REFLECTIONS ON EQUIPPING YOUTHS OF THE KOREAN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES OF AMERICA IN THE LOS ANGELES METROPOLITAN AREAS THROUGH THE SUMMER RETREATS OF 2005-2006

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NATURE OF THE STUDY

*T*he Los Angeles Metropolitan District of the Korean Evangelical Church of America (KECA) has held annual summer youth retreats every year since 1998. The program was called the Reaching Out Ministries (ROM) for 7 years from 1998 to 2005, and then renamed the Ministry of Renewal (MORe) from this year, 2006. The author joined these summer retreat ministries from 2002. The author has also conducted two reflective surveys in order to evaluate the summer retreats of the ROM and MORe programs for the last nine years from 1998 to 2006. Both ROM and MORe have trained youth counselors every summer prior to the summer retreat. A group of youth pastors within these two districts have cooperated to operate these summer retreats.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research was to determine factors that influence adolescents who have actively participated in the programs at some point. Areas of evaluation include youth perception and satisfaction with the retreat; training needed for youth counselors; the strengths and

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weaknesses of the retreat at different levels. This research can help parents and pastors to identify strategies to better challenge Christian adolescents to live active Christian lives, to effectively equip youth ministries, counselors and teachers, especially pastors from smaller churches whose youth groups have less than ten students, and to support youth ministry as a whole.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question for this research was, "What are the influential factors for the Korean-American youth retreat and for their spiritual growth?" the Sub-questions were: (1) What is their perception on faith growth? (2) Who are the most influential persons for their faith growth? (3) What are the most influential programs for their faith growth? (4) What are the characteristics of the faith styles of the youth within the denomination? and (5) What programs would be helpful for teacher/counselor training?

BACKGROUND

Korean-American Youth

Numerous scholars (Chong, 1998; Kim, K. C. & Kim, S., 2001; Kim, R. Y., 2004; Kwak & Lee, 1989; Kwon, 2005; Lee, Chang, & Miller, 2006; Min, 1992; Park, 2005) have studied the issues faced by Korean-American youths such as their identity, faith community, bi-cultural issues, faith growth among adolescents, religious life, and so on. It is not difficult to find articles on issues that Korean-American face in America among Christian education journals or in youth ministry journals. Beside Korean-American issues, Doucet (2005) has studied issues of immigrant youth, especially among the 1.5 generation and second generation immigrants among those of Haitian ethnicity. Kelly Chong (1998) researched the role of religion in the construction of ethnic identity and boundaries among second generation Korean Americans, and found that the Korean ethnic church, especially the evangelical Protestant church, supports the development of strong identity and religiosity. He then reported that the majority of first-generation and second-generation Korean Americans are affiliated with Korean American churches. Kil Jae Park (2005) researched Korean American youth ministry as the challenge of constructing Korean

American identity, and reported that many Korean American youth and children have still suffered from low self-esteem and weak self-identity with the experience of discrimination and prejudice (p. 23). Danny Kwon (2005) researched "spiritual formation in the lives of Korean-American youth" and suggested that Korean churches need to do a "better job in its youth ministry practices, not only its ministry to youth but also in equipping and working with parents" (p. 79).

<center>Youth Retreat</center>

Arlo Reichter (1983) sees that "worthy goals for retreats include fun, fellowship, recreation, Bible study, issues study, discipleship and faith-growth" (p. 21). According to Reichter, faith-growth is one of the main goals for youth retreat. However, summer retreats for Korean-American youths have more than the above items in mind, such as the attempt to build closer relationships among Korean-American adolescents, develop a better understanding of God's word among students, rededicate the students' lives for God and His mission, and build up loyalty to their local churches as well as their denomination.

Even though many American scholars and Korean youth pastors (Beckett, 1996; Brandon, 2005; Cobb, 2006; DiGlacomo, 2004; Penney, 2001; Stevens, 2001; Wirpsa, 1995) wrote about practical guidelines for youth retreat, few scholars have researched issues that involve retreats.

<center>Learning Styles and Spirituality Types</center>

Learning Style

David Kolb (1984) identified four learning styles: Divergers, Assimilators, Convergers, and Accommodators. Kolb developed these styles by using his experiential learning theory: Concrete experience (feeling), Abstract conceptualization (thinking), reflective observation (watching), and active experimentation (doing). McCarthy (1990, 1997) developed the 4MAT system using Kolb's four learning styles: Imaginative learner, Analytic learner, Common Sense learner, and Dynamic learner. LeFever (1995) then published "Learning Style" based on Kolb's research and McCarthy's work. These four styles can be related to the spirituality types as following.

S*pirituality Type*

Spirituality types were studied by Urban Holmes (1997), Allen Sager (1999), and John Westerhoff III (2002). They introduced four types of spirituality which is very similar to the four learning styles. Holms used two poles, vertical pole as Heart and Mind, horizontal pole as Kataphatic and Apophatic, in order to identify four types of spirituality. By using these two poles, Holms named four types as following: Heart-Kataphatic type, Mind-Kataphatic type, Mind-Apophatic type, and Heart-Apophatic type.

However, the author found that spirituality types are very similar to learning styles. After a comparison of these types and styles, the author has renamed these spirituality types among Korean-Americans differently through the following: Relational spirituality for HK(IM), Intellectual spirituality for MK(AN), Practical (Social or Moral) spirituality for MA(CS), and Devotional spirituality for HA(DY).

Figure 1: Relationships between Spirituality types and learning styles

Spirituality Types	Learning Styles	Students' Perception
Heart-Kataphatic	Imaginative	Relational
Mind-Kataphatic	Analytic	Intellectual
Mind-Apophatic	Common Sense	Practical (Moral)
Heart-Apophatic	Dynamic	Devotional

METHOD

Instrument

Self-reported survey questionnaires with 20 questions for 2005 and 21 questions for 2006 were made by the author and were discussed with the participating church youth pastors in order to avoid any ethical problems or violations of the human rights of minors. In 2005, the questionnaire was made with 20 questions, and in 2006 one question about the student's immigrant status was added. The surveys included four questions on demographics, gender, grade, status as a born-again Christian or not, immigrant status, and number of ROM & MORe retreats attended. Seven questions dealt with the student's perception of their faith growth, six questions were on student satisfaction with the retreats, and three questions were used as an evaluation of the retreