factors in terms of friends and community were the most prominent deciding factor. “Serving” was the other peak indicating what appealed to the English group was the more personal and direct involvement in ministries. These were interesting pointers of cultural differences between a more traditional Chinese group and a more westernized group that places high value on relationships, community and direct serving involvement.

Participants’ Peak Contributions

While deciding factors for making SCBC home from the two groups showed distinct differences, responses to question on peak contributions in SCBC showed a surprising resemblance (Figure 7). Both groups of participants identified that ‘Serving’ was their top contributions to SCBC. Itemized breakdown numbers showed an interesting difference in the way they expressed their responses within the same “Serving” category, with the English group expressing serving in terms of employ and tapping of their spiritual gifts in ministry over the acts of serving. Both gift element and acts of serving were about the same on the Cantonese side. This could also be an indicator of cultural difference in perspectives between the two groups.

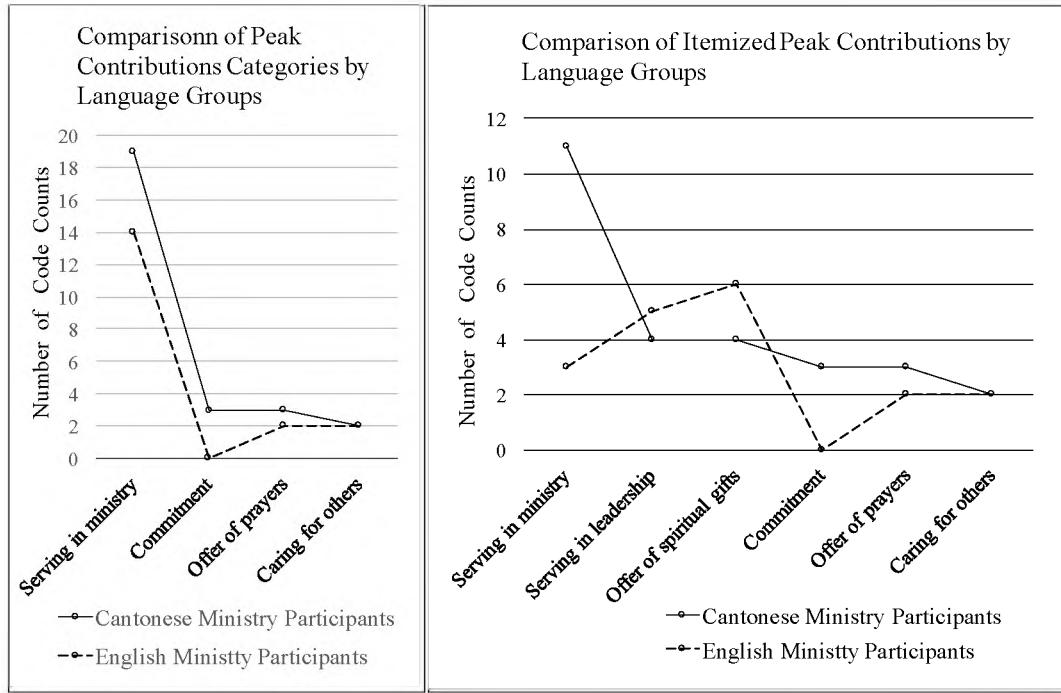


Figure 7. Comparison of peak contributions by language groups in categories and itemized details

It must be noted how background factors like Chinese heritage, family connections and relational factors were not prominent elements that showed up in their perceptions of contributions, except for a small number in “Caring” which reflected a more relational aspect.

Participants’ Peak Experiences

Responses to question on peak experiences from the two groups showed an even stronger resemblance to almost identical with each other (Figure 8). Most participants recalled specific ministry experiences as their high points in SCBC. A noticeable number cited specific tasks that they accomplished, like church building project, coordination of banquets and events, or even success in mediating conflicts between members as their high point peak experiences.

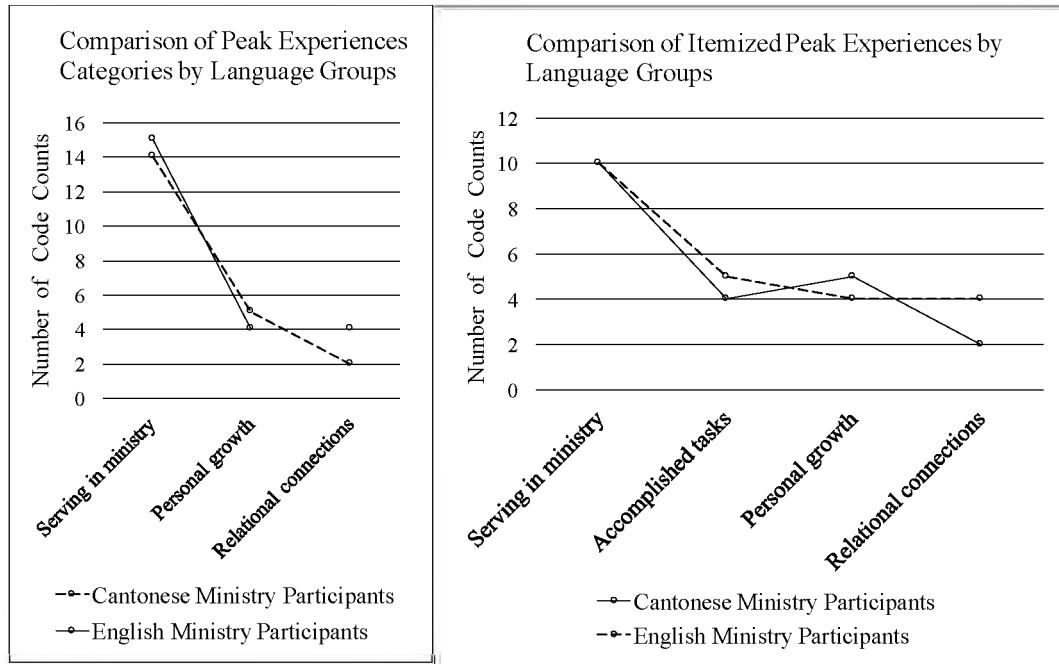


Figure 8. Comparison of Peak Experiences by Language Groups in Categories and Itemized Details

It is also notable that again more English participants would cite relational experience as their high points. And again, background elements like Chinese heritage or past history of TCBC or family connections did not show up at all.

Participants' Top Values

Responses to the question on top values were derived from the Summit with participation from all 3 language groups (Figure 9). Some response returns did not specify congregational affiliations and were classified as “unspecified”. Though responses were very diverse and varied, distinct patterns could be found.

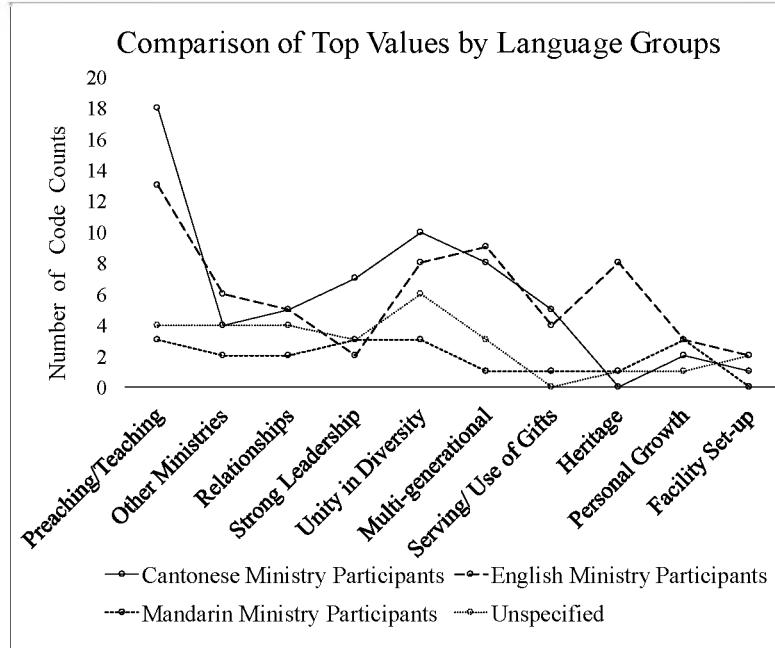


Figure 9. Comparison of Top Values by Language Groups

First, there were two prominent peaks common to all the groups in the distribution of answers. The most distinct was that all groups saw “Preaching/Teaching” as a top value in SCBC. This was an interesting finding as it very well reflected the Baptist distinctive that upholds supreme authority of the bible as well as the characteristic Chinese cultural trait that places high value in education. This affirmed that SCBC carries this Baptist distinctiveness across the board.

Another peak was found in the appreciation for “Unity in Diversity”. These responses from all three groups affirmed how they valued the fact that SCBC has 3 different language groups and different generations in one church.

But there were still notable differences among the groups. Surprisingly, a high proportion of English participants also named Chinese heritage as their top values. While this factor might attribute to one of the reasons for English-

speaking members to stay in an ethnic Chinese church, this expressive regard for Chinese heritage as a top value by the English-speaking group was most revealing as more often than not, this group was perceived by other groups as culturally most different from or even alienating to the Chinese way of doing things. Better understanding on this point will be helpful in bridging the groups.

Another notable difference was how both Cantonese and Mandarin groups both had fair numbers of responses citing “strong leadership” as a top value in SCBC, but not so with the English group. This also reflected a known cultural difference between the groups. As discussed above, a respect and honor to higher authority is an innate part of traditional Chinese culture. Both the Cantonese and Mandarin groups are in general more submissive, appreciative and respectful to the leadership which is not the case with the CBC and CRC in the English group. So the subtle difference in their responses were not out of line. As expected, “relationships” was more valued proportionately by the English participants which again affirmed their cultural differences.

Participants’ Dreams and Wishes

Responses to the last AI question on dreams and wishes for SCBC varied widely as shown in Figure 10. Apart from the fact that the most prominent dream from both Cantonese and English groups was found in “Change will happen”, responses from the language groups varied greatly. For the English group, “leadership succession” and more “evangelism, outreach” were the second highest in number. For the Cantonese group, dreams for a more “spiritual and prayerful

church” and greater commitment for people to serve are the second highest. For the Mandarin group, a more relational church and stronger ministries were their top dreams. Dreams and wishes reflected the yearnings of the participants and apparently, their dreams reflected areas of needs and perceived weaknesses in their own language groups which were distinctly different from each other.

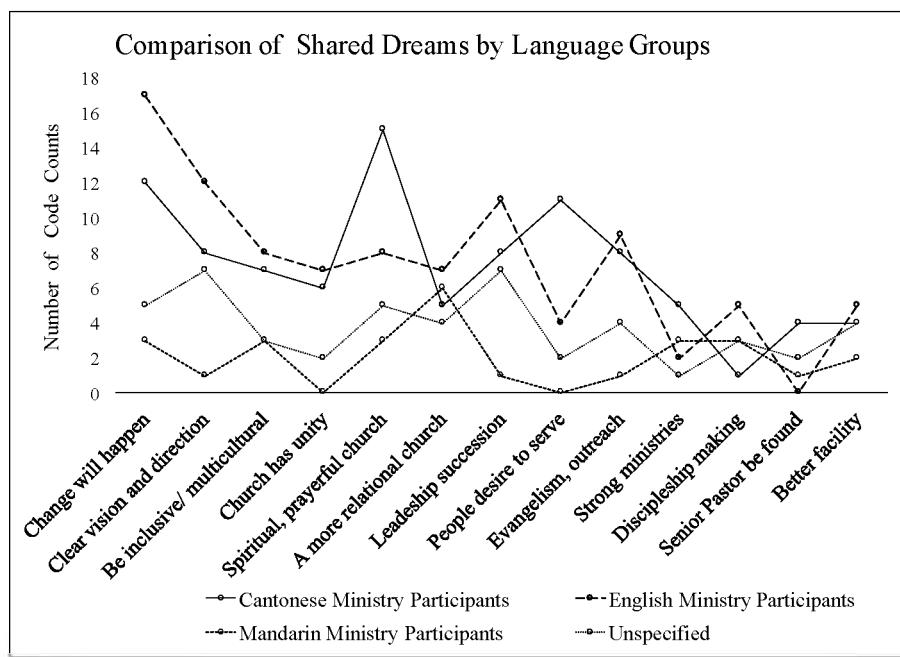


Figure 10. Comparison of Shared Dreams by Language Groups

Sub-Group Identities and Differences

The above comparisons affirmed that differences certainly exist among the language groups in SCBC. Some of these differences were very obvious as shown in their decisions to make SCBC home and in what they valued. But some were more subtle as revealed in the way they perceived their involvement in ministry and the way they regarded leadership. Even though the AI did not set out to look at the differences between the groups, their differences showed up and affirmed

that these language groups within SCBC have their own sub-group identities and cultures that set them apart from each other.

Finding Commonalities

In order to cultivate the common ground for the leaders to work together, the AI directed them to look away from their sub-group identities and differences, but to pay attention to what they had in common. So a key question that needs to be ascertained is whether they could find commonalities among themselves and were there commonalities in the responses from different language groups.

Findings from various sources are examined below.

Commonalities between Language Groups

Some similarities in the data from different language groups have already been highlighted in the previous section. A further look into the percentage distributions of data revealed more resemblances. The following three sets of side-by-side distribution bar graphs (Figure 11) accented the proportionate prominence of different responses from the paired interview rounds and presented clear visual patterns for comparison.

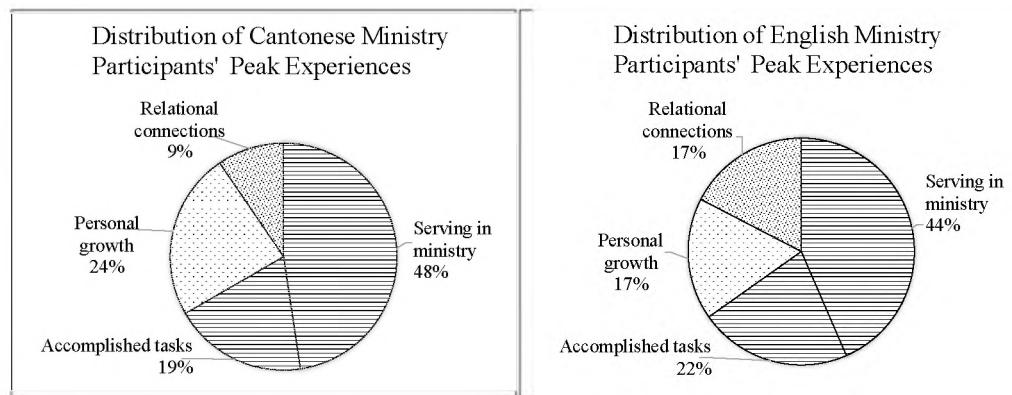
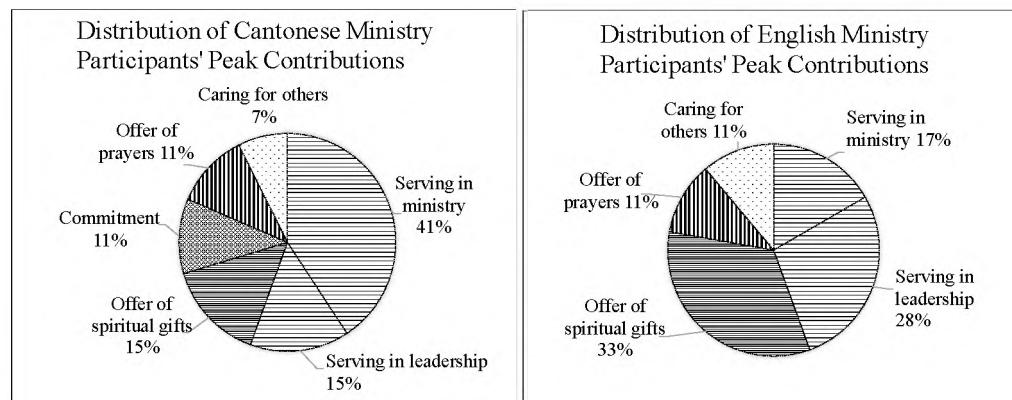
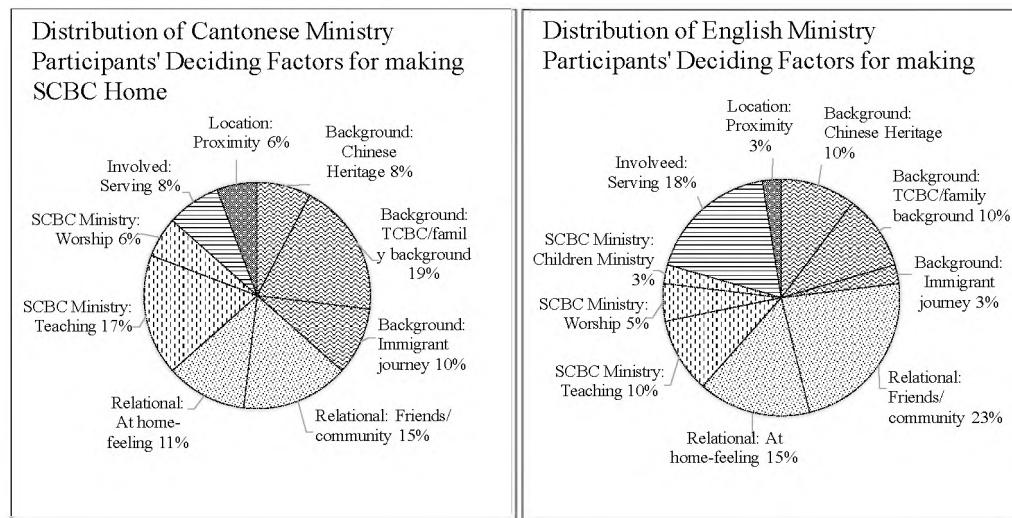


Figure 11. Side-by-side Comparison of Paired Interviews (Rounds 1-3) Responses Distribution between Groups

First it must be noted that even though the proportional distributions between the groups were different, the responses gathered from both groups fell into the same major categories.

Secondly it is notable that though the deciding factors to join SCBC showed more distinct differences, the peak contributions and experiences were similar not only in kind but even in proportions.

The three sets of side-by-side comparisons revealed that despite the fact that people in the different groups might be inherently very different when they first came to SCBC, once they settled into church life, their embrace and perception of church experiences were actually very similar.

Comparison of top values distribution among the three language groups again showed that the responses gathered were similar not only in kind but also in proportionate value (Figure 12).

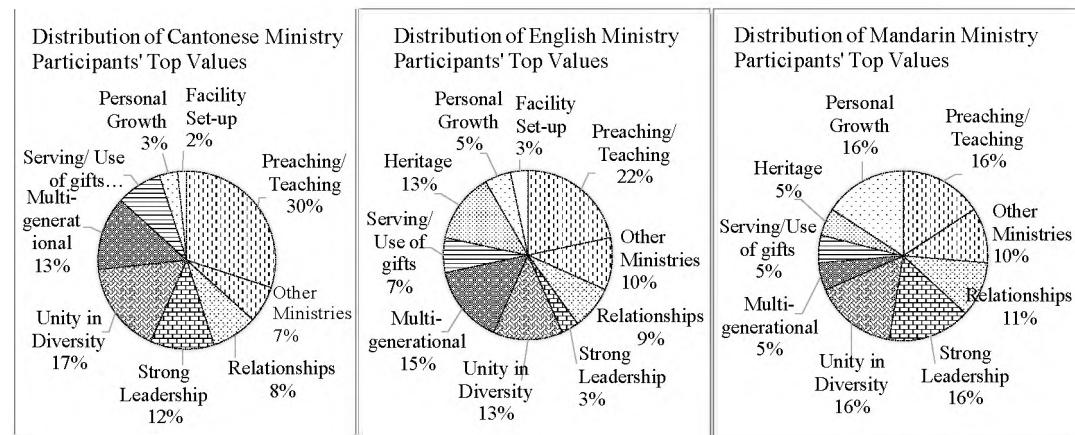


Figure 12. Side-by-side Comparison of Top Values Distribution among Language Groups

It revealed that the highest percentage of participants from all three groups held “Preaching/teaching” as their top values and all three groups affirmed their high regard for “Unity in Diversity”, The three groups actually had a lot in common in what they valued most in SCBC.

Figure 13 shows a side-by-side percentage bar graph of the shared dreams gathered from the three groups. Even though distribution of the dreams appeared to be scattered in kind and in prominence with no obvious patterns of similarity, all the major categories still showed up in all three language groups.

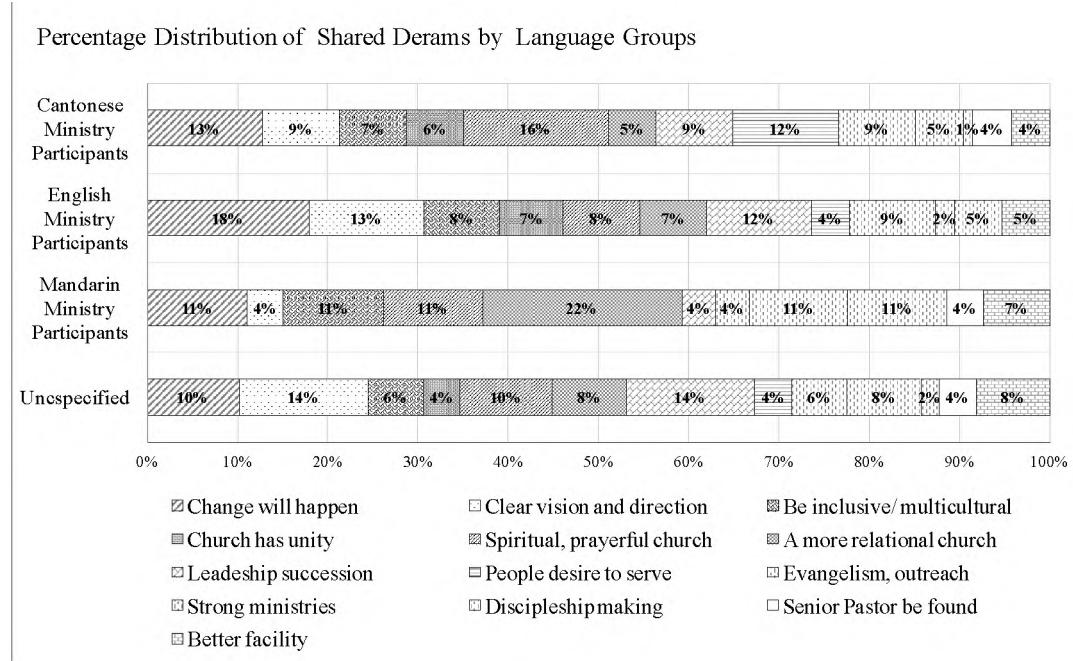


Figure 13. Comparison of Percentage Distribution of Shared Dreams among Language Groups

As all the questions were asking for personal opinions and experiences, responses therefore reflected the views and preferences of individuals. These

group comparisons however still revealed in broad strokes that there were many commonalities among the different groups.

Common Threads in Participants' Stories

A follow-up question to the generic theme questions was posed in the paired interview rounds asking participants if they could see common threads in the stories that they shared with each other. This question drove them to listen closely to one another to look for what they might share in common. Results showed that commonalities readily surfaced as a total of 105 common threads data were returned. Findings are presented below (Figure 14) while detailed breakdowns of commonalities from different sessions can be found in Summary of Data (Appendix K).

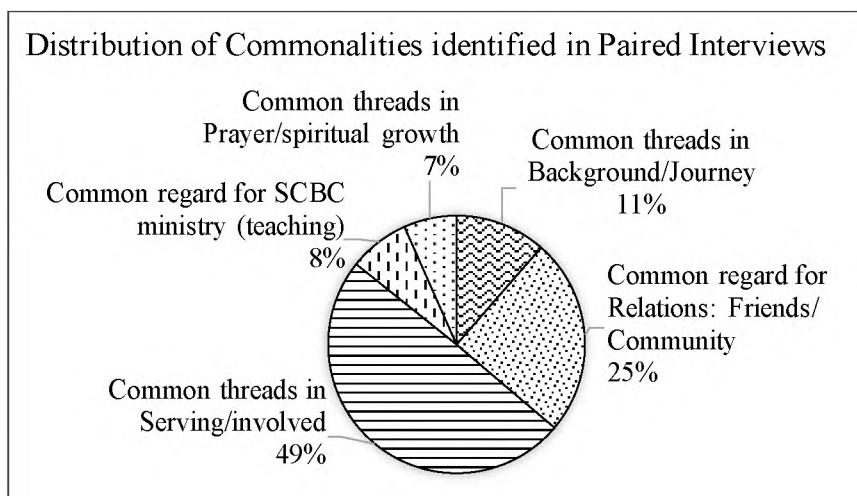


Figure 14. Distribution of Common Threads Identified by Participants

These common threads were what the participants themselves identified as they listened to each other's stories. There were interesting discoveries of specific

commonalities as some found that SCBC was the one and only church they ever attended, or that interview partners both got baptized within the first year they came. Specific discoveries like these helped them feel more akin to one another than before.

The number one common thread that topped the list pertained to their actual serving and involvement in ministries, followed by a common regard for the relationship with friends and community life in SCBC. There was a lot of positive affirmation in the room when they told each other how they were making a difference and making contribution to church life with their service and offering of gifts. There was also a lot of mutual appreciation as they recognized their common passion for God's work and commitment to SCBC as they shared their peak contributions and experiences.

What the AI was able to accomplish through this was to charge participants to pay attention to one another as fellow co-workers, to what they had in common and to affirm each other of what they valued together. No doubt AI was helpful in substantiating and strengthening the common ground that they shared in SCBC.

Creating a Composite Picture of SCBC - 'Decategorization' in a Third Space

The need for a neutral zone to facilitate collaboration and to foster unity among diverse groups has already been established above by precedent literature. Pittinsky talked about the "Third Space - *decategorization*" that provides a neutral

zone where categorization of sub-group identities does not exist and personal relationships can be developed and values explored anew. The AI actually offered SCBC leaders this “Third Space” for communication, relationship building and conversation. It charged them to take off their congregational sub-group identities but to turn their focus on their shared identity in SCBC as they discovered commonalities among themselves and explored together things that they have never inquired before.

So participants entered this neutral zone not as representatives of their groups but as individual fellow members, workers and leaders of SCBC. All the questions were directed towards their personal experience stories asking for their personal views. Each participant represented his or her own good self and responded to the inquiry questions from a personal perspective. What they brought to the table helped create a composite picture of SCBC, unfolding the story of her past, present and possibly, her future. This was another thing that this AI accomplished and will be explained below.

Participants’ Decisions on Making SCBC Home

In Round 1 paired interviews, participants were told to inquire each other what key factors attributed to their decisions to make SCBC home. Participants were asked specifically to name the positive elements in SCBC that attracted or helped them in their decisions. Findings are shown in Figure 15.

Interestingly findings revealed that participants decided to stay in SCBC primarily not because of church size or ministry programs that SCBC offered.

Topping the list with one third of responses were “Relational Connections” that included family connections, friendships and relations. Mentioned specifically were things like having family members in SCBC, reconnecting with old friends, new friends, fellowship groups, welcoming gestures, befriending a pastor here, or simply feeling at-home with the people in SCBC. It was the people, not programs, that made many feel at-home that they would look no further but decided to stay in SCBC.

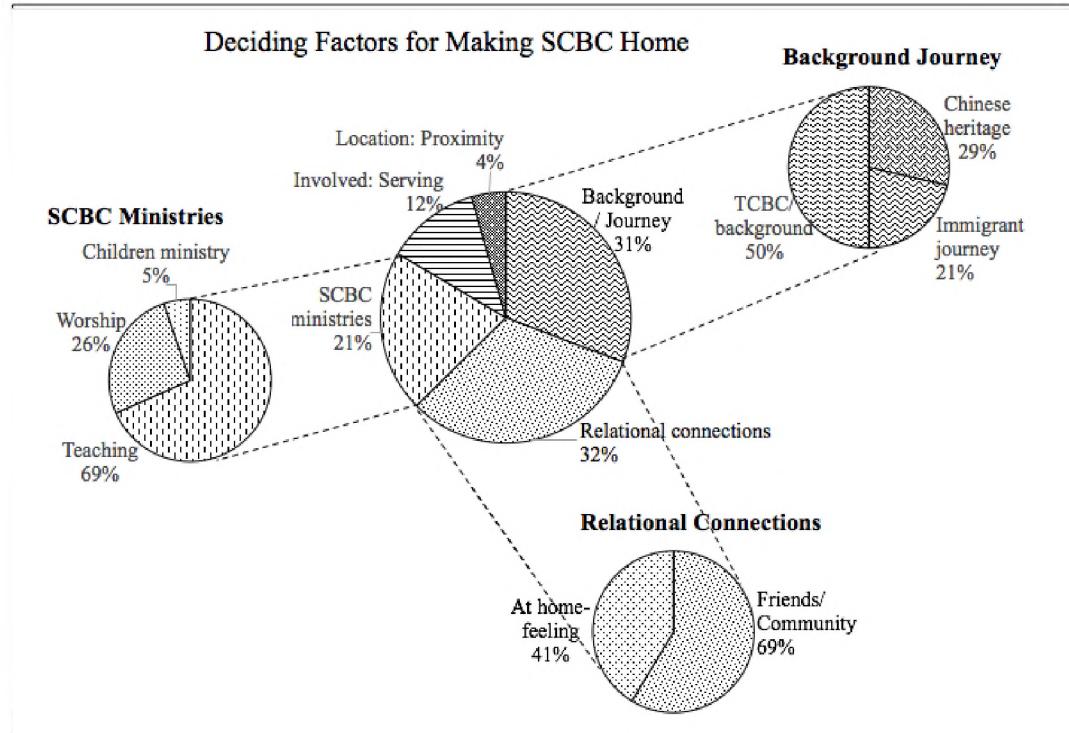


Figure 15. Distribution of All Counts of Deciding Factors for Making SCBC Home

Almost equally prominent was that another one third of responses that were “Background” related factors pertaining to cultural values and views each held before they came to SCBC. These background factors reflected preconceived

and predetermined criteria and personal preferences about church that were formulated before they came to SCBC. So factors like Chinese language, a desire to keep Chinese heritage, a desire to pass on Chinese cultural values to their children would draw them to narrow their search to Chinese churches.

Background affiliation with Baptist denomination, with TCBC the mother church of SCBC, familiar worship styles and church traditions, and the search for a church with people of similar immigrant background as themselves were all contributing factors that led participants to SCBC. As if unfolding the history of SCBC, these contributing factors pointed to the founding of SCBC and her distinctiveness as an ethnic Chinese immigrant church.

“Ministries” still had a big part to play in participants’ decisions on making SCBC home, only to a relatively lesser extent. In particular, strong teaching and pulpit preaching in worship were identified as the positive elements that attracted participants to stay in SCBC. This affirmed the centrality of worship and teaching of the word in church life as these would be first and foremost what believers look for in a church. The quality of the children’s program was an appeal to some participants, reflecting how many Chinese parents placed high priority in the interest and education of their children. This could be linked to a traditional Chinese culture that sees proper upbringing of children as most important, as well as to their immigrant backgrounds as common to many immigrant families; the main reason for immigration was that their children could have a better future.

Another identified deciding factor and common thread was “Serving” which included decisions to join SCBC because they were quickly invited and welcomed to serve in ministry, or they quickly became involved, or they saw opportunities in ministry that they could be a part of. It showed that affirming newcomers’ gifts, encouraging them to get involved, and ready acceptance of their service could enhance their decisions to join the church.

The findings from this segment revealed that aside from predetermined personal reasons, primarily it was the people and the community relations that stood out as the key positive elements that drew participants to SCBC. What appealed to them most in deciding to join SCBC were the relations and connections with people, and not so much the showcase of size and the varieties of activities or programs found in SCBC.

Participants’ Peak Contributions and Experiences

In Round 2, participants inquired each other of what constituted the most valuable ways they contributed to SCBC and what marked their peak experience or high point in SCBC. The results presented below show strikingly similar findings from the two questions (Figure 16).

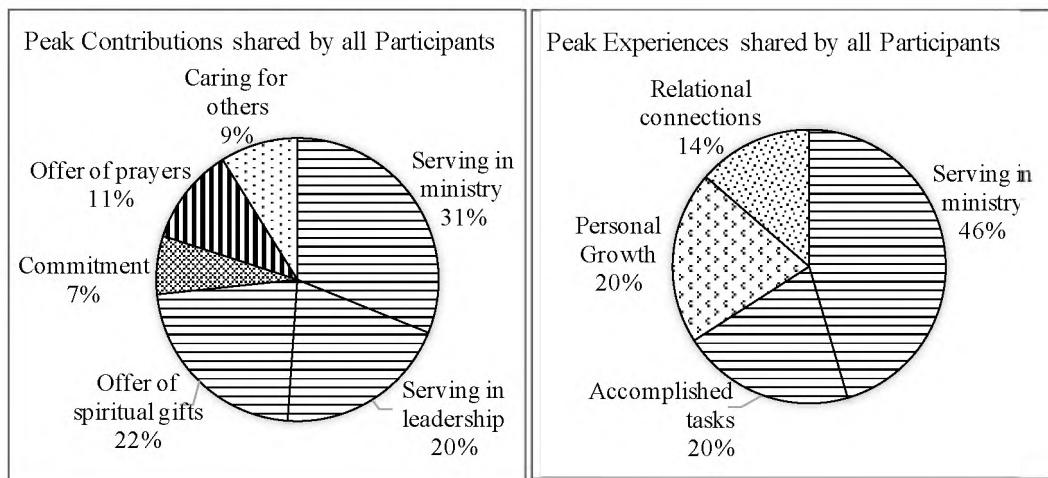


Figure 16. Distribution of All Counts of Peak Contributions and Peak Experiences

“Serving” as described in actual participation and active serving in ministry positions was identified by the participants as the top peak contribution. Because of the notable high percentages of returns specifying various leadership roles, and those naming specific gift areas like teaching, music and evangelism as their top contributions, “Serving in leadership” and “Offer of spiritual gifts” are distinguished separately. But actually these two groups belong to the category of “Serving” which altogether took up 73% of the total peak contributions responses.

“Serving” was also identified as the most prominent peak experience, as participants recalled their high points in what they encountered and experienced in ministry, like when they first started involving in ministry, learning experience in Sunday School, leading people to Christ and going through difficult situations. A notably high percentage labelled “Accomplished tasks” warranted special attention and was highlighted separately though they actually fell under “Serving.” They referred specifically to special church events and incidents, such

as organizing anniversary celebrations, church retreat, helping with problems, conflicts and challenging crisis situations.

What the findings revealed was that most participants readily affirmed that they were making contributions with their service and the use of their spiritual gifts in ministry. To many of them, their high points in church were also defined by what they were able to do and give, and what they experienced in serving. The most enriching and satisfying experience for most participants was found in their serving experiences. Bearing in mind that participants of this research project were leaders active in serving, the findings were naturally consistent with the characteristic profile of the group.

The sharing of each other's contributions and peak experiences offered glimpses into a leader's church life in SCBC and exposed the things that sustained them in ministry. It also brought to light the importance of giving people opportunities to serve and of matching people's gifts in ministry. At the same time, the way contributions and peak experiences were so predominantly defined by labor in ministry service and by the 'what and how' of ministry doings reflected the kind of leadership culture that was work-oriented and result-driven described in previous chapters.

"Relations" which was a huge factor in their decisions in coming to SCBC dwindled to a low point. This may implicate that the leaders were so busy serving that relations have become a low priority. Or this may reflect a leadership culture where satisfaction and success were fueled by work in action. Somehow from the

findings of this segment, it appears that *koinonia*, fellowship and communion, has taken a backseat.

“Background” elements disappeared from the picture altogether.

Apparently, once participants settled in church, cultural heritage and faith background factors much cherished in the past were replaced by practical involvement in church life. Somehow these personal background factors that were held when they first came seemed to have taken a backseat and was taken over by a commitment to serve. Social literature has expounded on the cultural, language and generational differences that exist in a multi-congregational Chinese church that make working together difficult. But with such a strong common thread in “Serving”, maybe inherent differences are not that hard to overcome if a common drive for serving could be found. This takes us right back to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission and the work that we are called to do with God and with one another.

Also notable is that some named “Prayer” as in praying for SCBC as their top contribution to church. Some found their peak experiences in “Personal Growth” factors such as personal spiritual growth, faith journeys and revival experiences. Such spiritual elements were also identified as common threads in their stories, implicating the presence of the unifying strand founded on faith experience in Jesus.

Shared SCBC Top Values

As AI progressed, participants inquired each other of what they valued most about SCBC. Findings are presented below (Figure 17).

Distribution of Shared Top Values of SCBC

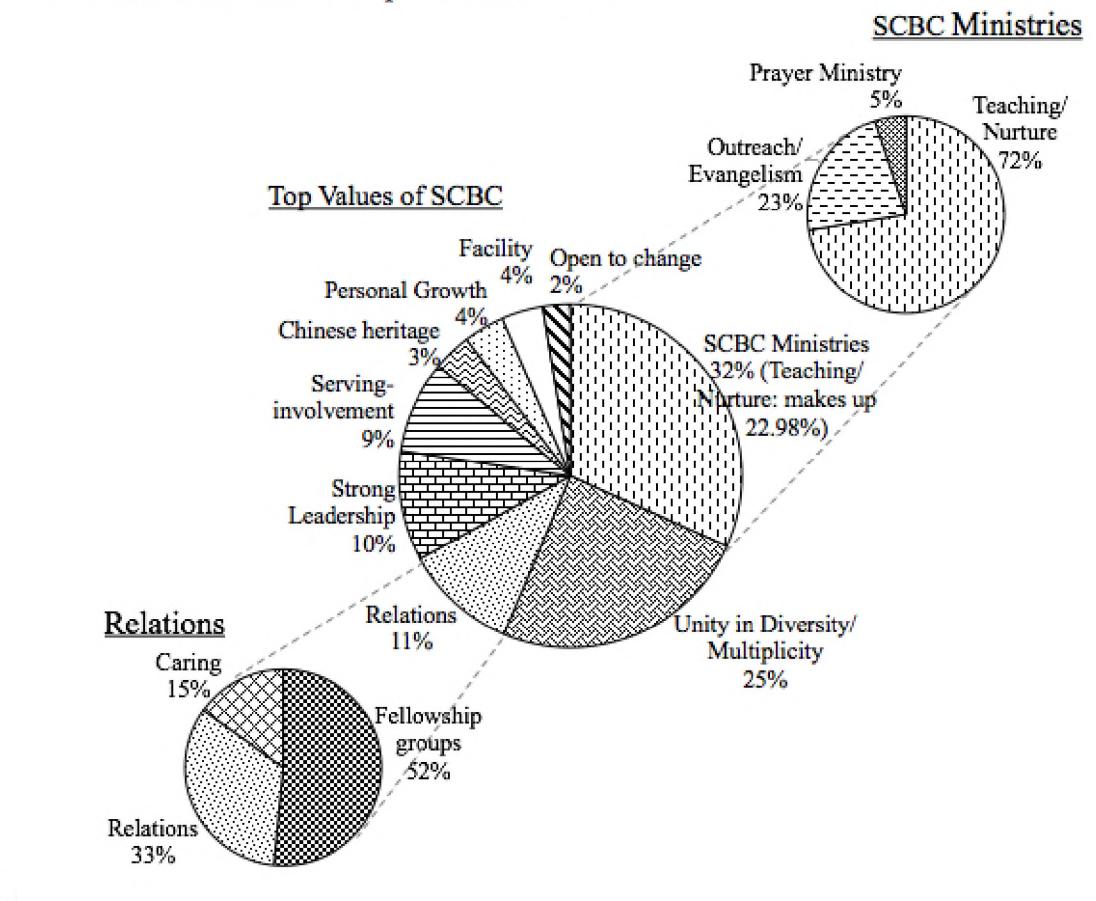


Figure 17. Distribution of All Counts of Shared Top Values

These inputs represent participants' opinions about the most positive top value of SCBC. The highest identified top value was under "Ministry" group in which teaching ministry accounted for 22.98% of the total counts. A good proportion of returns cited specifically the "Word of Life" bible study program

while many cited Sunday School and bible teaching and pulpit preaching as their top value. As one Baptist distinctive is a strong emphasis on the authority of the bible, SCBC has a strong Sunday School department that delivers bible teaching to all ages from early childhood to seniors in all three languages. Attendance has always been strong. Besides, hosted on site are other weekly bible study programs like “Word of Life” in Cantonese and Bible Study Fellowship for English-speaking young adults. It is natural that as participants pulled their thoughts away from personal stories to inquire what valuable elements are found in SCBC, teaching/nurture ministry would get affirmed first and foremost.

“Outreach/Evangelism” and “Prayer” ministries made up the rest of the category as top values, which is of no surprise as these two ministries have always been emphasized. And with a Mission Department that supports over 30 missionaries and numerous local organizations, outreach has always been perceived as a strength of SCBC.

“Unity in Diversity/multiplicity” surfaced as the second highest value named by participants. Many participants specifically shared that they valued the fact that there are multi-generations in the church. Many others value the fact that there are multi-congregations of three languages yet the church stays united as one big family. Especially noteworthy is that by accounting for 25% of the total counts, “Unity in Diversity, multiplicity” actually surpassed the 22.98% on “Teaching/nurture” and came out as the top single value cited by participants. While naming teaching ministry with the range of programs mentioned above as a top value was no surprise, this high regard for unity in diversity was not expected.

Such a strong acknowledgment of the value of multiplicity attests to the ability and benefit of AI in generating a positive climate of appreciation that is helpful for an organization. These comments displayed a positive recognition and appreciation of the reality of diversity in the body of Christ that was discussed above in Theological Framework. Especially for the case of SCBC, an ethnic immigrant church with all the internal differences discussed above, such embrace of multiplicity by participants could be a very encouraging message to the leadership.

“Relations”, “Serving” and “leadership” each took up around 10% of the total counts and stayed as notably high top values. Factors like Chinese heritage and culture, the physical location right in the heart of Scarborough, and the well-equipped church facilities with a gymnasium and a commercial kitchen were also distinguished as top values for the church. Interestingly, a willingness and openness to change was also named by some as top values for SCBC.

Church DNA identified by Participants

Participants were also directed to identify from their shared stories and experiences any DNA elements that they could find. What they identified were grouped into the broad categories as before and the results are presented side-by-side below for comparison (Figure 18).

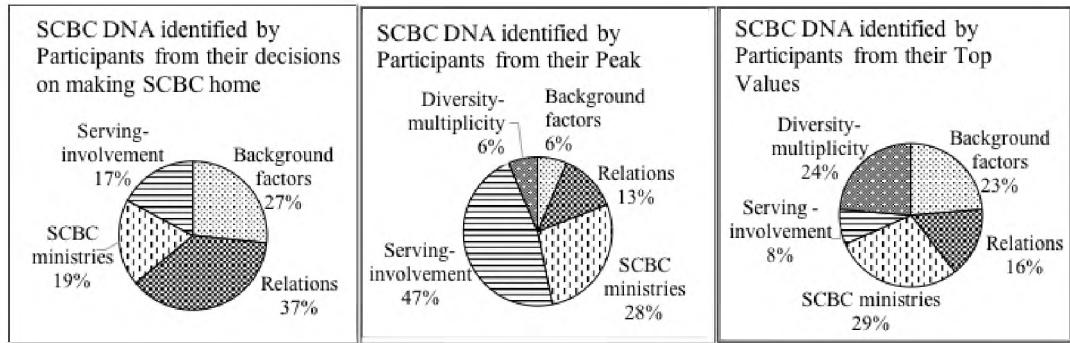


Figure 18. SCBC DNA identified by the Participants from AI Sessions

From stories of their decisions to make SCBC home, “Relations” was identified the dominant DNA of SCBC, followed by “Background” factors associated with heritage, culture and background journeys. “Serving” played a lesser part. However, in the peak experience and peak contributions sharing, “Serving” surfaced to become the major DNA elements followed next by “Ministries”, while “Relations” and “Background” factors fell drastically behind. But then when asked about the top values of SCBC, all three categories “Ministries”, “Background” and “Relations” surpassed “Serving” to take up again major shares of responses, and the new category of “Diversity, multiplicity” factors surfaced as a prominent value.

It is notable how “Background” was very prominent in the beginning, diminished at one point, and then resurfaced as a “Top Value”. Likewise, “Relations” and “Serving” both had their high and low points but never dropped out of the picture. Somehow these factors always resurfaced and found their places in various components of life in SCBC.

All Counts of SCBC DNA identified by Participants

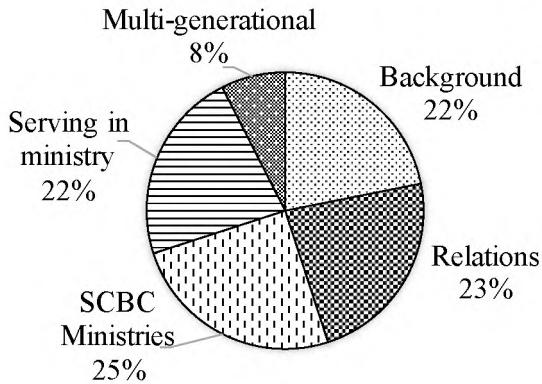


Figure 19. Distribution of All Counts of DNA identified by Participants

When all counts of these identified DNA were put together (Figure 19), they show a fairly even distribution of the different elements. Evidently these were the DNA factors that were deeply ingrained and embedded in SCBC and that made what SCBC is today. This resonates with how DNA was defined in the first place, that they are “the fundamental and distinctive self-replicating characteristics and qualities that make a church what it is today.”

It is no surprise that as participants were looking for DNA elements from what they shared with and heard from each other, the DNA factors they identified would reveal the same kinds and patterns as the results of data analyses already detailed and discussed before. But the exercise showed exactly what the AI was trying to achieve, that participants would work together on something so their shared identify could be strengthened. Looking for SCBC DNA served this purpose well as affirmed by their findings.

Co-Dreaming for a Future

Participants were asked to share in focus groups their dreams and wishes for SCBC. Findings are presented below (Figure 20).

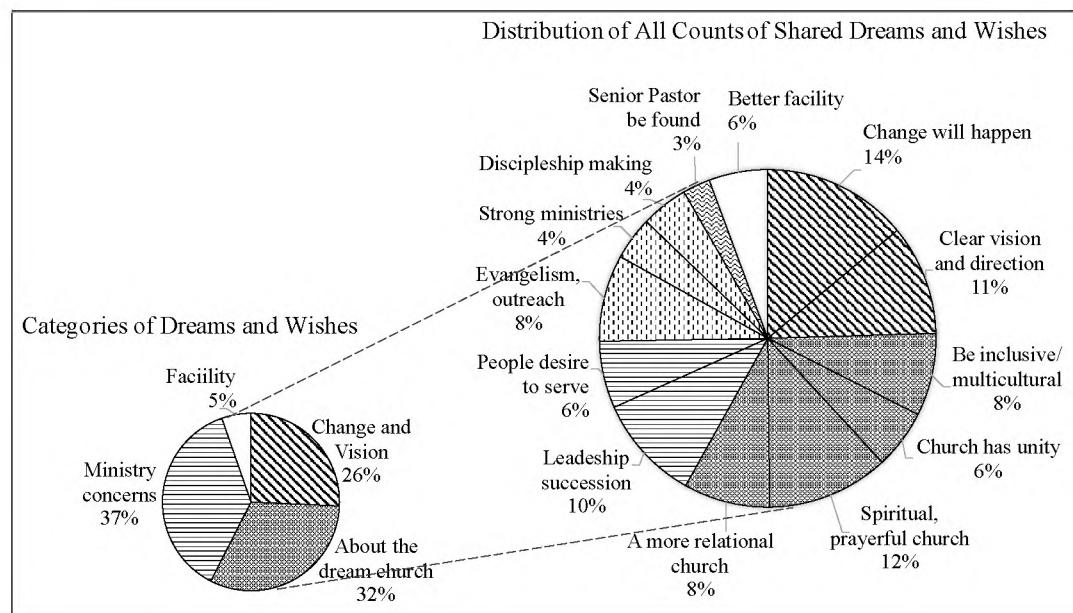


Figure 20. Distribution of All Counts of Shared Dreams and Wishes

Three main categories of dreams surfaced, first a group that expressed wishes for things to be different. This group was named “Change and Vision”. A second group expressed specific wishes for what kind of church they dreamed for and these were grouped under “About the Dream Church”. A third group of wishes were related to practical concerns and current ministry needs and were grouped under “Ministry Concerns”. A small percentage dreamed for bigger facility and building expansion.

“Change and Vision” dreams included those wishing for change and that things be different, labelled “Change will happen”, with examples like “bring

change to SCBC culture”, “desire to not remain as a first-gen immigrant church”, “cut down on governance structure”, “name change to reflect missional church”, “need change in leadership- open minded to change”, “needs a paradigm shift, where faith is rooted into society”. The other sector labelled “Clear vision and direction” wished for clarity in vision and church direction like “a greater emphasis and passion in global mission”, “not just concerned with SCBC”, “clear understanding and vision/mission of SCBC (direction and focus and strategy to achieve it)”, “need longer vision and direction instead of short projects”, “clear direction”.

Another big category named “About the dream church” showed responses that gave affirmative descriptions of the kind of church they wished to see in SCBC. A sizeable group wished SCBC to be a “Spiritual and prayerful church”. Dreams for SCBC to “Be inclusive and multicultural” included examples like “more diversity”, “a desire to not remain as a Chinese church”, “a heart for community (cross-cultural ministry) that tailors to the essential needs of GTA residents”, “break down ethical barrier –treasure heritage, expand beyond ethnicity”, “cross-generational lineage and friendship”, “inter-fellowship within English Ministry”, “Break down ethnic barriers, both traditional and non-traditional ones, while keeping the “good” heritage”, “inclusive in understanding”, “enforce more collaboration amongst congregations”. Some wished that “Church has unity” amid diversity while some wished for “a more relational church” where deep personal relationships, fellowship and community life could be developed.

The third main category reflected wishes in response to specific ministry issues, concerns and needs. Top on the list was “leadership succession” wherein wishes were expressed like “younger people move into leadership”, “have the 30-50s to be on deacon board”, “30s and 40s in leadership”, “empowering the next generation of leaders”. Others wished for ministry development and growth in areas like outreach and discipleship training. Some just wished that a senior pastor be found to fill the position that has been vacant for over two years.

Lastly, there were those who wished for “Facility and Resource” such as new space for children worship, more parking spaces, new and bigger chapel and better use of the functional space in the church.

Unlike the previous AI segments, the picture gathered from “Dreams and Wishes” did not show any pattern of predominance by one particular data group. Instead new categories of “Dreams and Wishes” data came out from all directions. They reflected the aspirations, yearnings and desires of participants and things that they hoped to see but were not found, or things that addressed some obvious shortfalls or need areas in SCBC.

Summing up, “Change will happen” voiced out the yearnings for change, some unspecified and others spelling out change as in organizational structure, church culture, paradigm shift, and move away from first-generation immigrant church. “Clear vision and direction” voiced out desires for clear vision and direction of where SCBC is heading. They both reflected certain extent of restlessness and dissatisfaction of the current state of matters.

Like the other side of the coin, “About the dream church” painted out the desires of the kind of church they longed to see in SCBC. Some wished for a “Relational community”. “Relations” had been valued most at the beginning of their SCBC journey but has somehow diminished to a low point along the way, and now it surfaced again as a wish. This could reflect a much desired value that had got lost but needed to be brought back.

“Be spiritual and prayerful” reflected the longing for a spiritual and prayerful community, a category related to a sizable group “personal growth” in peak experience findings, greatly outnumbered as a top value, now resurfacing again as participants’ eyes were pointed to the future.

“Be inclusive and multicultural” and “Church has unity” appeared to further what first showed up in top value findings as “Unity and diversity, multiplicity”. When responding to the top value question, participants were affirming the multi-generations and the three language groups staying as one church. Here participants were describing dreams for SCBC to move away from being a Chinese ethnic church, to move into local communities, to be inclusive of people different than themselves. The term “multicultural” actually surfaced a lot in the responses. This implied that some leaders had in their dreams a multicultural and multi-ethnic church for SCBC.

Data in the “Ministry concerns” group appeared to have direct relations to known issues of imminent needs and concerns in SCBC. “Leadership succession” has been a pressing issue repeatedly raised in leadership so dreams came in wishing for more people especially the younger age groups to have more passion

to serve. Some were wishing for a senior pastor to be found. Some were wishing for expansion in existing ministries, especially in outreach and evangelism as two outreach pastors with such portfolios have recently left SCBC.

Church DNA and Life-Giving Forces - Story of SCBC Past, Present and Future

One key use of Appreciative Inquiry is to identify the positive life-giving forces that are present in an organization. Throughout the AI process, participants have been inquiring and discovering all these positive life-giving factors from stories of their decisions in making SCBC home, their peak experiences, peak contributions, top values, and their dreams and wishes for SCBC. Findings from these five inquiry components are presented in a line graph for comparison (Figure 21).

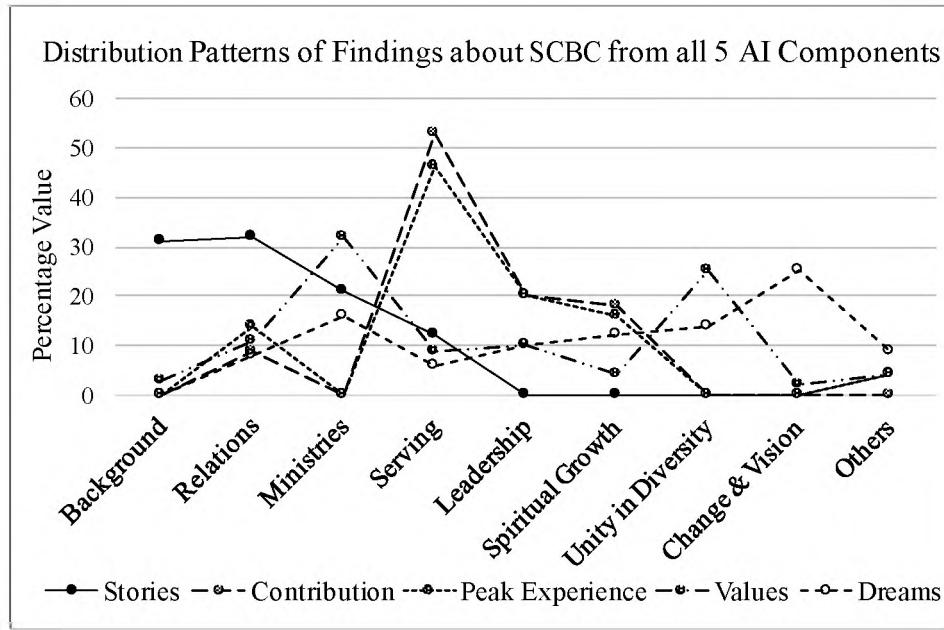


Figure 21. Comparison of Distribution Patterns of Findings from the 5 AI Components

The comparison chart put together the findings of this AI from the different sessions and showed their distinctly different patterns. “Background” and “Relations” were the most prominent positive factors in participants’ decisions to join SCBC. “Serving” in ministry was the most prominent positive thing they treasured as peak experiences and peak contributions. Participants’ top values were peaked by “Ministries” offered in SCBC and “Unity and Diversity” characteristics of SCBC. Factors gathered from the dreams and wishes were more evenly dispersed with a peak in “Change and Vision” comprising desires for change and church vision, followed by the second highest category “Ministries”. These identified positive elements were none others than primary life-giving forces that made SCBC what she is today.

By comparing the distribution patterns of these life-giving forces, it could be seen that the relative prominence of these elements has changed with time according to the time reference that each specific AI component alluded. This can be seen from the stacked bar graphs below (Figure 22).

Life-giving forces from the first AI session is represented by the bottom bar. 'Background' factors revealed how SCBC was gathered with members sharing commonalities in their distinctive Chinese descent, cultural values, immigrant background and faith journeys. These were the building blocks that made SCBC. They were in the DNA of SCBC. This was what participants recalled as they reflected on the past.

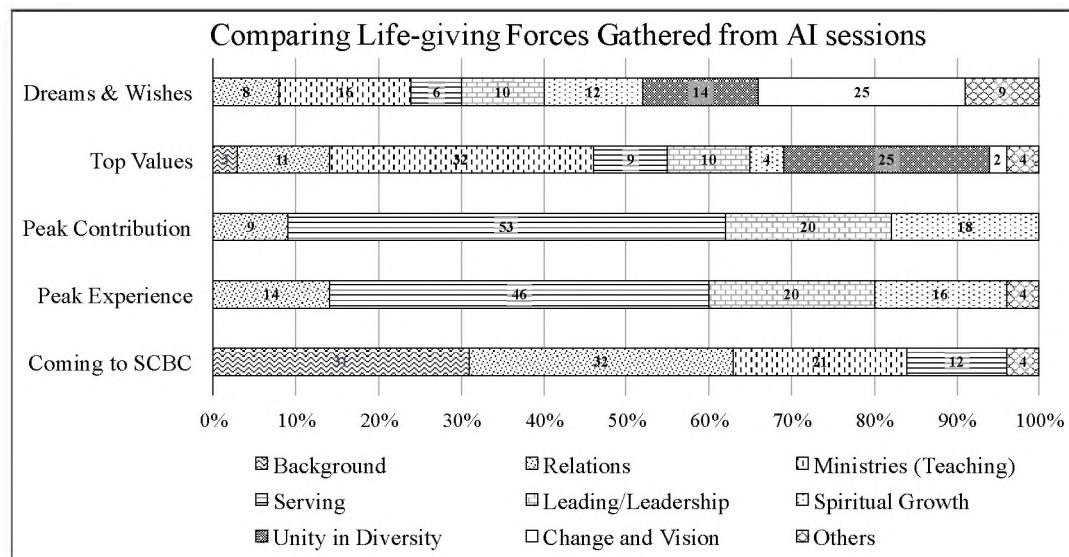


Figure 22. Comparison of Percentage Distribution of Life-Giving Forces Identified from AI Sessions

It also revealed how “Relations” played an important part in attracting people to SCBC as this was the most prominent factor that participants cited.

Many were drawn to SCBC first and foremost simply because of the relations and personal friendships that connected and the ready acceptance of them into the community. That personal touch, the caring spirit and extend of friendship in the fellowship groups were the building blocks of SCBC. These were in the DNA of SCBC from the very beginning. This told not only about the past but also the present.

The next two bars from the bottom showed “Serving” and “Leading” accounting for as much as three-quarters of the total returns. This revealed that once they settled down in SCBC, participants took part in church life with what they could offer to church, their gifts, commitments and actual service. They would experience their high points in church through serving, leading and such giving of themselves. These were the life-giving forces that energized participants as they found themselves partnering with God and with fellow believers in doing God’s work in church. The giving of oneself, the offering of gifts and the acts of service continue to be the building blocks of SCBC. They are in the church DNA.

The fourth bar from the bottom presented two major elements that were embraced by participants as top values of SCBC, “Ministries (Teaching)” and “Unity in diversity”. While prominence of “Teaching” pointed us to the Baptist distinctive with emphasis on bible teaching, “Ministries” reveal what business and life in SCBC is about with the day-to-day operation and delivery of church work and activities. It tells about the present.

Coming out as the number one single top value named by participants, “Unity in diversity” reflected how much participants valued the fact that SCBC

stayed as one church with multi-congregations and multi-generations. Such strong appreciation of unity amid diversity strongly expressed a firm embrace for unity, diversity and multiplicity that has not been heard before. From a one-language immigrant church, SCBC has evolved into a multi-congregational church. These elements together with the other recognized strengths and identified top values have now been firmly ingrained in the DNA of SCBC. They characterize what SCBC is today.

The top bar “Dreams and Wishes” displayed a mix of responses from participants with dreams pointing to different directions, each category taking up a fair share of the total. This actually revealed the diversity of views among participants. Such diversity in views and opinions is a common occurrence as the church grows in size. Attempts to appease all parties and to maintain harmony often call for a balancing act to deal with competing views, needs and demands. Diverse and competing interests need to find balance. Compromise needs to be made. As much as possible, all views and initiatives are welcome. The result will be like that of an evenly divided pie with every sector getting a fair share. Status quo can then be kept and peace and harmony maintained. Such an approach reflects the inherent deep-rooted Chinese culture that is very much ingrained in the DNA of SCBC. This is what SCBC is today.

The dreams and wishes delivered the participants’ yearnings for the future. The longing signaled certain restlessness and dissatisfaction and signified what were the things hoped for and the things not seen in the minds of participants. The unspecified change and paradigm shift, a clear sense of vision and direction, the

picture of a multicultural, spiritual and relational church in unity, and growth in ministries can be envisaged as future DNA of SCBC. This reflects the present undercurrents in SCBC and the hope for a possibly better future.

Feedback Evaluation from Participants

The coming together of leaders to sit down and inquire each other of the designated questions, to look for commonalities and to identify DNA factors was, by nature, a work in itself. Not only did it present to the leaders a task to be accomplished together, it also facilitated a shared experience of a new kind of working together. In the current church structure, leaders of different groups and congregations work together by primarily working apart in their own focus areas. Members bring to the table their own piece of ministry, and pieced together the work of the whole church. The AI actually gave them a real time experience of working on something together.

The undertaking of Appreciative Inquiry therefore, by nature and in effect, delivered a shared experience of working together in real time.

Feedback on AI Experience

Out of a total of 85 comments on the experience of AI collected from the AI sessions and evaluation, 76 positive comments and 9 neutral or negative feedback were received. Distribution of feedback is presented below in percentage and absolute value (Figure 23).

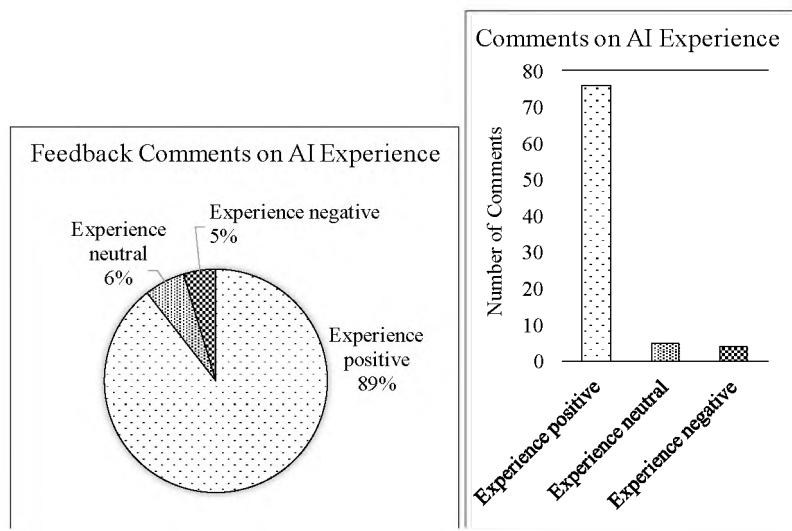


Figure 23. Distribution of Feedback on Overall AI Experience

The high percentage of positive feedback affirmed that participants found the experience positive. Most comments were general in expressing how they found AI a good and enjoyable experience. Many affirmed that it was something new and refreshing. Classified as positive are positive comments like these:

- “for mutual connection and expression rather than our usual business focus, which I find equally important for balanced growth and nurturing of leaders”
- “I recall this might be the only one occasion that all SCBC leaders mingled/ worked together”
- “More listening opportunities like this are needed”
- “AI provided the opportunity for leaders to connect and bond in a new light; this has definitely enhanced the working together of the leadership team.”

Comments like “it’s okay” were classified as neutral. Five negative comments were received from the paired interview sessions, with three noting that they found the AI process “slow in process”, “like climbing a hill” and “running

like a turtle”. The other two comments quoted below confirmed what AI method was criticized as incapable of delivering strategic and tactical solutions to problems as previously mentioned.

- “Not too much that I learn because we have similar background” (from stories)
- “However, the current situations of SCBC require so much more effort and team work in targeting the issues. Love to see stronger initiatives from the leadership/management team (Deacon Board and Pastoral Team) in the same sense of urgency. Also, if the AI experience can involve more of their inputs, including the actual overview of the real situations as well as the real “dream” along with plans and implementation, these will make this forum a so much for meaningful one.”

The last comment reflected a strong desire for “targeting the issues” and “real situations” with “plans and implementation”. This reflected the preference for a pragmatic problem solving and strategic planning approach with which the leadership was familiar.

The above results from the qualitative analysis were in agreement with ratings on the AI experience derived from the evaluation survey. Ratings on 5 different questions addressing the experience were summarized in the chart below (Figure 24). It showed that except for a very low percentage of negative feedback, overall the vast majority of respondents found the AI experience enjoyable.

Interestingly, the percentage of “enjoyed hearing other’s dreams and wishes” was notably higher than the percentage for “enjoyed sharing my dreams and wishes”. This attested to the effect of AI in engaging participants to practice listening.

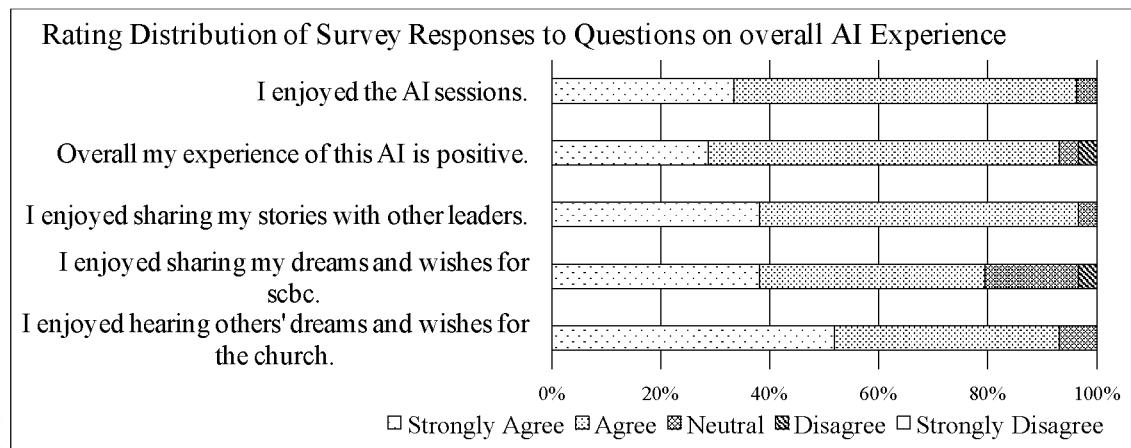


Figure 24. Rating Distribution for Responses to Questions about Overall AI Experience

The listening that happened in this AI process fits into Lewis description of real ‘conversation’, one that involves an experience of being listened to and of listening to others, an atmosphere of trust and openness and an affirmation of self-value and the value of others, and the development of shared meanings and understandings (Lewis et. al. 2008. 73). The inquiring and listening is not merely dialogue or talk, but conversation. This practice of listening is what Halter calls for in a ministry of listening as a practice of incarnational community. It also resonates with what Bonhoeffer says about listening to one another is an obligation that must be practiced for true fellowship life to be realized. The intent and scale of listening that this AI delivered have never happened in business meetings and was a new experience to the participants. It offered a glimpse into what could and should be done more regularly in the leadership for “working in fellowship, fellowship in working” to happen.

Impact on Relationship and Team Building

A total of 56 counts of positive comments on AI's positive effect on relationship and team building were recorded. Only two counts of negative feedback were returned both from the first paired interview session expressing that they knew their partners well and did not find relationships strengthened. The positive comments split evenly into two 50-50 groups, one half commenting on how AI helped respondents build relationship with others and the other half commenting on how AI helped build the team and fostered unity.

Comments especially affirmed how AI was helpful for striking intergroup communication and crossing sub-group boundaries, a few examples are:

- “This exercise got me to know more of others, I talked to different people in my group, their faces are familiar but never talk to them in person before.”
- “I met some other church leaders that I never had a chance to talk to them at SCBC.”

Some examples of comments referring to impact on the team are given below:

- “It was a good opportunity to experience a sense of teamwork and support and encouragement from each other.”
- “AI provided the opportunity for leaders to connect and bond in a new light; this has definitely enhanced the working together of the leadership team.”
- “promoted sense of unity among leaders.”
- “Since we are a large church where the paths of the leaders do not necessarily cross during the normal course of our church life, such sessions bring people together to build familiarity.”

Findings were in line with survey ratings on questions about relationship building and effect on leadership team (Figures 25, 26) both of which showed high percentages affirming the positive impact of AI.

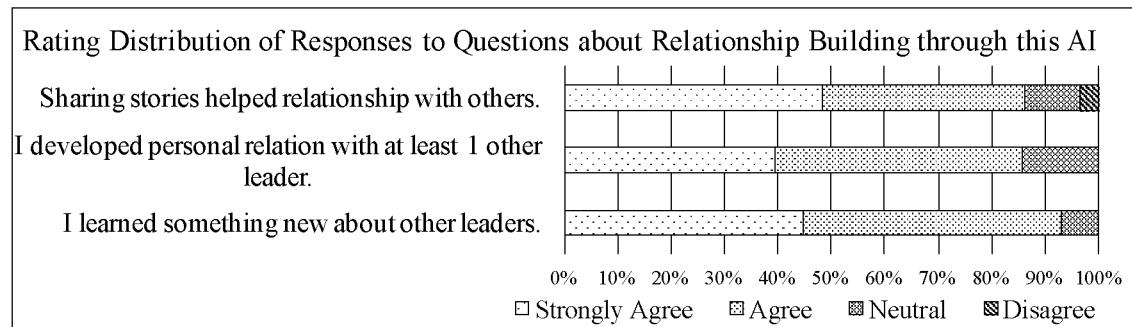


Figure 25. Rating Distribution of Responses to Questions about Relationship Building

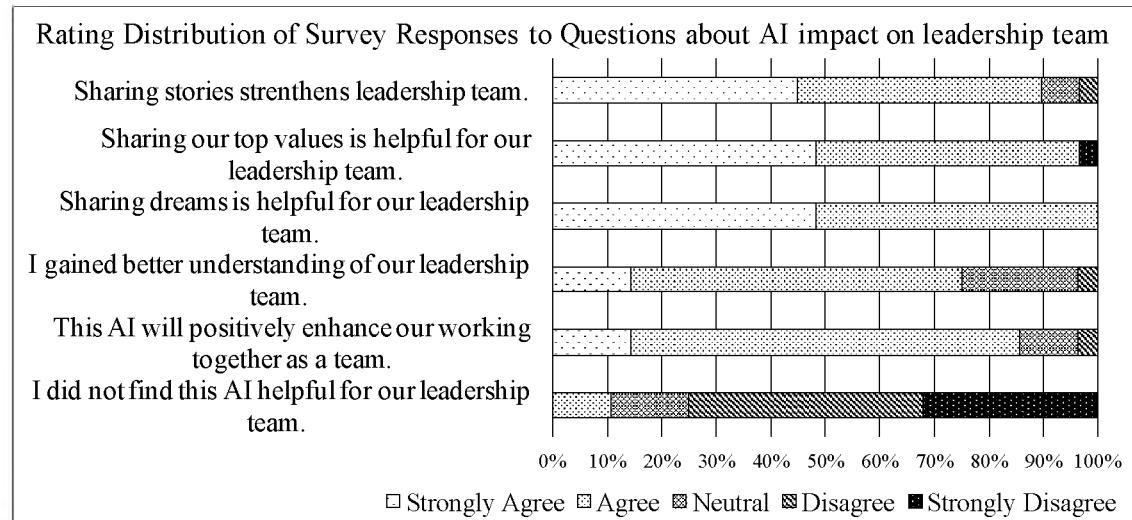


Figure 26. Rating Distribution of Responses to Questions about AI Impact on Leadership Team

It must be noted that the respondents gave high ratings to the impact of sharing stories, values and dreams as indicated by these bars. Sharing dreams got even 100% positive rating in agreement to the helpfulness of that session.

Responses to the bottom ‘reverse wording’ question indicated the same positive response. There was more hesitation as to the impact on understanding the team and the working together of the team. These questions called for a deeper conceptual understanding and change in working behaviors. Apparently, this AI did not go beyond the appreciative shared experience to generate deep changes in personal understanding and group behaviors so they could not be ascertained.

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The natural occurrence of barriers between sub-groups and intergroup dynamics has been discussed above. Barriers between subgroups can be removed and boundaries crossed by what Pittinsky describes “intergroup leadership that brings groups together” for “intercultural communication” (Pittinsky 2009, xii).

The positive impact of AI on relationship and team building affirmed such intergroup and intercultural communication. Changing partners in paired interview sessions and mixing leaders from different language groups into mixed

focus groups actually facilitated a “movement of relationships” that transcended sub-group dynamics and broke through in-group behaviors.

Impact on Growth in Knowledge

Respondents were asked if AI has helped them gain any knowledge. A total of 75 comments were collected. Except for 2 comments noting that nothing new was learned, all comments were positive. As to what kind of knowledge was gained, specific comments fell into three categories: knowledge of other people, knowledge about the church and knowledge about other congregations, as presented below (Figure 27).

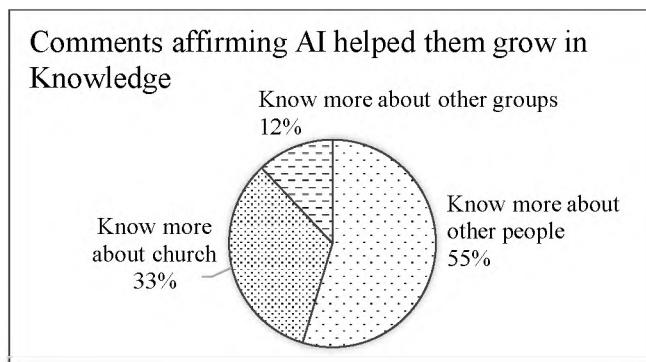


Figure 27. Distribution of the Kind of Knowledge Gained in AI

Here are a few examples of these comments:

- “know other leader more deeply”, “know more about the partner”, “know the partner better”, “appreciate the partner”
- “How little I know about leaders in the other congregations and their perspective of SCBC.”
- “As a leader, not just narrow minded to think about one’s own congregation, but think of part of the whole SCBC, how do we help across congregations.”

- “I was able to get to know more leaders outside of my usual working groups and connect with them in a different level. I believe this is an important step for greater understanding and growth as an organic church.”

Figure 28 showed survey results on questions about AI’s effect on growth in knowledge. Most respondents affirmed has AI was helpful in this respect. It could be expected that what they exactly learned might be random, choppy, piecemeal and subjective as they engage inquiry dialogues with one another. But most respondents were able to affirm that some new knowledge was acquired. Moreover, the mass of data and the findings presented above would attest to the positive effect of AI on enriching knowledge.

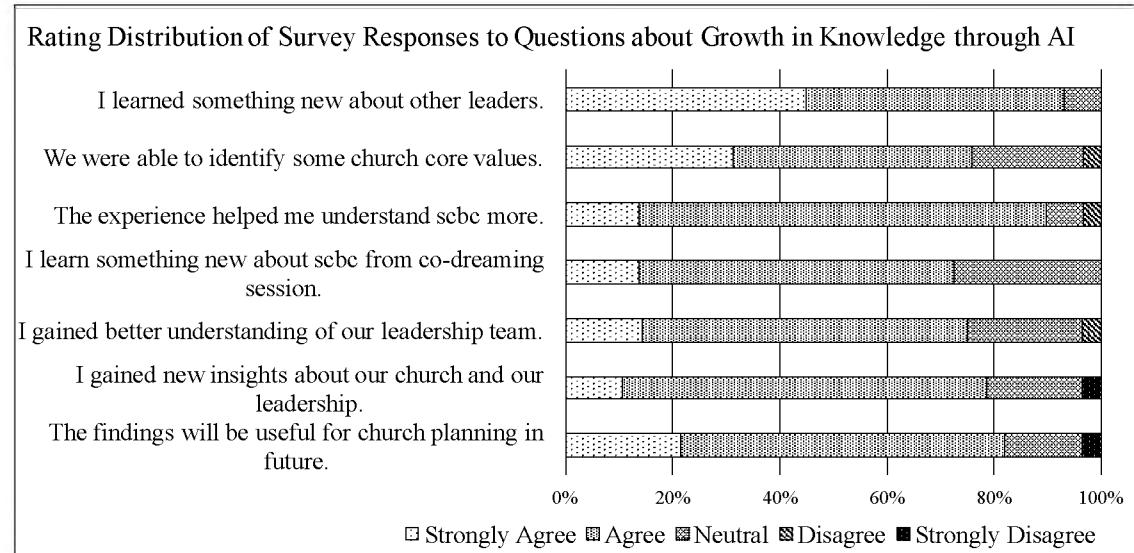


Figure 28. Rating Distribution of Responses to Questions about Growth in Knowledge

Finding Common Ground

Findings on commonalities identified by the participants have already been presented above. Survey questions were included in the Evaluation to solicit participants' feedback on whether they were affirmative on this point (Figure 29).

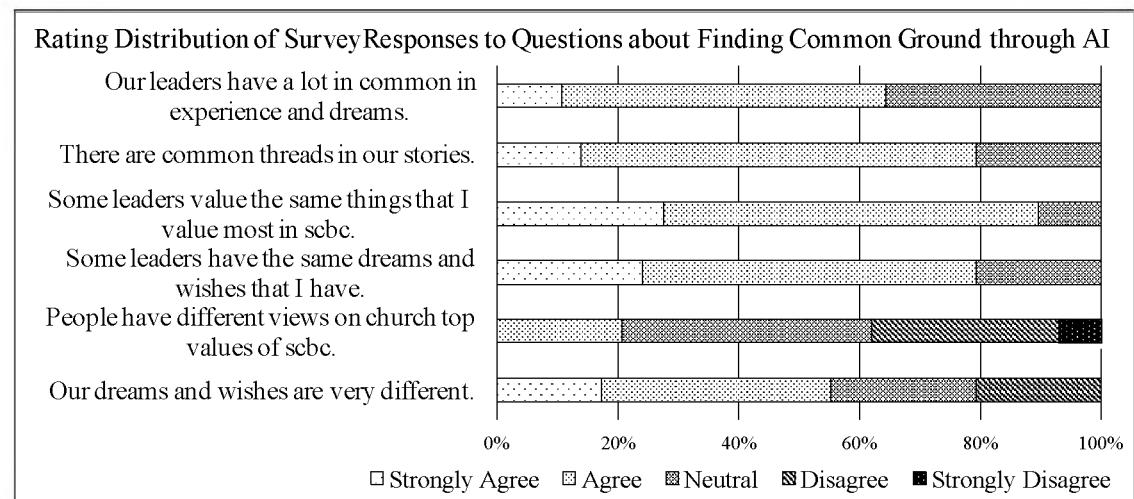


Figure 29. Rating Distribution of Responses to Questions about Finding Common Ground through AI

The bottom 2 questions were 'reverse wording' questions to ensure a valid measure of response from another perspective. All responses validated the same pattern with high percentage of responses affirming that respondents found common threads and commonalities with others in the AI.

It is interesting that even though the text analyses findings revealed to us that data on SCBC top values and dreams were the most varied compared to data gathered from the other AI components, the survey results showed a different picture. Here the respondents affirmed that they found common values and dreams with even higher percentages than what they found from their stories and

experiences. This might reflect the very positive impact of AI. In applying the principle of social constructionism and appreciative approach, AI was able to generate the engaging and listening spirit of participants to see the positive. Throughout the process, there were a lot of mutual affirmation and appreciation of each other. Apparently an awareness and attention to commonalities might have been heightened by the sense of togetherness and positive outlook promoted by the AI.

Overall Affirmation

Figure 30 presents an overall picture of the high level of positive feedback on the AI gathered from both text analysis findings and the evaluation survey returns. Findings from text analysis displayed the helpfulness of AI as a positive experience that facilitated growth in knowledge and relationship building. Responses to all evaluation survey questions except for the three ‘reverse wording’ ones were summarized and shown in the pie graph below. It showed overwhelmingly positive feedback about the AI.

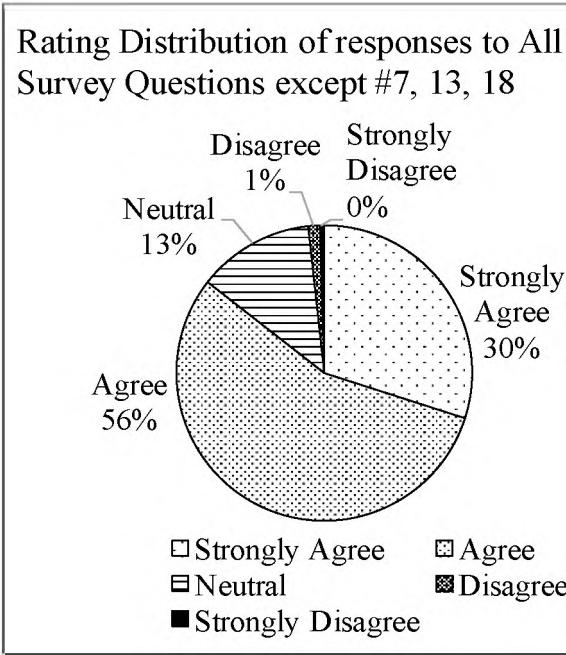
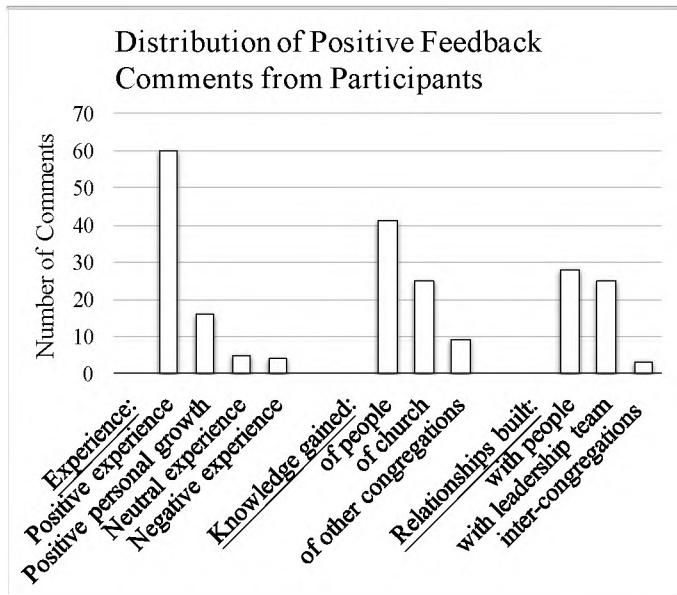


Figure 30. Summary Charts Showing All Feedback from Text Analysis and Evaluation Survey

The pattern of distribution was in line with patterns of responses to the three ‘reverse wording’ questions already discussed above. These questions were

posed to ensure that patterns of survey response can be validated from a reverse angle and their purpose was served in this case.

Overall, the AI has successfully provided the leadership of SCBC with this shared experience and opportunity to inquire and listen to one another. The experience was affirmed to be positive and enjoyable with relationships and knowledge both impacted and enriched. Many common threads were discovered throughout the process to substantiate and build on the common ground for working together.

Feedback from Other Sources

Apart from the formal evaluation feedback and data analysis, some informal feedback and observations need to be mentioned in order that the use and impact of AI in SCBC can be more fully ascertained.

First, it was noticed how the paired interviews were received differently by the participants. After the AI approach was introduced to the participants, it could be seen that not everyone was convinced about the method. There were a few questioning looks and a few people showed doubts with body language and were apparently not impressed with the paired interview format. Everyone still engaged in the inquiry as directed. It could be seen that some people were really engaged, intently listening, laughing and enjoying the dialogues with their partners. Some groups were more serious and slower in their conversations, and seemingly less enthusiastic. Some people slowly loosened up and started to be more comfortable and open with the partner in the second round of interviews.

Some really showed interest in meeting and hearing from different partners. It was apparent that AI was something that they have not encountered before.

Casual verbal feedback was received as people left. One person said, “it is refreshing”, A few said, “it is interesting”, “this is good”, “this is new”. Some appreciated the moving around and enjoyed dialogues with different people. Notable were questions from one participant: “How can this solve church problems? How can this address the needs in leadership, and our problems in leadership?” His honest questions clearly reflected that the AI approach might appear to some participants as disconnected with church problems and they might be wondering how appreciative interviews could be helpful. This affirmed how AI approach was totally foreign to the group and reflected the problem-solving approach and business mindset that the leaders were used to in SCBC. It was understandable that participants might not grasp the value of communicative actions and the need for relationship building.

People were a lot more familiar and comfortable with focus group format at the Mini-Leadership Summit. Every group was intensely engaged in sharing. Everyone appeared to be enthusiastic in anticipating in the inquiry. Many positive verbal comments were received after the session, mostly general appreciation words of thank you and positive comments like: “It is really good”, “I like it”, “I enjoyed it”, etc. One person mentioned how engaged and participatory a Mandarin-speaking brother was in his group, and that he has never seen Mandarin-speaking leaders so actively involved and voicing out so comfortably before. A few Mandarin-speaking leaders confirmed with me that they were very

comfortable and found themselves very involved and vocal in their groups. Such comments validate what has been discussed above about the dynamics of a majority-culture dominating over a minority-culture, and what Berry says about the need for “a sense of cultural security” for multicultural integration to happen. The AI has provided what Berry talks about, an opportunity “for all to participate equitably” (Berry 1997, 60), one that allows the usually more subdued Mandarin leaders to feel secure enough to speak.

A pastor who did not attend the Summit wrote me an email saying that he heard good things about the Summit and asked if I could give him all the feedback sheets and especially the data on dreams and wishes so that he could work out some follow-up strategies and actions. The request was politely declined as I explained what AI was about and my pledge of confidentiality for all participants. This again reflects the pragmatic problem-solving and result-driven task-oriented ministry approach that is practiced in SCBC (Consent from this pastor has been sought).

Six months after the Summit, out of nowhere a young leader approached me and asked if I could help him plan for a similar mini-leadership summit for the 50+ leaders in his department. He has participated in the AI and found it a really good approach. Subsequently, I met with his task force and introduced to them the philosophy, principles and method of an AI. Their event took place in the summer a year after the AI Mini-Leadership Summit.

Six months after the Summit, I ran into a Mandarin-speaking leader, and the first thing he asked was, “When are we going to do it again?” I received a few

more casual verbal comments in passing from a few more sisters on different occasions: “people still talking about that leadership event”, “people still talking about that day, it was very positive, I like the evening sessions too”.

Months later, another sister ran into me, and told me that she still remembered how God miraculously made it possible for the Summit to proceed without disruption. The event was originally planned to be held in church, but somehow last minute we decided to move it outside of church to Tyndale for a change, not knowing that a gas leakage outbreak in church on that exact morning would cause a total shutdown and lockout that would have made it impossible for the event to take place. She was deeply appreciative of the Summit.

Another brother also approached me and told me how he remembered the Summit well and how he appreciated meeting leaders from other language groups and listening to other people’s stories and learning about the church.

Overall the Mini-Leadership Summit was really well received. No negative verbal comments were received.

CHAPTER VI:

CONCLUSIONS

This research set out to study the challenge that the leaders of SCBC were facing in leading a multi-congregational church with increasing diversity and widening differences in language, culture, views and practices within the leadership team. An examination of theological framework gave us an overview of what ‘working together’ entails and how it needs to be anchored with what God is doing and with each other in *koinonia* and unity. The one unifying strand for believers that is founded on faith experiences in Jesus must be strengthened through attentive heeding to his call and work in our midst both past and present, a practice of listening to one another and a movement of relationships in an incarnational community. The nature of barriers that exist in an ethnic Chinese church like SCBC and the dynamics and challenge of removing barriers and crossing boundaries have been discussed by precedent literatures. The need for a common ground for relationship building, communication and conversation was established. It is towards these ends that an Appreciative Inquiry was conducted among the leaders of SCBC.

The Use of Appreciative Inquiry in Finding Unity in Diversity

The leadership challenge of SCBC is one that grew out of increasing diversity within a multi-congregational ethnic Chinese church in North America. As diversity is a reality of church and the call for unity in fellowship and in working together with God and with fellow believers is a charge to all church bodies, lessons learned from this AI can relate to all churches facing similar leadership challenge. The results and findings are therefore offered for consideration to SCBC and beyond.

Outcomes and findings showed that Appreciative Inquiry was indeed effective and helpful for strengthening the ground for working together among the leaders of SCBC. My submission is that AI is beneficial and instrumental in helping the leadership team of a church in their working together in answering the call for unity and fellowship. I propose that an AI approach should be incorporated into the leadership culture and practice of a church and be regulated into church life as an integral component and regular exercise.

Chinese Culture - Not a Strong Tie but also Not an Impenetrable Divide

A question was asked earlier: "Chinese heritage - how strong a tie?" Findings from this AI affirms that Chinese heritage is a dominant deciding factor for the Cantonese leaders in their decisions to settle in SCBC but not so for the participants of English congregation. Findings reveal differences in priorities and

views among leaders from the different congregations. This is in line with known facts that differences in level of attachment to Chinese culture and degree of assimilation to Canadian culture among the different congregations do exist and dwell in SCBC. Chinese heritage is, as established above, not a strong tie that connects the different congregations.

However, findings from this AI reveal that major differences among the groups show up only in the deciding factors for making SCBC home.

Interestingly, the way participants from the different groups view their peak contributions, peak experiences, top values and even their dreams and wishes for SCBC are very similar. It clearly shows that across the board what leaders treasure and value, and what they desire for their spiritual homes are similar in kind and priority. The known differences in cultural ties and division among the groups may not be that strong a barrier as commonly perceived after all.

As if displaced by other factors, Chinese heritage seems to have dwindled in importance and taken a back seat in the other realms of church life. Chinese heritage is not regarded as a dominant core value, a commonality or a DNA factor even by participants from the Cantonese congregations. Apparently, even though first-generation OBC/ORC immigrants might have come to SCBC because of an appeal of strong Chinese heritage, once they settled in this community, the importance of Chinese culture was taken over by other common values like serving, relations and ministry involvement.

On the other hand, surprisingly a relatively high percentage of leaders from the English congregation rated Chinese heritage as a top value. This shows

that despite the perceived differences in language and culture, people from the English congregation may cherish Chinese heritage as much as their counterparts.

What these findings tell us is that we cannot generalize and categorize cultural views and values by congregational boundaries. Chinese heritage is not a strong tie that connects the three congregations, but it is also not an impenetrable barrier that divides. The cultural differences and divisions between the different congregations may, after all, be more a result of convenience for them to congregate in language groups rather than firm demarcations that separate and segregate.

The Unifying Force in Christ and Not in Chinese Culture

It is noteworthy how much similarities are found in the ways participants from the different groups value things like teaching, preaching, use of gifts in serving and relationships. They also have the same kinds of dreams and wishes which clearly express individual aspirations rather than congregational differences. Responses from participants from all three groups reveal that they have a lot in common related to their Christian experience, faith journeys and ministry involvement.

Of particular importance is that a prominent proportion of participants from not only the Cantonese-speaking group but also from the English-speaking and Mandarin-speaking groups expressed how much they valued the fact that multi-generational and multicultural congregations could stay peacefully

within one church family. There is also a strong indication of desire from all groups that the church be more inclusive and multicultural, and that there be unity in SCBC. The affirmation of and desire for unity and diversity is loud and clear.

For the leaders of SCBC, how to navigate through the labyrinth of the complexly intertwined and entangled dynamics of language, cultural, generational and structural issues appeared to be a real big challenge. But the common regard for similar core values and the strong embrace for unity and multiplicity revealed by the findings of this AI presents us a very positive image of intergroup leadership. Cultural and language differences among the different generations and congregations in SCBC need not be perceived as obstacles for unity or culprits for division. Instead they can showcase the beauty of diversity in the body of Christ where unity is made possible by the love of Christ and the power of the Spirit.

The AI Summit facilitated intergroup communication by grouping leaders with varying degree of Chinese culture and heritage together and putting intergroup leadership in action. Intergroup leadership can be both an end and a means, as Pittinsky explains:

Intergroup leadership can be both an end and a means. Bringing groups together can be a primary goal of leadership. For many institutions dedicated to interfaith dialogue or gang reconciliation, the goal is improved relations among groups. Bringing groups together into a collective can also be a means - a step toward achieving other collective goals, such as bringing a new product to market in a joint venture or uniting various ethnic groups into a populace that can achieve economic, military, or social and cultural goals. (Pittinsky 2009, xii)

For SCBC, the goal "improved relations among the groups" was achieved with this AI. But the goal of intergroup leadership for a church certainly goes beyond

relationship building and is definitely not only an end but also a means towards "collective goals". The common regard for core values, the strong embrace of unity and diversity, and the common dreams and wishes that show little trace of congregational demarcations point us to a "collective goal" that transcends the cultural sub-group differences.

This brings us back to the one unifying strand that unites believers as one body: the common faith, common identity, and the common call into God's mission in Christ. As pastor, teacher, writer and leadership consultant Alan Roxburgh and leadership and organizational expert Fred Romanuk so insightfully write in their book *The Missional Leader*:

At its core, missional church is how we cultivate a congregational environment where God is the center of conversation and God shapes the focus and work of the people. We believe this is a shift in imagination for most congregations; it is a change in the culture of congregational life. Missional leadership is about shaping cultural imagination within a congregation wherein people discern what God might be about among them and in their community. (Roxburgh and Romanuk 2006, 26)

Somehow the AI in SCBC has worked in a way suggested here. By generating positive conversation around God's deeds in people's stories, there is that "shift in imagination" and that "cultural imagination within a congregation" centered around what God is doing and what God desires. A Christ-centered culture transcends ethnicity, denominational divisions, heritage and cultures, be it Chinese or otherwise.

Findings from this AI shows that the one unifying strand in SCBC is not founded on Chinese culture nor Chinese heritage but is founded on a common

faith and a common life in church. In addressing issues of cultural and ethnicity differences, Branson and Martinez offer the following advice:

We believe that matters of culture and ethnicity are important and that we can shape intercultural community in chorus not by ignoring particulars but by affirming our polycenteredness, by engaging our own stories and by creating new stories of mutual accountability and shared missional life. (Branson and Martinez, 2011, 91)

As suggested, there is no need to ignore particulars of cultural and ethnicity differences. Instead "polycenteredness" need to be affirmed. In finding unity in diversity in a multi-congregational context like SCBC, there is no need to negate the cultural differences between OBC/ORC and CBC/CRC, and among the three language congregations or to press for uniform ministry views and practices. Sub-groups identities must be recognized as advised by Pittinsky (Pittinsky 2009, xvi) and cultural distinctiveness and cultural security must be affirmed (Berry 1997, 60). So each congregation needs to be encouraged to continue to engage their "own stories" and to thrive on their own. But as Branson and Martinez suggests, in shaping an intercultural community, "new stories of mutual accountability and shared missional life" need to be created. And this is exactly what the AI in SCBC accomplished. In exploring commonalities and DNA factors, leaders discovered new stories about the common life they shared in SCBC. What unites the people of SCBC is not ethnicity nor Chinese culture, but a shared common life in Christ.

Crossing Sub-Group Boundaries

The participants and the findings of this research project have attested to what AI can do effectively. Especially for a multi-congregational church with

great internal diversity like SCBC, AI is proven to be an effective and valuable way to foster unity among the people of different congregations through pulling them together to work on the common ground.

First and foremost, the AI conducted in SCBC gave the leaders a task to work together in real time. The AI method was totally new to all the participants except for a couple of people. Leaders were given the specific task of finding commonalities and church DNA through inquiring and answering one another. This was a new and different kind of “working together” that took them away from their normal business which engaged a tactical approach in looking for pragmatic solutions and decisions for church issues. The task simply aimed for a positive shared experience among the leaders.

The AI held in SCBC was also in itself an act of boundary crossing. By inviting leaders of the different ministry groups and the three language groups of SCBC to come together and mixing them into groups, and by directing questions to probe into personal stories and personal opinions, people participated in the Inquiry on just their own behalves and not in representation of any groups they belonged. Every one took off their sub-group identities to tell their own personal stories and thoughts. With the imperative that the inquiry was to be done in a non-judgmental non-threatening manner, the AI created the “Third Space – decategorization” that Pittinsky talks about (Pittinsky 2009, 89), a neutral zone where participants could feel secure and accepted. This is a real step in breaking the inter-group barriers and crossing the sub-group boundaries.

Cultivating the Common Ground

How AI offered a neutral “Third Space” for “decategorization” has been explained. The focus on finding common threads in participants’ stories and discovering commonalities among themselves was built in to pull the leaders away from their sub-group identities so their “shared identity” could be strengthened. Findings revealed that AI served this purpose and was able to cultivate the common ground for the leaders of SCBC.

Common Ground for Conversations

The AI facilitated conversations and exercised a practice of listening. Lewis distinguished conversations from dialogues and talk in that a sense of being listened to and of listening to others, an atmosphere of trust, an affirmation of values are necessary components of conversation. This echoes the “attentiveness” that Branson and Martinez call for and the ministry of listening that both Halter and Bonhoeffer talk about (Branson and Martinez 2011, 206; Halter 2008, 124; Bonhoeffer 1954, 75). The whole process of AI in SCBC involved inquiring and listening as leaders were engaged in conversations. As participants had to identify commonalities from the stories and experiences they shared and heard, they had to pay attention and listened to each other. The conversation was a deliberate, intentional drive for attentiveness among the leaders.

The exercise brought attention to stories of individual faith experiences. Even though the stories themselves were not subjects of investigation and the faith element could not be verified, their stories expressed the common faith they

shared that was built on the one unifying strand founded in faith in Jesus. The inquiry also brought to the surface memories of past and present stories of what God has been doing in SCBC. Through this AI, leaders of SCBC actually together took part in a corporate act of inquiring, sensing and paying attention to God's work in their midst.

Common Ground for Communication

The AI was also an act of intercultural communication. It was by nature the kind of “communicative action rather than just strategic action” (Branson and Martinez 2011, 192) that was called for to bring about intercultural understanding. For leaders of the different congregations and language groups to work together, just putting them together in meetings and projects is not enough. So Branson and Martinez call for “attentiveness”, and Lawrenz calls for a “movement of relationships” as showcased in the precedent literature discussion. The AI for SCBC was in effect such an intentional act of communication. The active engagement of inquiring and listening, and the employ of unconditional appreciation throughout was a clear push away from the operating mode and strategic actions of resolving problems and striking agreement amidst differences and polarization in church business meetings.

Common Ground for Social Construct of Meanings for SCBC

The AI was an act of social construct of meanings within SCBC. AI method is built upon the principle of social constructionism which holds that

meanings are constructed socially and that mindsets and thinking are changed and new meanings formed in actions and relations. As Stout suggested that the storyteller, the listener and relationship will be changed in storytelling (Stout 2011, 87-88), through this AI in SCBC, changes would occur in these three aspects and new meanings would be constructed. As leaders engaged in the AI and each told their stories or views, the teller, the listeners and the relations would experience change in themselves. Reflective thinking took place, emotions drawn and knowledge enriched. Meanings of what's going on and what SCBC is about were constructed and new meanings emerged. Changes to collective memories and meanings of stories and new values would be formed simultaneously through the conversations. Some of these changes were captured in the responses already presented. Others may have stayed unnoticed and unrecorded as participants take home with them.

Common Ground for Relationship Building

Just as Stout suggests, changes in relations were brought about by the AI. The paired interview format actually facilitated a movement of relationships in the room. It directed the leaders away from the tasks and business of church into the presence of the people with whom they are yoke-fellows, and required them to probe deeper into the lives of others. To various extents, relationships among the leaders across groups and congregations were built. With attentive listening and unconditional appreciation built in the participatory design, the AI moved the people one step closer to each other and into fellowship with one another.

Common Ground for Discoveries – Stories of SCBC and Stories of a Leader’s Journey

The AI took the leaders on a journey of discovery. Leaders were instructed to pay attention to each other so they could find common threads among themselves and so they did. They were also told to identify top values and SCBC DNA and they did. But in fact what they discovered could be a lot more than what the questions of them. For as they began to inquire and listen to each other's stories, contributions, experiences, values and dreams, attention would naturally be drawn to what God was doing in their midst. Their discoveries could lead them far and wide to God's work in the journey of a leader and to the story of SCBC.

The AI brought to light the background factors and the importance of relational factors at the onset of one's journey in SCBC. They also revealed the change that occurred in one's church life as one journeyed into leadership. How serving in ministry displaced relational factors in one's peak experience reflected a reality that as one matured into leadership, one might get increasingly entangled or bogged down by tasks and ministry workloads that personal relations were not tended as they should have been or as they desired in their hearts. Its resurfacing as a dream indicated a yearning for personal relations and fellowship life, something that they once treasured but have somehow lost along the way to leadership. This issues a warning to leaders and takes us back to the importance of working in fellowship and fellowship in working, and the need for *koinonia*.

Moreover, the whole AI process commanded participants to exercise the practice of listening and attentiveness to the people and to what their stories

unfold. In answering those reflective questions on one's past, present and dreams, participants would have to recall and reflect on their own faith journeys that evoked the counting of blessings and spiritual gifts as many participants have expressed. Not only would this bring attentiveness and awareness to God's continuous working in their own individual and corporate church lives, this would also beseech gratitude, commitment and streams of hope as they dreamed on about the future. So AI serves to pull the leaders back from the strivings of ministry work, and directs them to enter a reflective mode of seeking and listening, and draws their attention to what God was doing in these people and in SCBC. Such reflective attentiveness is an essential component of leadership formation that church leaders must not forsake. For one is not only a co-worker with God and with each other, but also a piece of God's workmanship continually being shaped and formed in God's hands. At the same time, by helping participants to build relationships across congregational boundaries, the AI was in effect, an active attempt to steer the team towards a more personal and relational working team, one that demonstrates the tight fellowship of working together in the true spirit of *koinonia*.

The importance of memory sharing in a community and how memories and narratives accumulate to shape the identity of the community and provide shared meanings and hope for its members has been discussed. When leaders of SCBC started to inquire and listen from each other, memories and narratives surfaced to tell the corporate story of SCBC. They were the storytellers. Together

they were constructing the story of SCBC. As the AI progressed, a story of SCBC emerged that tells about the past, the present, and the future.

The story of SCBC reveals that even though people might have come from very diverse backgrounds, once they settled in the community, heritage and background factors were overtaken by common values in church life that far surpassed the need to hold on to their differences. The cultural differences and divisions between the different congregations maybe, after all, more a result of convenience for them to congregate in groups rather than firm demarcations that separate and segregate. Apparently, relations and serving both appeared as strong common threads that can override background factors. The active energized participation of leaders in the AI, including that of the minority-culture Mandarin-speaking members, attests to the fact that barriers can be broken and boundaries can be crossed. With decategorization in the AI, leaders took off their congregational hats and were invited to contribute as equal counterparts. Now that sub-group identities were downplayed, dual identity gave way to the new task and interest of the big group. How decategorization can be articulated in business meetings over issues such as distribution of resources is something that can be further explored.

Some suggestions for plans and actions were offered by the participants. As strategic actions for change was not targeted as an objective in the project, these suggestions together with the findings will be documented for future reference and provide an additional source of input for the church. Again this adds to the value and contribution of the use of Appreciative Inquiry as a tool.

Use of Appreciative Inquiry in Church - Implications and Application

Overall, the outcomes and findings confirmed the positive effect and impact of the use of an Appreciative Inquiry in helping the leadership of SCBC. It has successfully facilitated a shared experience that transcends divisions and barriers. It offered the leaders of SCBC a safe, neutral space to come into each others' presence to engage in conversation and to work together. The experience offered the leaders a chance to exercise and evoke a positive spirit of acceptance and appreciation of fellow workers in a true spirit of *koinonia*. The gathering of leaders not to discuss business matters but to probe into each other's stories and values was also a clear drive towards a different direction in line with an understanding of "working together" as not merely performance-based result-driven ministry work but also as God's workmanship and formation of lives together.

The AI project in SCBC affirmed the benefits of Appreciative Inquiry. It is concluded that Appreciative Inquiry is a useful tool that helps to cultivate a common ground for working together in the leadership of SCBC.

One main criticism of AI is the overstressing of the positive and repression of negative feelings. As AI runs on a positive principle, all inquiry questions are designed to target for positive and appreciative answers. Nevertheless, the criticism does not apply to all segments of the AI conducted in SCBC. Responses for "Dreams and Wishes" reflects deep yearnings and feelings of dissatisfaction. The large percentage that dreams for "there be change" carries a strong undertone

of dissatisfaction. Responses about the dream church also reflect what is found lacking or inadequate in SCBC. Some wishes like “leadership succession” and “finding senior pastor” directly relate to obvious church needs. Even though inquiry questions and findings look positive on the surface, comments and concerns could be picked up that invite more probing thoughts and closer examination.

Observation was made that not all participants followed the instructions. For example, they were asked to give positive elements that helped in their decisions on SCBC as home, some simply described the process of their decisions without naming the positive factors. Verbal responses are hard to control and there is no guarantee how questions will be answered. So the intended impact to generate positive appreciation in the leadership of SCBC might not have been generated to the fullest extent.

It appeared that the AI did not produce any strategic action to visibly solve any problems nor did it resolve any disagreements within the group of leaders in SCBC. But it must be reiterated that the intent of the Appreciative Inquiry was not to find answers for the problems and struggles facing the leadership, nor was it intended to bring about any physical, technical or structural organizational change or strategic action planning. So disappointment and negative feedback from the few participants could not be justified.

Admittedly it is true that AI is helpful for the leadership in only certain aspects as highlighted above. While AI does not produce tactical solutions or strategies to immediately and directly resolve differences and division in church,

yet by cultivating the common ground and building relationships, it offers an invaluable tool to help move and change people so that reconciliation and teamwork in a true spirit of unity and fellowship can happen.

It was established the one unifying strand for the people of God is founded on faith in Christ. But how much are the leaders bound by this one foundation cannot be ascertained in the AI. For this AI was designed for the purpose of facilitating a shared experience and finding commonalities among the leaders so the ground for working together could be strengthened. It was not designed to probe into the source of strength in the experience and service of the leaders. Their stories carry testimonies of faith experience, commitments and love for God and for SCBC. The DNA and findings attest to expressions of faith in decisions, works, attitudes and aspirations. Bits and pieces of these testimonies of faith were picked up here and there from the stories and conversations. The exercise of finding commonalities with one another definitely helped bring about a deeper sense of unity. But how much is this unity solidly built on the one unifying strand, on a submission of the spirit in obedience to the Great Commandment and Great Commission and not on the outward expression and works of service or other factors could not be verified. It would need another AI to reveal and to build on this aspect.

The neutrality of AI has to be recognized. The AI in SCBC drew the leaders together and provided them the chance and means to cultivate the common ground for working together. What participants put into the ground was wide open and subject to the social construct of the people in attendance. The AI

offers a neutral tool to entertain all possibilities and contents that the participants may bring.

This is why AI cannot stand alone in the formation and development of the leadership team of a church. Spiritual formation, theological understanding, rules and practices must be solidly established for individual leaders and the team. For the leadership of a multi-congregational church like SCBC, structural barriers in the governance set-up create more challenge for intercultural and sub-group communication as they tend to promote separation and segregation. AI would be a valuable counterforce until structural barriers can be removed.

I propose that AI should be incorporated into the regular practice of the leadership in SCBC. In order that the diverse team of leaders can actualize a “working in fellowship and fellowship in working” together in *koinonia* and unity, one isolated stand-alone AI event would not be enough. The use of AI needs to be repeated so that the shared “experiences of cohesion” and “bonding experiences” can get integrated into the common life of church. AI approach must penetrate and permeate the regular corporate life of the leaders so that working together in a positive, appreciative spirit with an attentiveness to God and to each other can become an integral part of the leadership culture.

To reap the full benefit of Appreciative Inquiry as a tool for organizational change, the process would need to be repeated not only at the Joint Board level of the church, but to be conducted at different levels of leadership and all the groups within and across the different congregations. As reported, an inter-congregational ministry department in SCBC has been inspired by the AI

methodology, reception and impact of this project and initiated a departmental retreat using the same leadership summit format. There were also encouraging signs of growing awareness and interest in cooperation and collaboration between leaders of different congregations. For example, a joint panel featuring representatives from the three language groups was coordinated in a Sunday School. More news about the needs of congregations were exchanged and there was noticeable increase in inter-congregational communication.

Since assessment of this project was contained within the context of the experience and the associated outcome and findings of this Appreciative Inquiry, these spillover effects have not been studied. The full impact of the Appreciative Inquiry may actually be more far reaching than what was described in this report.

SCBC and Beyond

This Appreciative Inquiry was an attempt to offer a positive shared experience for the leaders of SCBC to move towards building a more relational and affirmative leadership culture. The objectives of the project were fulfilled and the use of Appreciative Inquiry method established. The wealth of information and findings gathered from the Appreciative Inquiry was a pleasant surprise as they were not the targeted outcome of the project. They shed light onto various aspects of life in SCBC and revealed the thoughts, feelings, values and dreams of the leaders. The Appreciative Inquiry was proven to be a useful and valuable method for the purpose of this project.

The use of Appreciative Inquiry in this project was not an end but a means. Cooperrider describes how “the interview begins to build relationships within the team that later become the driving force for a whole-system inquiry” (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, 51-52). The small movement of relationships and experiences of cohesion initiated by the AI in SCBC are just small ripples in a big pond. But it still could very well be one important small step for the church to move forward.

As the famous saying of Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu goes, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step”. No matter how tiny it may be, Appreciative Inquiry is still a step away from the seemingly unmovable giant of a long established leadership culture where corporate reflective discerning of God’s work, fellowship bonding and an attentive listening have taken a back seat. The leadership challenge in a multi-congregational ethnic Chinese church may be huge, but God’s word brings comfort and promise: “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland” (Isaiah 43:19). Nothing is impossible with God.

Though unique in its own right, the leadership challenge of SCBC as a multi-congregational ethnic Chinese church in Canada is by no means unusual or atypical of other Chinese churches in North America. The findings of this project can offer these churches some points of reference and insights for consideration.

All Chinese immigrant churches large and small will face at one point the inevitable emergence of new generations of Canadian born Chinese who speak a different language and grow up in a different culture than that of the first

generation. Differences are bound to increase and intensify. Disagreement and conflicts within the leadership are bound to happen here and there. While traditional problem-solving and strategic planning methods are not disputed, what is offered here is an alternative approach to team leadership building. This project has demonstrated what Appreciative Inquiry can do in bringing people together for a positive shared experience that benefits individuals and the team. The by-product of data and information can also expose what is not previously known and provide a valuable source of inputs for further study and action. Appreciative Inquiry is therefore presented hereby to the leadership of all Chinese churches in North America as a creditable means that can effectively cultivate the common ground for working together.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Information and Consent

Date: August 30, 2015

Research Title: Finding Unity in Diversity: The Use of Appreciative Inquiry to Cultivate Common Ground among Leaders in a Multi-Congregational Chinese Church in Canada

Dear Respondent,

I am conducting action research on the Leadership of SCBC and would like to invite you to participate. The objective of the proposed project is to strengthen the working together of SCBC leaders with mutual understanding and relationship building by means of an appreciative inquiry whereby leaders can unpack the DNA of the church and a collective co-dreaming of the future can take place.

You are invited to participate in an appreciative inquiry to explore and inquire about the church DNA and to dream about the future of SCBC. You will share positive stories of your SCBC experience and co-dream with other leaders. The inquiry will be conducted in 2 sessions of 3 hours each. You will be working with a group of 10-12 fellow leaders.

It is not likely that there will be any harms or discomforts associated with the inquiry and you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer. Your inputs and views will be collected in confidentiality and will not be identified with you personally. No names or information that would allow you to be identified will be disclosed in the report.

Your participation is voluntary. There is no penalty if you do not participate. Your response will not pose any risk in affecting your present or future involvement in SCBC. If you decide to withdraw at any time, you can do so at any time without consequence. The research is anticipated to be completed by January 2016.

Collective findings and the composite dreams for the future of SCBC will be integrated and reported to you and the leadership of SCBC in a summary report when it is fully completed. Findings of this research will be compiled by the researcher for submission to Tyndale Seminary in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Ministry.

Your consent does not include any waiver of your legal rights.

If you have any questions or concerns about completing the questionnaire of about participating in this survey, you may contact me at ⁷ or at

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Tyndale Research Ethics Board by mail at 3377 Bayview Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M2M 3S4, by phone to This study was approved on August 28, 2015.

Sincerely

Josephine Chow, Researcher
Doctor of Ministry Program, Tyndale Seminary

CONSENT

- I have read the information presented in the information letter about a research study on Fostering Unity among the Leaders of SCBC by Josephine Chow, of Tyndale Seminary.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.
- I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until approximately January 2016.
- I agree to participate in this research. Signing this form indicates my free consent to participate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

Appendix B: Ethical Review of Research

I have completed the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics' (PRE) Course on Research Ethics (CORE) based on the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2) for Canada and satisfied the certification requirement. The proposed research was done in compliance with the Policy and Ethical Principles prescribed therein as outlined below.

The subject study was qualitative research that involved, as described in Article 10.2, a questionnaire, a collaborative process (appreciative inquiry), a participant observational research where the researcher is engaged in, and observes the action. As participants were not identified in the final dissemination of results, the research was non-intrusive and involved no more than minimal risk to the subjects.

In compliance with Article 2.1 by means of written letters of information and signed consent forms, the researcher obtained free and informed consent given voluntarily by participants who returned the forms as requested. The distribution and return of forms were properly documented. The scenario stated in Article 3.12 that "for some groups or individuals, written signed consent may be perceived as an attempt to legalize and may be interpreted by the participant as a lack of trust on the part of the researcher" also applied to this research. Furthermore in compliance with Article 10.3, appropriate oral or written consent was obtained from all participants as a gesture of respect for freed and voluntary

participation, and with the good will of fostering openness and transparency. The procedures for consent seeking and confirming were carefully documented in adherence to Article 2.1 (b) and Article 10.2.

In compliance with Article 3.1, the researcher took great care to ensure that consents from participants were given voluntarily without manipulation, undue influence or coercion of any kind. Participants were invited to freely take part or decline to take part on voluntary basis. The researcher was also mindful of any possible conflicts of interest such as in the case of salaried staff members working with the researcher in ministry, and will address these conflicts through explaining the issue to all parties, confidential completion of questionnaire's participant agency in deciding what to discuss, and by grouping people with equivalent levels of power. The purpose, process and reporting of the research as an independent study was fully disclosed to the participants.

In compliance with Article 3, to ensure utmost protection of privacy and confidentiality of participants, alphanumeric codes were assigned to participants so that data were collected, processed and documented throughout in anonymous form as anonymized data. Contact information and data were digitally stored, encrypted, password protected on the personal computer of the researcher and where applicable stored in locked location.

Appendix C: Questions Used in SCBC AI

A. Commonly used generic AI Questions

The 4 generic AI Interview Questions first proposed by Cooperrider and commonly used in Appreciative Inquiries:

1. Describe a peak experience or high point in your organization;
2. What is it the you most value about yourself, your work, your organization?
3. What are the core factors that give life to your organization?
4. What 3 wishes do you have to enhance the health and vitality of your organization?

(Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008, 36, 229-231; Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2010, 136; Mohr and Watkins, 2002, 6; Branson 2004, 68-71).

B. AI Questions for SCBC

Questions used in SCBC AI Interviews and Focus Groups:

1. Share how and why you decided to make SCBC your home.
Share what positive elements or factors in SCBC attracted you or helped you decide to stay in this church.
2. a) Describe a peak experience or high point in SCBC.
b) Without being humble, what are the most valuable ways you contribute to our church?
3. What are the 3 things that you value most about SCBC?
When we are at our best, what are the top most important values that makes our church unique?
4. a) Make 3 wishes for the future of our church. Describe what SCBC would look like as these wishes come true.
b) What would have to be true for your dreams to come true? What may be some steps to help your dreams come true?

Appendix D: Event Schedule

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Time Allocation</u>
Gathering 1: Paired Interviews (3 hours session)	
Introduction, goals, overview of AI, explain process	10 minutes
Paired Interviews Round 1 using Q. 1	40 minutes
Personal stories (Q. 1.A) - 20 minutes (10 min. each)	
Paired discovery (Q. 1.B, C) - 20 minutes together	
Big Group Debrief (all)	10 minutes
----- Break -----	5 minutes
Paired Interviews Round 2 using Q. 2.	40 minutes
Personal peak experience (Q. 2.A) - 20 minutes (10 min. each)	
Top contributions (Q. 2.B) - 10 minutes (5 min. each)	
Paired discovery (Q. 2.C, D) - 10 minutes together	
Big Group Debrief (all)	10 minutes
----- Break -----	5 minutes
Paired Interviews Round 3 using Q. 3	40 minutes
Personal top values (Q. 3.A) - 20 minutes (10 min. each)	
SCBC core values (Q. 3.B) - 10 minutes together	
Paired discovery (Q. 3.C) – 10 minutes together	
Big Group Debrief (all)	20 minutes

Gathering 2: Mini-AI Summit (2 hours focus groups session)	
Introduction, recap and summary report	10 minutes
Focus Groups covering Q. 3-5	90 minutes
Brief sharing of top values (Q. 3) – 15 minutes	
Dreams and wishes for SCBC (Q. 4) - 45 minutes	
Co-create and co-design for the future (Q. 5) - 30 minutes	
Big Group Appreciative Debrief and Closing (all)	20 minutes

Appendix E:
Instrument 1— Paired Interviews Round 1

Participant 1 # _____	Participant 2 # _____
<p>Question 1: Share how and why you decided to make SCBC your home. Share what positive elements or factors in SCBC attracted you or helped you decide to stay in this church.</p>	
A. <u>Positive elements/factors in your story:</u> (Be specific)	A. <u>Positive elements/factors in your story:</u> (Be specific)
<p>B. <u>Are there any common threads in the stories/experiences you shared, and if any, what are they?</u></p>	
C. <u>SCBC DNA identified in your story:</u>	C. <u>SCBC DNA identified in your story:</u>
<u>Quick Evaluation of your Experience:</u> What was the process like for you? What did you learn about the people, the team or the church?	<u>Quick Evaluation of your Experience:</u> What was the process like for you? What did you learn about the people, the team or the church?
<u>Basic Statistics:</u> (circle the appropriate answer) Attend worship service in: Cantonese English Mandarin Age Group: under 30 , 31-40 , 41-50 , 51-60 , 61+ No. of yrs in SCBC: 0-5 , 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs involved in ministry: 0-5, 6-10 , 11-20, 21+ yrs No. of yrs in leadership position: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs	<u>Basic Statistics:</u> (circle the appropriate answer) Attend worship service in: Cantonese English Mandarin Age Group: under 30 , 31-40 , 41-50 , 51-60 , 61+ No. of yrs in SCBC: 0-5 , 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs involved in ministry: 0-5 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs in leadership position: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs

Appendix F:
Instrument 2— Paired Interviews Round 2

Participant 1 # _____	Participant 2 # _____
<p>Question 2: Describe a peak experience or high point in SCBC. Without being humble, what are the most valuable ways you contribute to our church?</p>	
A. <u>Nature of Your Peak Experience:</u> (Be specific)	A. <u>Nature of Your Peak Experience:</u> (Be specific)
B. <u>Most valuable ways that you Contribute to SCBC</u> (Be specific)	B. <u>Most valuable ways that you Contribute to SCBC</u> (Be specific)
<p>C. <u>Are there any common threads in the experiences that you shared, and if any, what are they?</u></p>	
D. <u>SCBC DNA identified in your story:</u>	D. <u>SCBC DNA identified in your story:</u>
<u>Quick Evaluation of your Experience:</u> What was the process like for you? What did you learn about the people, the team or the church?	<u>Quick Evaluation of your Experience:</u> What was the process like for you? What did you learn about the people, the team or the church?
<u>Basic Statistics:</u> (circle the appropriate answer) Attend worship service in: Cantonese English Mandarin Age Group: under 30 , 31-40 , 41-50 , 51-60 , 61+ No. of yrs in SCBC: 0-5 , 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs involved in ministry: 0-5 , 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs in leadership position: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs	<u>Basic Statistics:</u> (circle the appropriate answer) Attend worship service in: Cantonese English Mandarin Age Group: under 30 , 31-40 , 41-50 , 51-60 , 61+ No. of yrs in SCBC: 0-5 , 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs involved in ministry: 0-5 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs in leadership position: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs

Appendix G:
Instrument 3— Paired Interviews Round 3

Participant 1 # _____	Participant 2 # _____
<p>Question 3: What are the 3 things that you value most about SCBC? When we are at our best, what are the top most important values that makes our church unique?</p>	
A. <u>3 things you most value / most important values in SCBC:</u>	A. <u>3 things you most value / most important values in SCBC:</u>
B. <u>Top most important values that make SCBC unique</u>	B. <u>Top most important values that make SCBC unique</u>
C. <u>SCBC DNA identified in your story:</u>	C. <u>SCBC DNA identified in your story:</u>
<u>Quick Evaluation of your Experience:</u> What was the process like for you? What did you learn about the people, the team or the church?	<u>Quick Evaluation of your Experience:</u> What was the process like for you? What did you learn about the people, the team or the church?
<u>Basic Statistics:</u> (circle the appropriate answer) Attend worship service in: Cantonese English Mandarin Age Group: under 30 , 31-40 , 41-50 , 51-60 , 61+ No. of yrs in SCBC: 0-5 , 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs involved in ministry: 0-5, 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs in leadership position: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs	<u>Basic Statistics:</u> (circle the appropriate answer) Attend worship service in: Cantonese English Mandarin Age Group: under 30 , 31-40 , 41-50 , 51-60 , 61+ No. of yrs in SCBC: 0-5 , 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs involved in ministry: 0-5 6-10 , 11-20 , 21+ yrs No. of yrs in leadership position: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs

Appendix H: Instrument 4 – Mini-AI Summit Focus Groups

#

SCBC Mini-Leadership Summit

Date: 2015.10.24

1. What do you see are the top 3 values of SCBC? (what to you are the 3 most valuable, most treasured.... things/qualities/elements...)
 2. If you had a magic wand and could have 3 wishes granted for SCBC, what would they be? (Be specific, name 3 wishes, describe what SCBC would look like if these wishes come true.)
 3. What would have to be true for your wishes and dreams to come true? (what condition, what changes.... What may be some steps to help your dreams come true? Be creative and innovative.

Basic Statistics: (circle the appropriate answer)

Attend worship service in: Cantonese English Mandarin

Age Group: under 30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61+

No. of yrs in SCBC: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs

No. of yrs involved in ministry: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs

No. of yrs in leadership position: 0-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+ yrs

Appendix I: Evaluation Questionnaire

SCBC AI Evaluation Questionnaire - To be completed by Appreciative Inquiry Participants.
Please answer all questions honestly. Your inputs will be collected in anonymity.

	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Do you agree or disagree with the following Statements? Circle your answers.					
<u>Sharing Personal Stories (Sessions 1-3)</u>					
1. I enjoyed sharing my stories.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I learned something new about other leaders.	1	2	3	4	5
3. There are some common strands in the stories we shared.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sharing our stories helped my relationship with others.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sharing our stories is helpful for our leadership team.	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Discovering Church DNA</u>					
6. We were able to identify some church DNA from our sharing.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Nothing new to me, I knew all the DNA from before.	1	2	3	4	5
8. People have different opinions about church DNA.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The experience helped me understand our church more.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Finding DNA together is helpful for our leadership team.	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Co-Dreaming of SCBC Future</u>					
11. I enjoyed sharing my dreams for the church.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I enjoyed hearing others' dreams for the church.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Our dreams are very different dreams.	1	2	3	4	5
14. There are things we share in common in our dreams.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I gained some insight about church from the co-dreaming.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Sharing dreams is helpful for our leadership team.	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Overall AI Experience : With reference to this AI experience,</u>					
17. Overall my experience of this AI is positive.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I did not find this AI helpful for our leadership team.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I gained personal relation with at least 1 other leader.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I gained better understanding of our leadership team.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Our leaders have a lot in common in experience and dreams.	1	2	3	4	5
22. This AI will positively enhance our working together on the team.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I gained new insights about our church and our leadership.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The findings will be useful for church planning in future.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I enjoyed the AI sessions.	1	2	3	4	5

Open-Ended Questions

1. Did you find anything from your story sharing sessions (Q. 1-2) that you have in common with other leaders? Please briefly describe and explain.
 2. Did you find anything from your value sharing session (Q. 3) that you have in common with other leaders? Please briefly describe and explain.
 3. Did you find anything from your dream sharing session (Q. 4-5) that you have in common with other leaders, or are your dreams very different? Please briefly describe and explain.
 4. In what ways, if any, have your relationships with other leaders been changed in this AI exercise?
 5. What new insight for SCBC, if any, did you gain from this AI?
 6. Do you think AI is helpful in enhancing the working together of the leadership team? Explain why and why not.
 7. In what ways, if any, has this AI exercise impacted you?
 8. How did you find this AI experience overall? Please give feedback.

Appendix J: **Qualitative Analysis Tool: Codes**

Tool Used: Text Analysis Markup System (TAMS)

List of Codes created in TAMS “DMin init.rtf” File

Attitude>appreciative	DNA>stories>Chinese
Commonality>contribute>XnEducaatin	DNA>stories>TCBChistory
Commonality>contribute>commitment	DNA>stories>baptist
Commonality>contribute>gifts	DNA>stories>bibleteaching
Commonality>contribute>growth	DNA>stories>evangelism
Commonality>contribute>leadership	DNA>stories>family
Commonality>contribute>relationships	DNA>stories>friendsfellowship
Commonality>contribute>serving	DNA>stories>immigrant
Commonality>dreams	DNA>stories>leadership
commonality>peakContribut	DNA>stories>minsitryDevelop
commonality>story	DNA>stories>prayer
commonality>story>Chinese	DNA>stories>youthchildren
commonality>story>churchFamily	DNA>values>Chinese
commonality>story>family	DNA>values>bibleteachiing
commonality>story>friendship	DNA>values>familyTies
commonality>story>journey	DNA>values>gifts
commonality>story>leading	DNA>values>immigrant
commonality>story>nurturing	DNA>values>leadership
commonality>story>pastors	DNA>values>multi
commonality>story>servingministry	DNA>values>outreach
commonality>values	DNA>values>SCBCstory
Commonality>values>giftedness	DNA>values>welcoming
Commonality>values>serving	DNA>values>youthchildren
Congregation	Dreams
DNA	Dreams>desireServe
DNA>contribution>Chinese	Dreams>different
DNA>contribution>bibleteaching	Dreams>evangelism
DNA>contribution>children	Dreams>future
DNA>contribution>evangelism	Dreams>inclusiveMulti
DNA>contribution>gifts	Dreams>makeDisciples
DNA>contribution>multigeneration	Dreams>ministries
DNA>contribution>peopleCommit	Dreams>relational
DNA>contribution>prayer	Dreams>resourceFacility
DNA>contribution>relationships	Dreams>seniorPastor
DNA>contribution>serving	Dreams>spiritualPrayer
DNA>contribution>youth	Dreams>succession

Dreams>unity	Stories>Chinese
Experience	Stories>childrenMinistry
Experience>personal	Stories>friends
Experience>stories	Stories>immigrant
Experience>stories>new	Stories>ministryinvolved
Knowledge	Stories>SCBCHome
Knowledge>church	Stories>SCBCLocation
Knowledge>intercongregations	Stories>SCBCjourney
Knowledge>people	Stories>teaching
Knowledge>stories>church	Stories>worship
Knowledge>stories>people	suggestions
Negative	Values
peakcontribution>caring	Values>Baptist
peakcontribution>commitChurch	Values>Chinese
peakcontribution>gifts	Values>caring
peakcontribution>leadership	Values>change
peakcontribution>prayer	Values>facility
peakcontribution>serving	Values>fellowship
peakexp>events	Values>gifts
peakexp>growth	Values>immigrant
peakexp>knowSCBC	Values>leaders
peakexp>problemsolving	Values>multigenFamily
peakexp>relationships	Values>nurturing
peakexp>serving	Values>outreach
Relations	Values>personalGrowth
Relations>otherLanguageGrp	Values>prayermeets
Relations>people	Values>relationships
Relations>stories>relationBldg	Values>serving
Relations>stories>teammember	Values>setup
Relations>teambuilding	Values>unityDiversity
Stories	WishesToRealize

Code Definitions

Attitude>appreciative: comments depict appreciative attitude : appreciative of AI experience, of leadership, of whole experience

Commonality>contribute>XnEducatin: Commonality identified in peak contribution and peak experiences: help build up Christian education, help nurturing b/s, help their spiritual life, teaching God's word

Commonality>contribute>commitment: Commonality identified in peak contributions and experience: commitment to church, loyalty, love for church, love for its people, strong commitment and sense of ownership

Commonality>contribute>gifts: Commonality identified in peak contribution and experience: giftedness, personal gifts and skills, gifts can be tapped and used,

Commonality>contribute>growth: Commonality identified through peak contribution and peak experiences: personal growth is generated, character growth, realize personal direction, discover giftedness, become more patient, stronger, SCBC helps people grow and mature

Commonality>contribute>leadership: Commonality identified in peak contribution and peak experiences: leadership, able to lead, involved in leadership

Commonality>contribute>relationships: Commonality identified in peak contribution and peak experiences: relationships with people, relationships with people who serve with, or people who are being served

Commonality>contribute>serving: Commonality identified in peak contribution and peak experiences is found in: serving, in ministry involvement

Commonality>dreams: commonality found in dream sharing sessions

Commonality>peakContribut: Commonality is found in sharing of peak experiences and peak contributions

Commonality>story: commonality in stories sharing as responded in evaluation
commonality>story>Chinese: commonality found in stories: Chinese heritage

commonality>story>churchFamily: commonality found in stories: SCBC is family, spiritual home, church family, never thought of leaving,

commonality>story>family: commonality element in stories: because of family, strong family ties

commonality>story>friendship: commonality found in stories: friendship, fellowship, body life

commonality>story>journey: finds commonality in church journeys - looking for church, finding church, getting baptized in SCBC, has been in SCBC for long time

commonality>story>leading: commonality found in stories: leadership experience, leading

commonality>story>nurturing: commonality found in stories: nurturing, teaching, biblical teaching

commonality>story>pastors: commonality found in stories: pastoral care, pastoral friendship

Commonality>story>servingministry: commonality found in serving in ministry, active in serving

commonality>values: commonality found in value sharing sessions, sharing high points in ministry

Commonality>values>giftedness: common core value identified in value sharing: gifts of people are used, giftedness of members, gifts are tapped, rich gifts in SCBC

Commonality>values>serving: common thread identified in values sharing: serving in ministry, serving opportunities, involved in ministry, can contribute by serving in positions

congregation: Cantonese, English, Mandarin

DNA: Text depicts elements of SCBC DNA discovered

DNA>contribution>Chinese: DNA identified in peak contributions and peak experience is: Chinese heritage, commitment and loyalty, immigrant background.

DNA>contribution>bibleteaching: DNA identified in peak contributions and peak experiences : biblical teaching, nurturing, bible, focus on God's word, preaching teaching

DNA>contribution>children: DNA identified in peak contribution and peak experiences: children focus, family focus, SCBC emphasizes on children and family

DNA>contribution>evangelism: DNA identified in peak contributions and peak experiences is: evangelism, outreach

DNA>contribution>gifts: DNA identified in peak experience and contribution to church is: giftedness in SCBC, rich gifts in members, gifts are tapped and used, gifts applied to serve

DNA>contribution>multigeneration: DNA identified in peak contribution and peak experiences is: SCBC is multi-generational, young and old together

DNA>contribution>peopleCommit: DNA identified through peak contributions and experiences is: people are very committed, commitment to church and to people

DNA>contribution>prayer: DNA identified in peak contribution and experiences: prayer focus, SCBC has prayer focus

DNA>contribution>relationships: DNA identified in peak contribution and peak experiences: relationships with friends and family, family ties, friendships

DNA>contribution>serving: DNA identified in peak experience and contribution to SCBC: serving, ministry opportunities, can serve in ministry positions

DNA>contribution>youth: DNA identified in peak contribution and peak experiences is: SCBC is youth focus

DNA>stories>Chinese: DNA identified in stories: Chinese heritage, Chinese heritage qualities, e.g. loyalty, respect

DNA>stories>TCBChistory: DNA identified in stories: history with TCBC, church heritage from TCBC mother church

DNA>stories>baptist: DNA identified in stories: Baptist denomination

DNA>stories>bibleteaching: DNA identified in stories : strong biblical teaching

DNA>stories>evangelism: DNA identified in stories: outreach and evangelism is strong

DNA>stories>family: DNA identified in stories: SCBC is family focus, helps own family, draws family to stay, attracts and builds families

DNA>stories>friendsfellowship: DNA identified: friends, b/s, fellowship groups, connections, body life

DNA>stories>immigrant: DNA identified in stories: immigrant experience

DNA>stories>leadership: DNA identified from stories: strong leadership in SCBC, godly leaders

DNA>stories>ministryDevelop: DNA identified in stories: ministries in SCBC is good, work of pastors in developing ministry types e.g. community groups

DNA>stories>prayer: DNA identified in stories: strong in prayer, prayer focus

DNA>stories>youthchildren: DNA identified in stories: focus on children and youth ministry

DNA>values>Chinese: DNA identified from values : Chinese heritage, strong sense of loyalty, common background, very loyal to church

DNA>values>bibleteachiing: DNA identified from core values/value sharing: bible teaching, teaching God's word, preaching

DNA>values>familyTies: DNA identified from values: family ties, friends and relationship, fellowship groups, community groups

DNA>values>gifts: DNA identified in core values/value sharing: gifts are used, giftedness identified, rich gifts tapped in ministry

DNA>values>immigrant: DNA identified from values: immigrant experience

DNA>values>leadership: DNA identified in values: strong leadership, decent leadership

DNA>values>multi: DNA identified from values: multi factor, SCBC is multi-lingual, multi-generational, multi-cultural, diversity

DNA>values>outreach: DNA identified from common values: outreach, evangelism focus, social concern, care for surrounding, Hunger No More, increasing involvement

DNA>values>SCBCstory: DNA identified in values is: SCBC stories, development, heritage

DNA>values>welcoming: DNA identified from the things most valued: welcoming, hospitable, caring

DNA>values>youthchildren: DNA identified from core values/ value sharing: youth focus, youth ministry in SCBC

Dreams: Text tells of wishes and dreams of participants

Dreams>desireServe: Element of dream for SCBC/ Top dreams and wishes: many people want to serve, zeal to serve, desire to be in leadership

Dreams>different: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: willingness to be different, willing to change, paradigm shift, adapt to changing world and times

Dreams>evangelism: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: spread the gospel, evangelism, outreach to community, impact to outside

Dreams>future: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: have clear vision for future, prepare for future, forward looking, direction and goals towards future

Dreams>inclusiveMulti: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: be more inclusive in understanding, acceptance of differences, multi-cultural among different groups

Dreams>makeDisciples: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: make disciples, followers Christ, authentic Christian community of believers

Dreams>ministries: Dream elements identified/ Top dreams and wishes: ministry development and expansion, new ministries e.g. family, children, young life ministry

Dreams>relational: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: SCBC be more relational, people-oriented

Dreams>resourceFacility: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: facility expansion, more space, more rooms, building phase 2, more parking space, more resources e.g. new space for Mandarin and children worship

Dreams>seniorPastor: Top wish and dream: SCBC finds a senior pastor to move forward

Dreams>spiritualPrayer: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: SCBC to be more spiritual, more prayer driven, house of prayer, Spirit led

Dreams>succession: Common dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: succession, younger b/s to serve, younger b/s in leadership, young deacons

Dreams>unity: Dream element identified/ Top dreams and wishes: unity of all congregations, all people

Experience: Statements about overall positive experience of AI

Experience>personal: Positive experience in AI - helps personal reflection, personal growth, remember past, dream future

Experience>stories: Positive experience in stories sharing: I enjoy/ like

Experience>stories>new: Neutral experience - new, interesting experience, not negative not positive,

Knowledge: Text tells that AI helps participants to learn something new about people or SCBC

Knowledge>church: AI helps me to gain insight and knowledge about church, doing church, church direction, collaboration

Knowledge>intercongregations: AI helps gain insight and knowledge about other congregations, cross congregations

Knowledge>people: AI helps gain knowledge of people: know more about other leaders through AI

Knowledge>stories>church: gain knowledge from stories: know more about church, about SCBC, insight

Knowledge>stories>people: Gain knowledge from stories: know other team members, other leaders

Negative: Comments that participant's experience of AI is neutral or negative.

peakcontribution>caring: Peak contribution to SCBC is: caring for people

peakcontribution>commitChurch: Peak contribtuion is commitment to church, love for church and its people, loyalty to church, sense of ownership and family

peakcontribution>gifts: Peak contribution to church is gifts, giftedness, specific gifts in ministry, that can be used

peakcontribution>leadership: Peak contribution is able to lead, has leadership skill, involved in leadership

peakcontribution>prayer: Peak contribution to SCBC is: pray for SCBC, prayer, prayer support

peakcontribution>serving: Leader's contribution to SCBC lies in: serving, in ministry positions, can serve

peakexp>events: Peak experience lies in events, activities, special programs and activities, eg church fund raising event, celebration, millennial retreat

peakexp>growth: Peak experience identified: personal growth, growth in character due to ministry experience of challenge, struggles, conflicts, personality clash

peakexp>knowSCBC: Peak experience is through serving, get to know more about SCBC, know more about church

peakexp>problemsolving: Peak experience in SCBC is to do with solving problems, personnel matters, conflicts, dealing with problems, crisis, tough issues.

peakexp>relationships: Peak experience is found in relationships, relationships with people serving together, and people being served (e.g. youths, children)

peakexp>serving: Peak experience is in serving in ministry, actively serving, involved in ministry

Relations: Text denotes that AI helps build relationship

Relations>otherLanguageGrp: AI helps build relationship across different language groups, other language-speaking leaders

Relations>people: AI helps me build relation with people, relate to people personally

Relations>stories>relationBldg: Positive experience in story sharing that relationship is built, can gel, can cross age differences

Relations>stories>teammember: build relation from stories with team member, leaders, another person, people

Relations>teambuilding: AI helps teambuilding - improve working relationship, helps team building

Stories: Text tells elements in stories shared

Stories>Chinese: stories: Chinese heritage, Chinese church, Chinese culture

Stories>childrenMinistry: positive element in story identified: strong children ministry, good children program, children welcoming

Stories>friends: story has element: friends in SCBC, fellowship groups, bonding, made friends here, relationships

Stories>immigrant: stories: immigrant experience, new immigrant, look for church, settle in SCBC

Stories>ministryinvolved: stories: ministry opportunities, involved in serving, active service in SCBC, involvement

Stories>SCBCHome: Element in stories: home sense, relational, SCBC is home, life spent in SCBC, family sense, never thought of leaving, raised or born in SCBC, SCBC is family

Stories>SCBCLocation: Element in stories: church location, close to home

Stories>SCBCJourney: Element in stories: journey, SCBC has special place in faith journey, spiritual home, baptized here, married in, birthplace, from TCBC to SCBC, student in TCBC

Stories>teaching: stories has element: teaching, biblical, sermon, SS

Stories>worship: story: like worship service in SCBC, good worship experience suggestions: Suggestions and comments on AI - action, follow-up, hope to see next

Values: text indicates elements of core values shared

Values>Baptist: most valued thing in schc is: Baptist tradition, congregational, democratic, people can vote and make decisions

Values>Chinese: Value identified: Chinese heritage, Chinese values

Values>caring: value element identified: caring for others, caring for other's needs

Values>change: thing most valued: willing to change, to adapt to community, progressive, trying to be missional

Values>facility: Most valued: facility, parking lot

Values>fellowship: common value identified: relationship, fellowship, body life, love and care for one another, community groups

Values>gifts: Value identified in value sharing: various gifts in ministry, rich in gifts, different gifts in SCBC

Values>immigrant: Top value identified: immigrant experience, 1st generation immigrant Christian, journey, experience

Values>leaders: Identify common value in leadership, became leaders, strong leadership, committed leadership

Values>multigenFamily: thing most valued in SCBC: multi-generations, family focus

Values>nurturing: thing valued most: in solid biblical teaching, preaching, nurturing, building up each other, teaching and preaching

Values>outreach: thing valued most in SCBC: outreach, reaching to surrounding communities

Values>personalGrowth: values identified in sharing: personal growth due to challenge, struggles, personality clash, conflicts, etc.

Values>prayermeets: things valued most: prayers, prayer meetings every week, church is God-centered, Spirit led

Values>relationships: values identified in value sharing: relationships with those who serve, relationships with those being served (e.g. youths, children)

Values>serving: common value identified: serving opportunities, ministry opportunities; also people very committed, loving God, serve with commitment

Values>setup: the thing that most valued is : set up with pastors and lay, pastors and admin separate, the organization, the balanced ministry, wide range of ministries

Values>unityDiversity: common value identified: unity in diversity

WishesToRealize: Suggestions for wishes and dreams to be realized, implementation, conditions and changes, strategies, plans, misc. suggestions

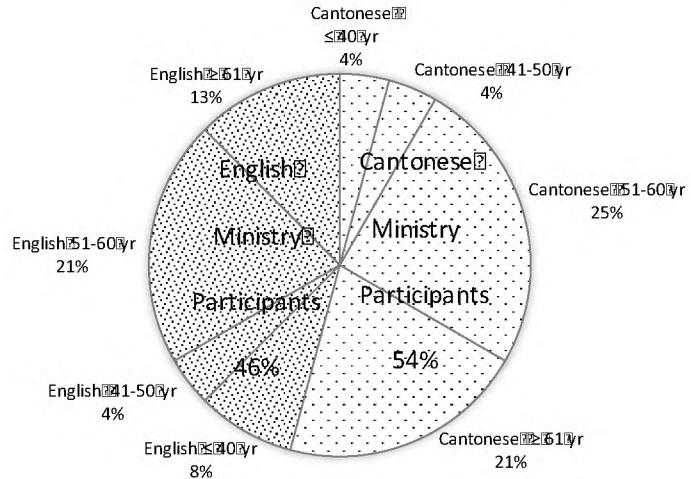
age: under 30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, over 61

yrs_in_leadership:

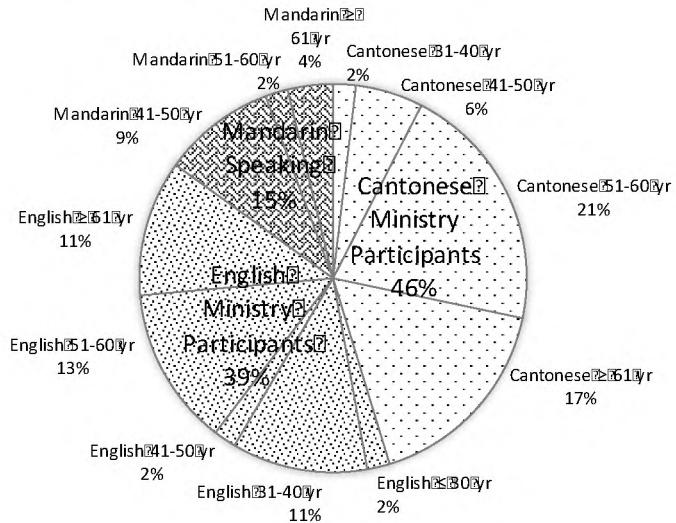
yrs_in_SCBC:

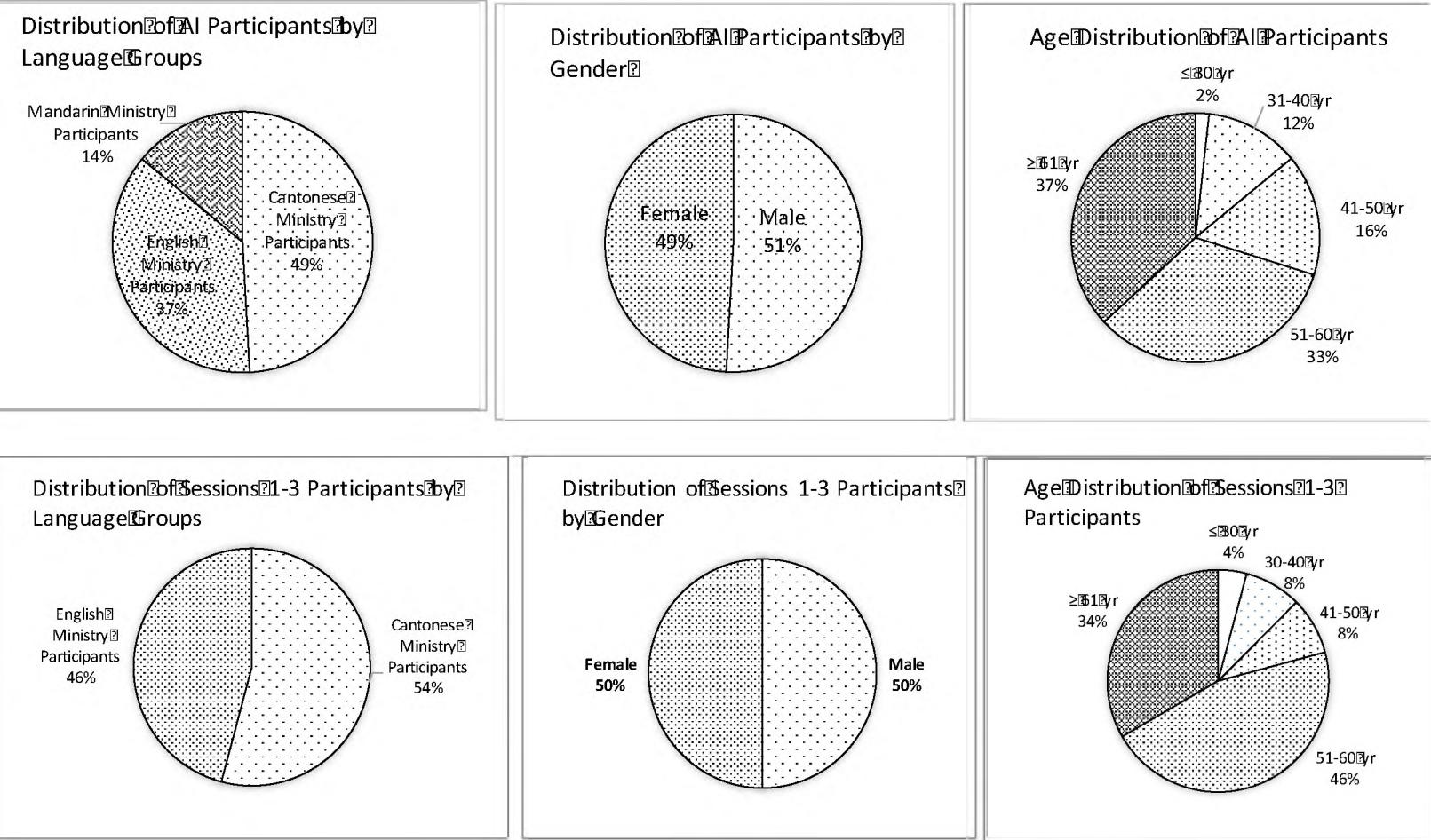
Appendix K: Summary of Data

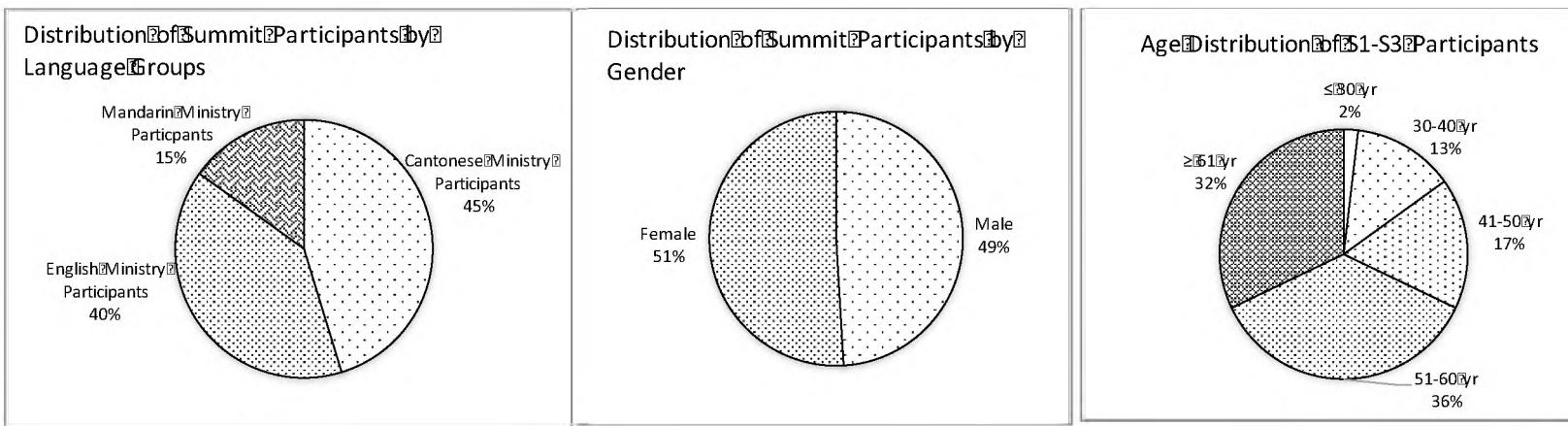
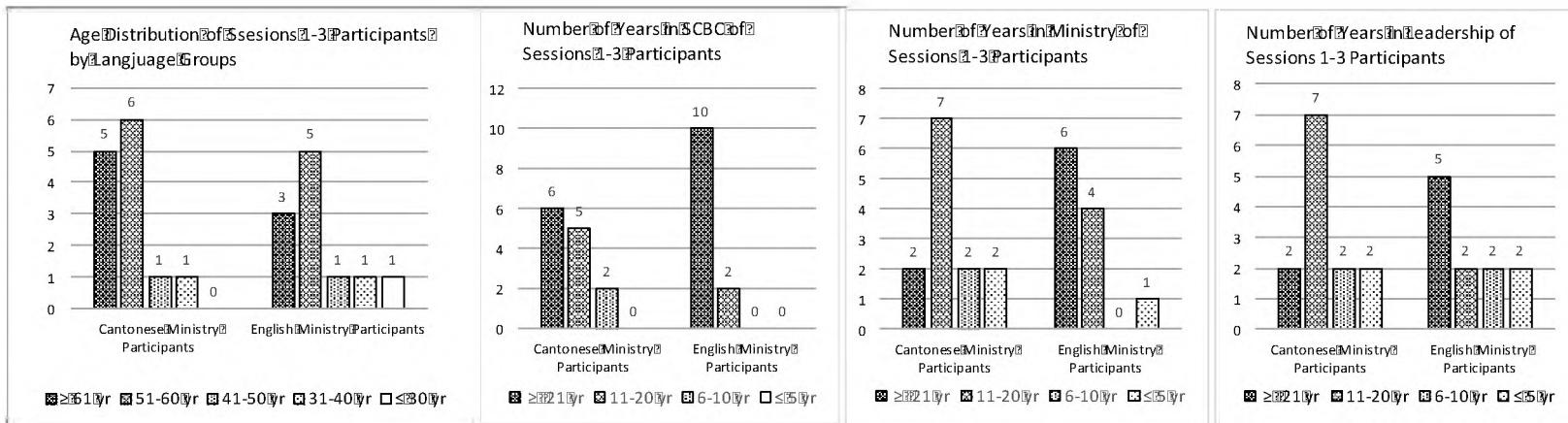
Composition of S1-S3 Interviews Participants by Congregation

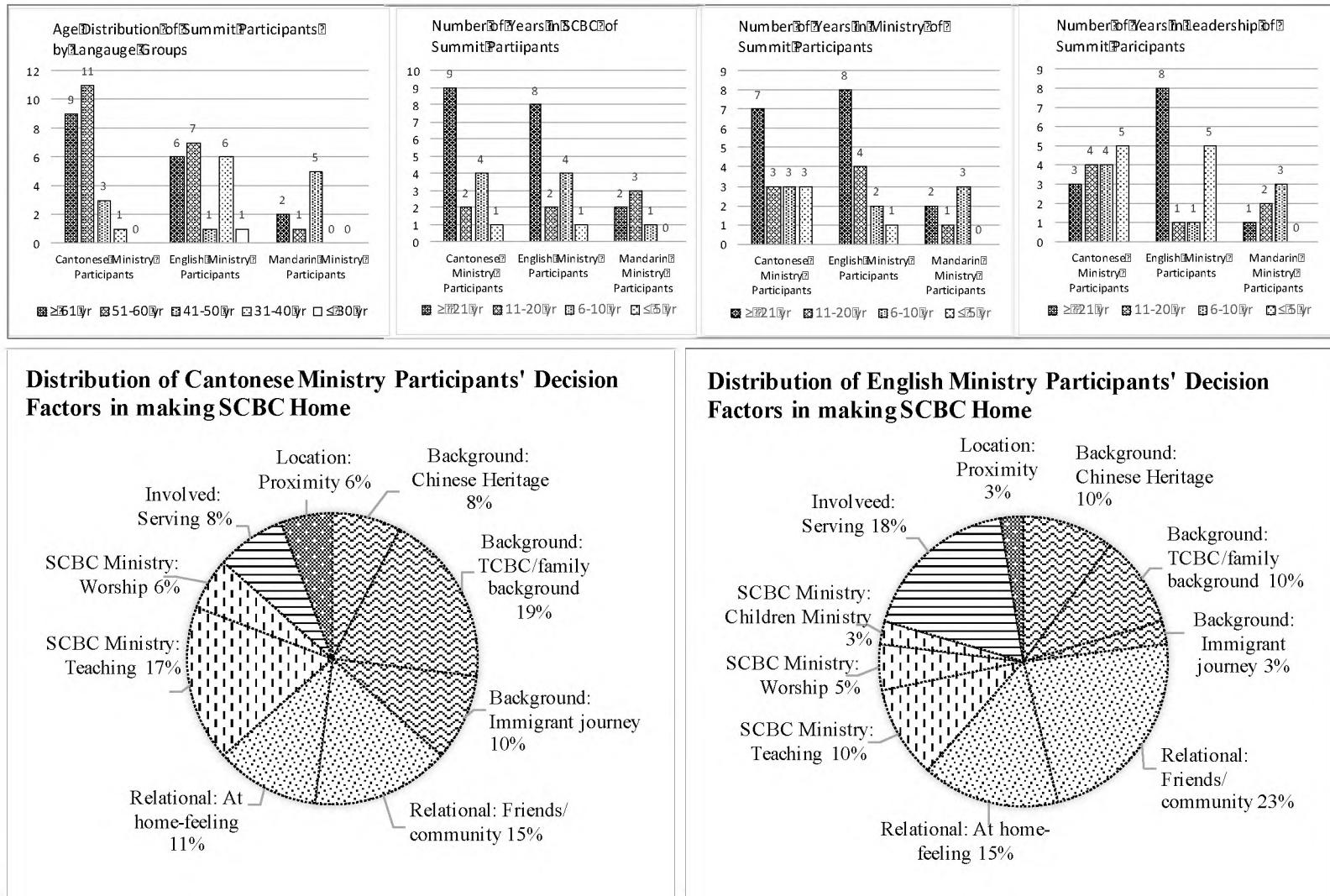


Composition of Summit Participants by Congregation

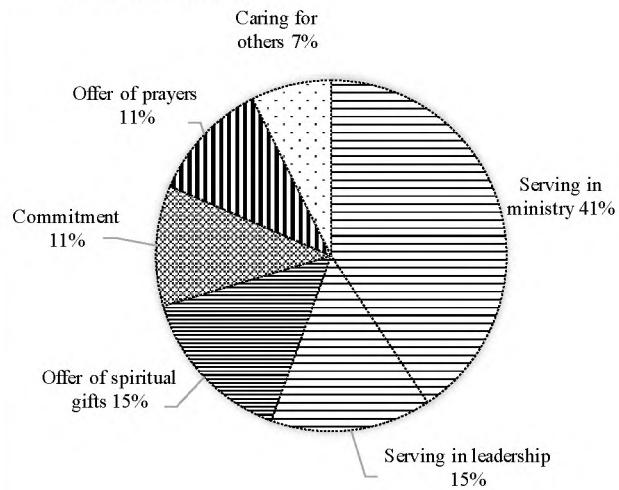




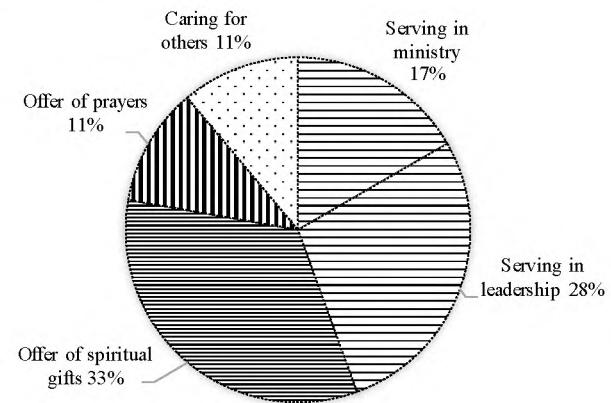


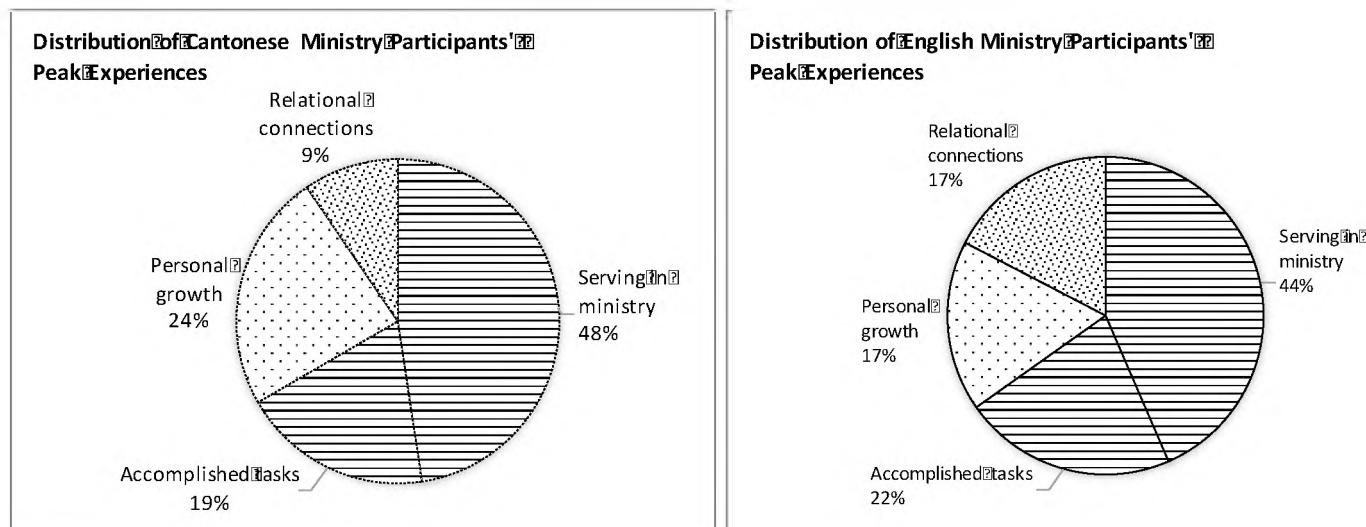


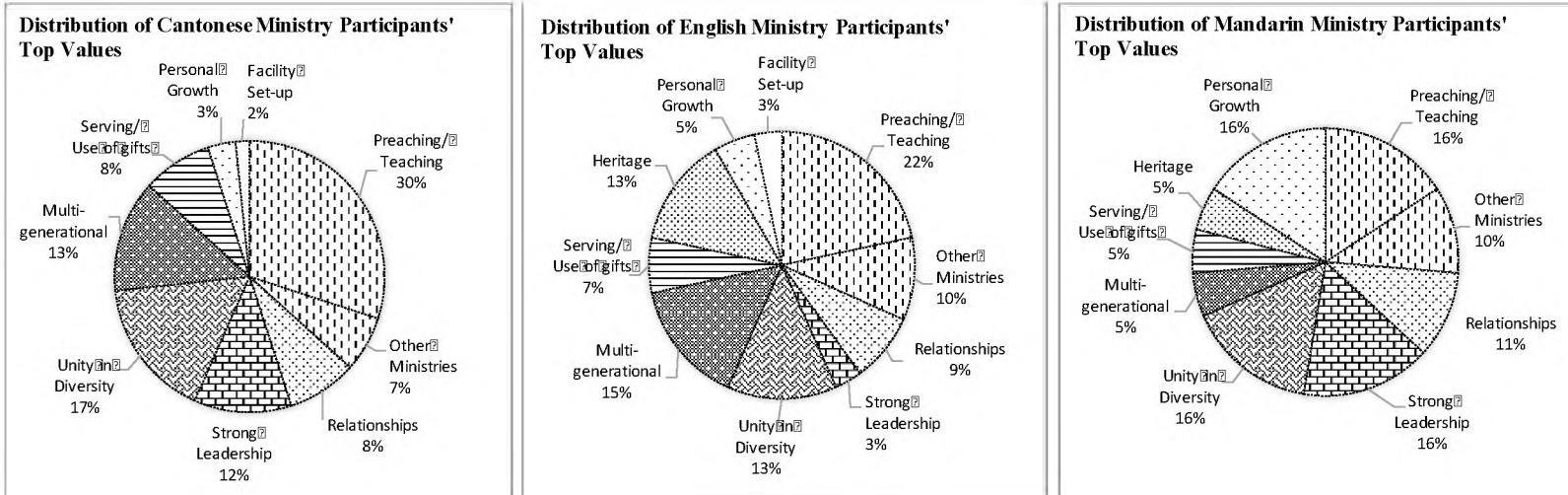
Distribution of Cantonese Ministry Participants' Peak Contributions



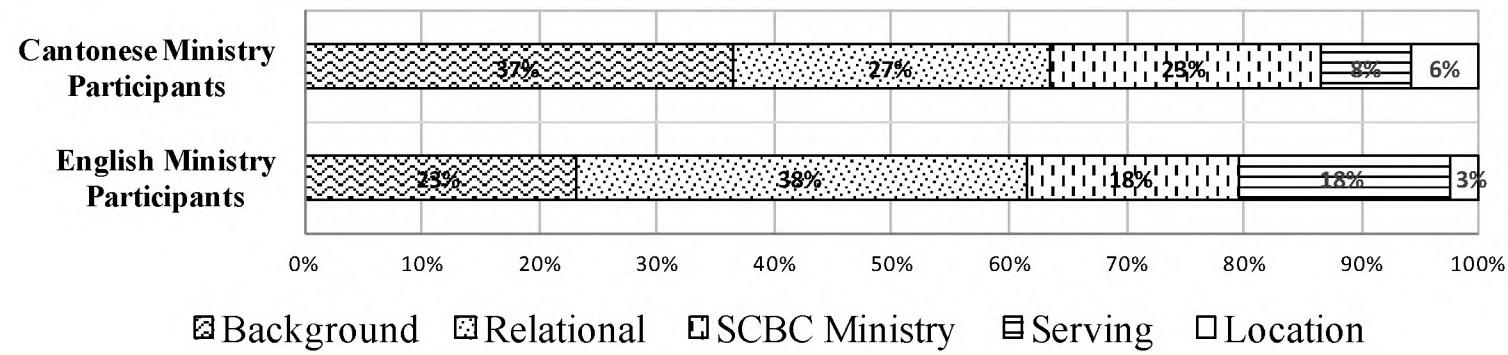
Distribution of English Ministry Participants' Peak Contributions



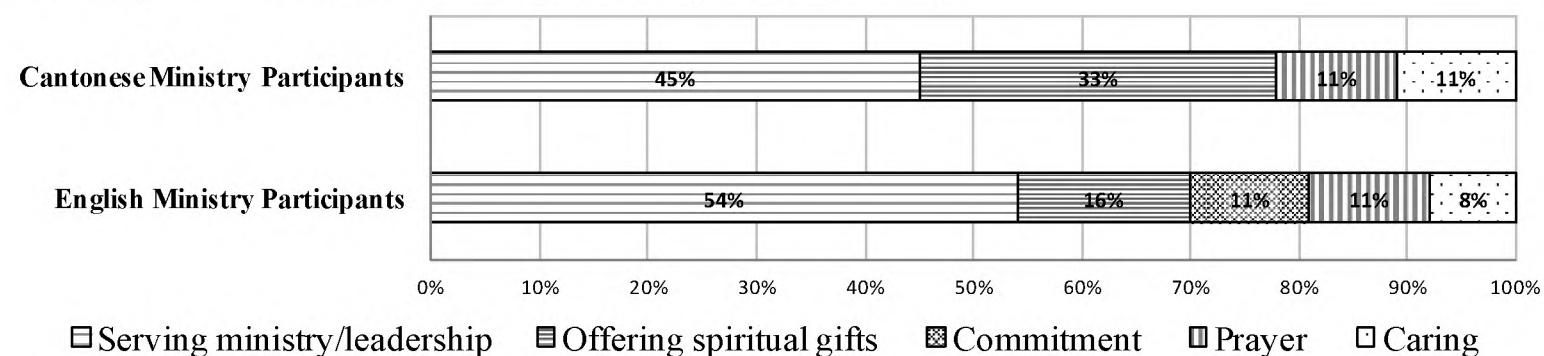




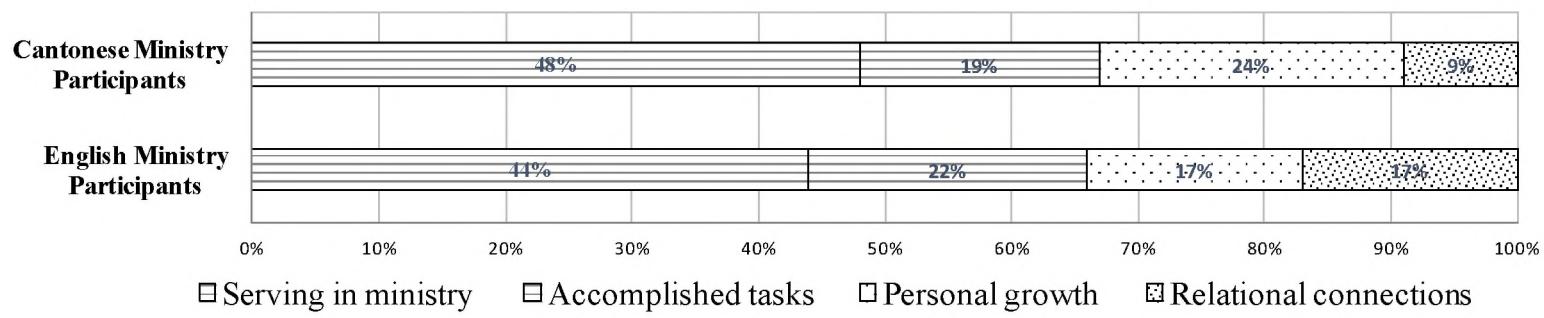
Percentage Distribution of Deciding Factors for making SCBC Home by Language Groups

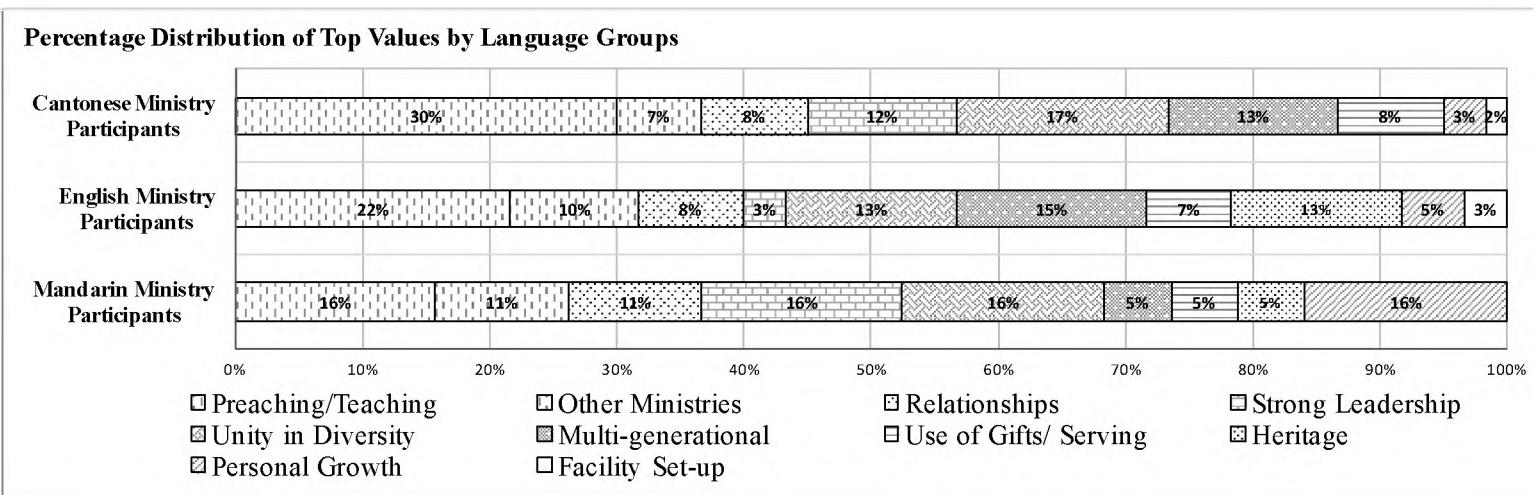


Percentage Distribution of Peak Contributions by Language Groups

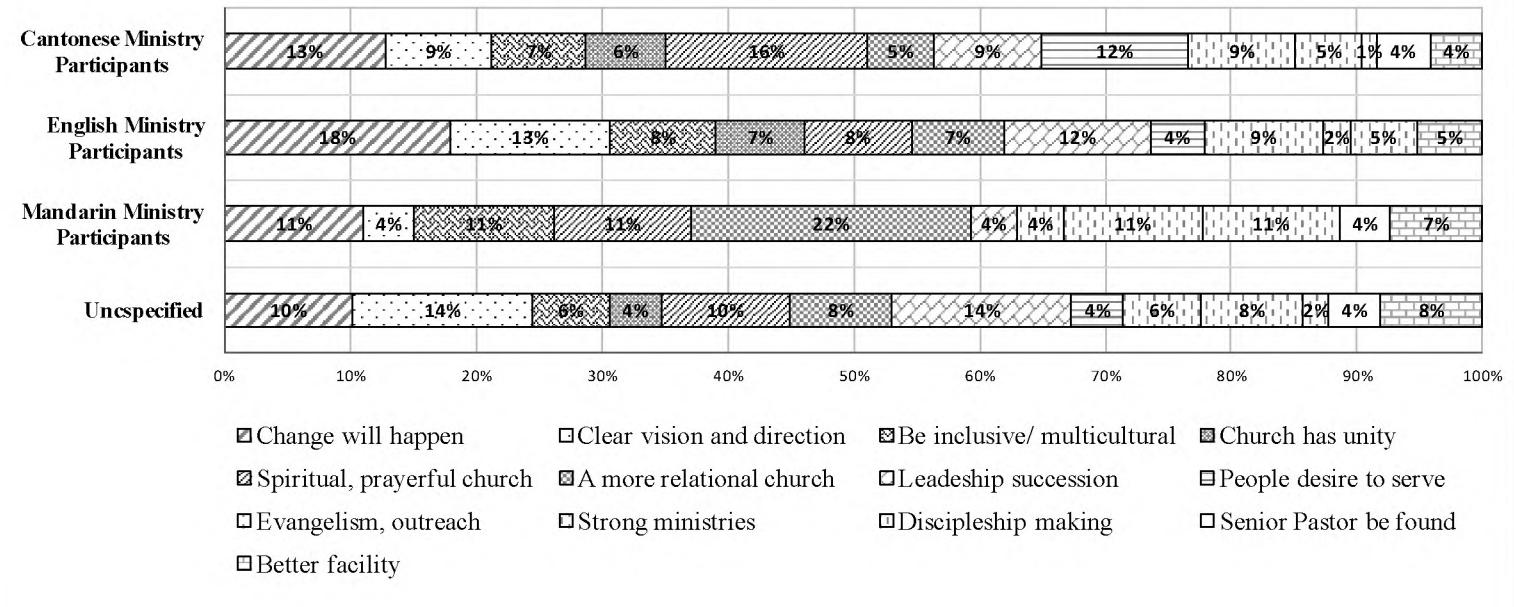


Percentage Distribution of Peak Experiences by Language Groups

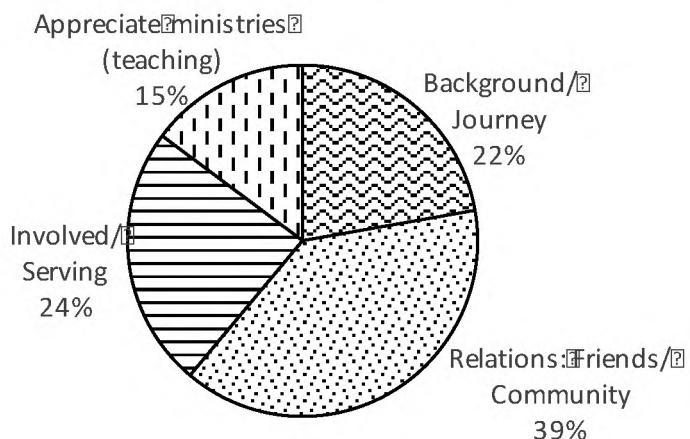




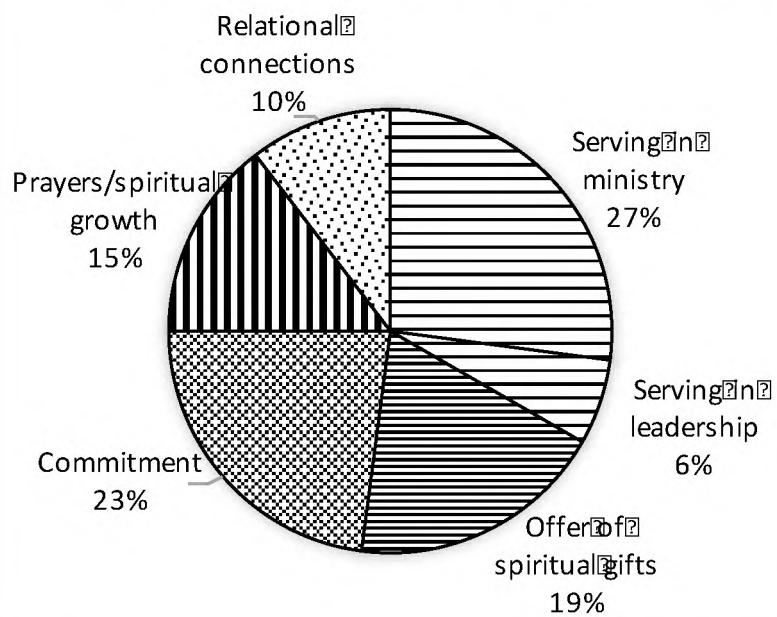
Percentage Distribution of Shared Dreams by Language Groups



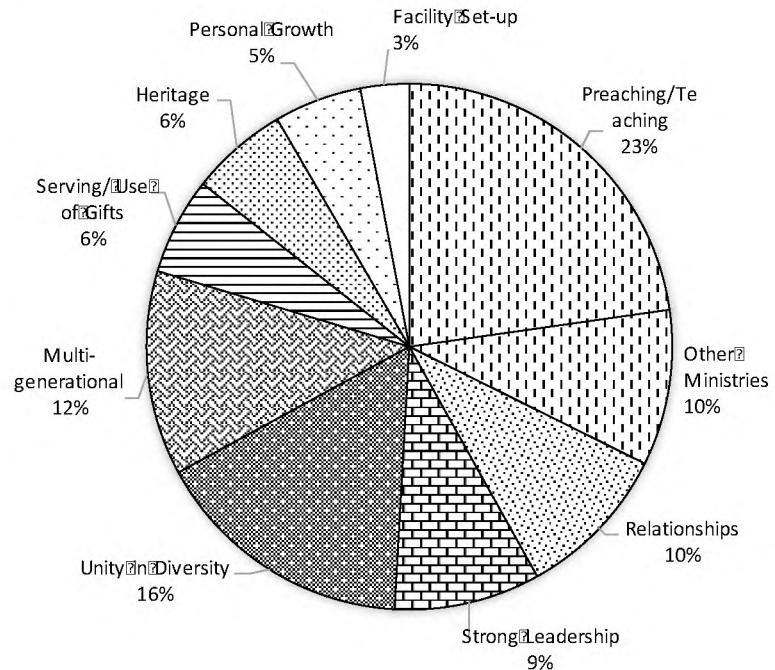
Commonalities identified in Stories



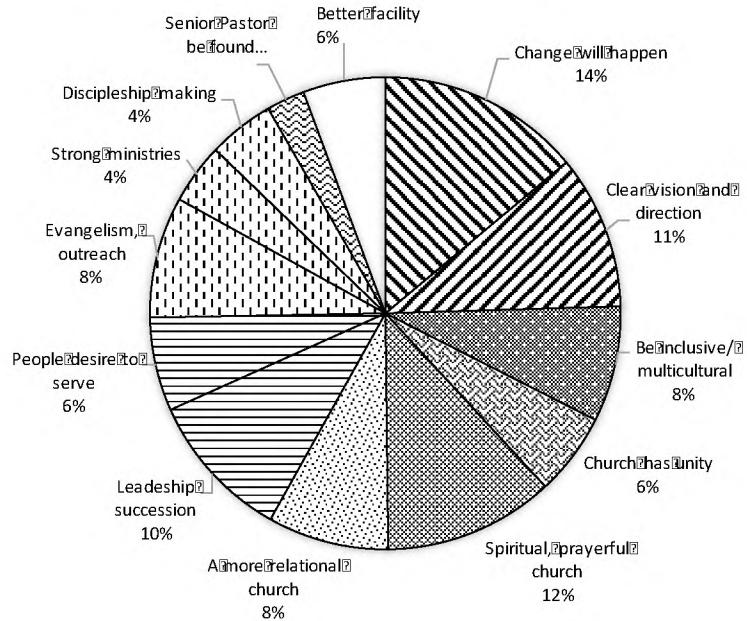
Commonalities Identified in Peak Contributions

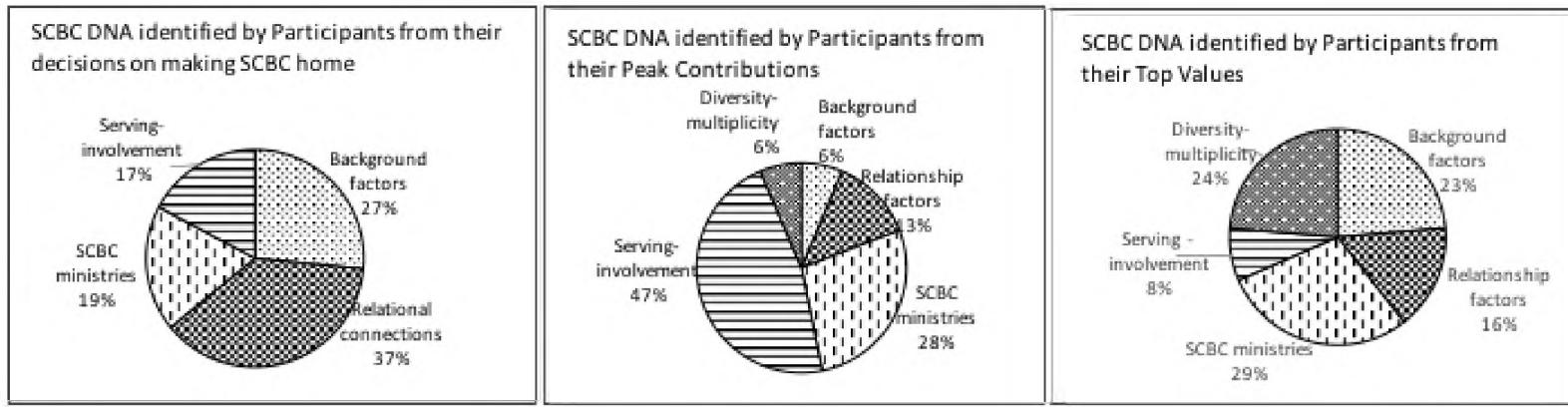


Distribution of All Counts of Shared Top Values

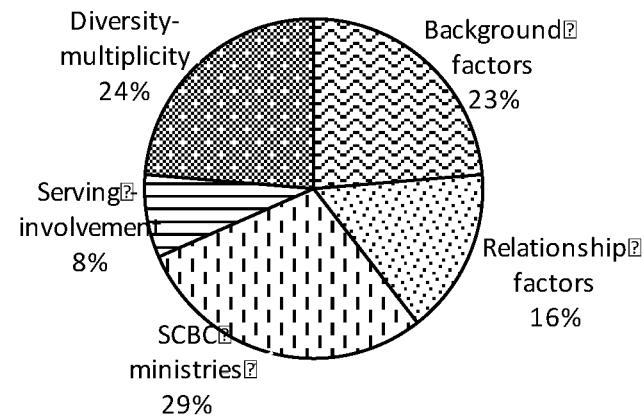


Distribution of All Counts of Shared Dreams

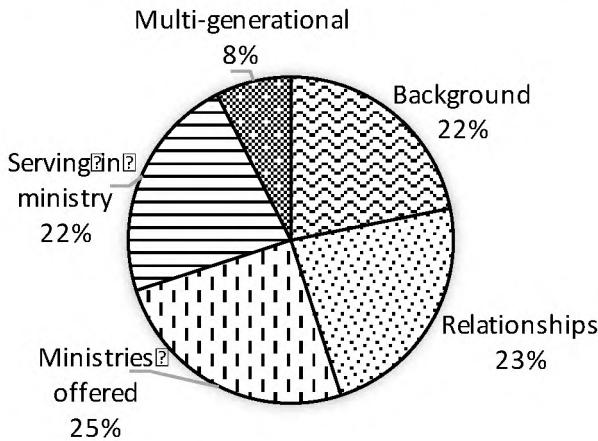


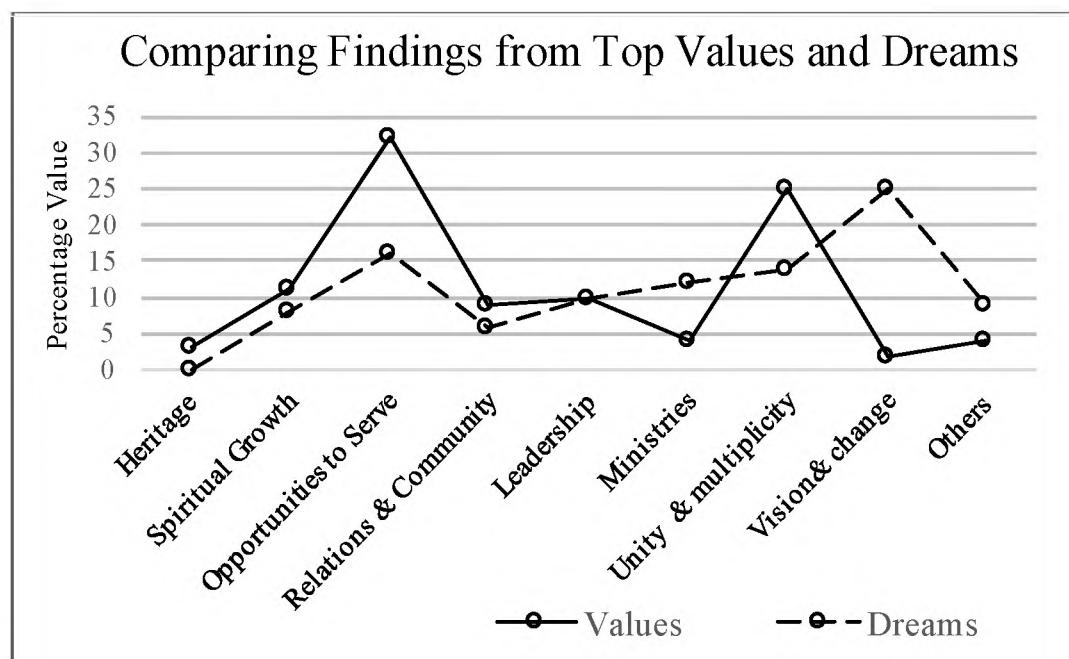
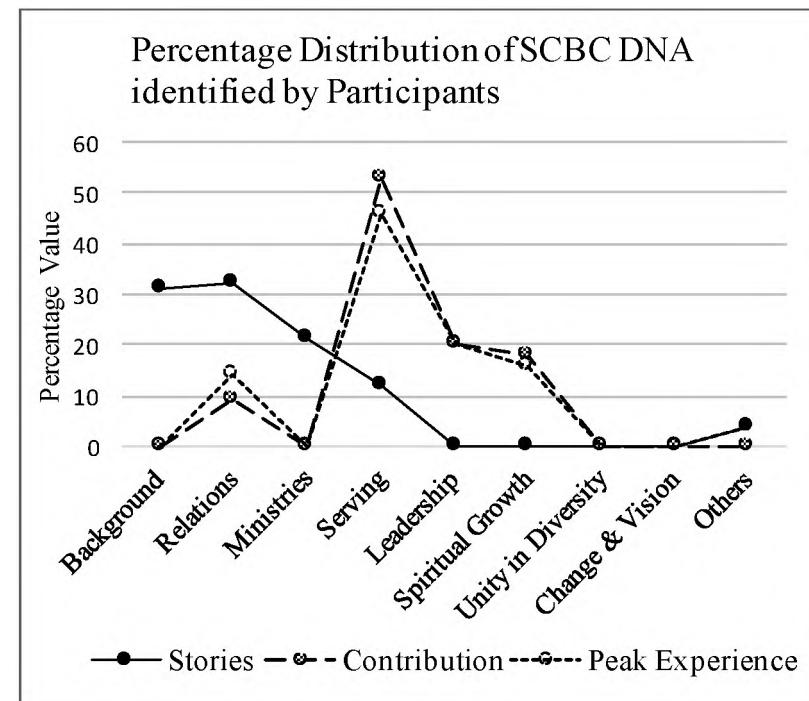


DNA Identified from Top Values

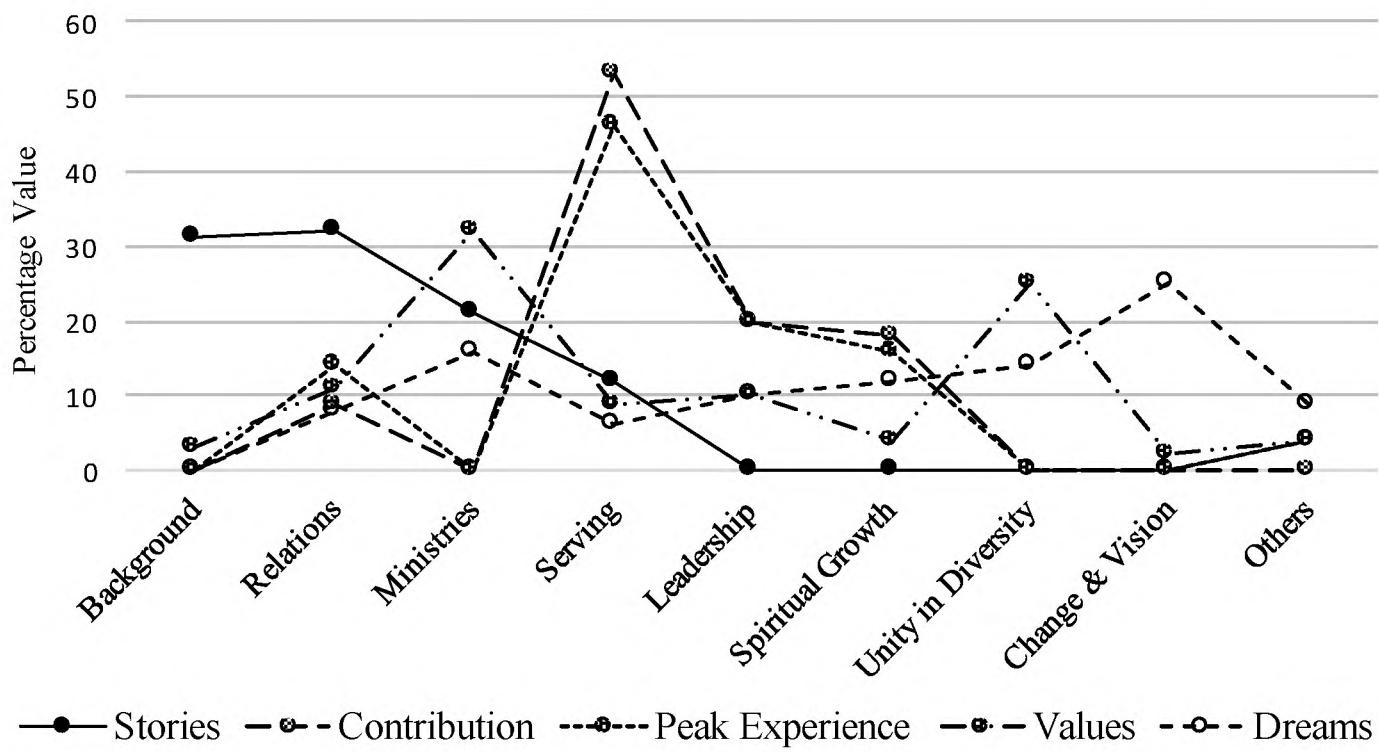


SCBC DNA Identified from All Sessions

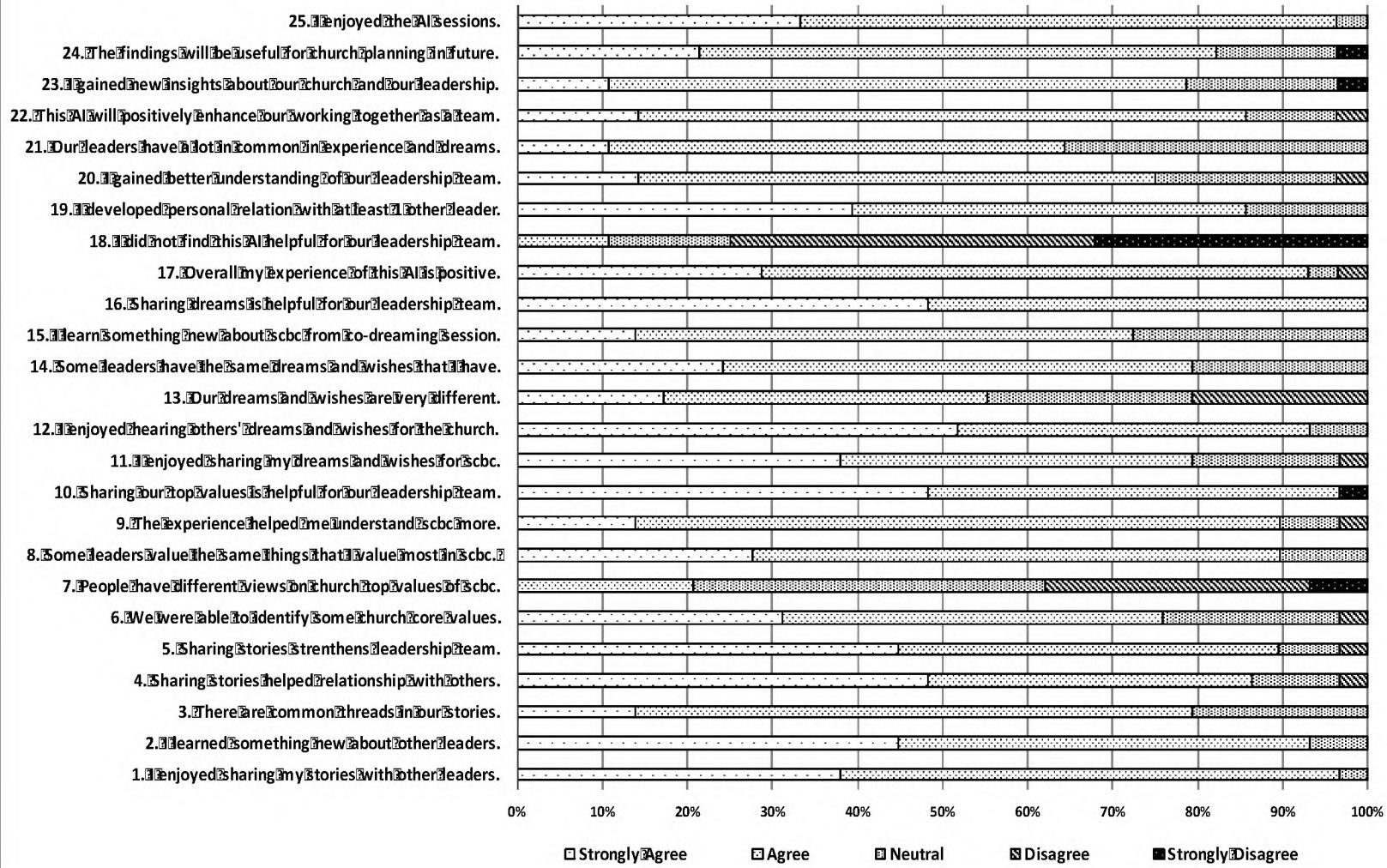




Distribution Patterns of Findings about SCBC from all 5 AI Components



Rating Distribution of Responses to 25 Evaluation Likert-Scale Evaluation Survey Questions



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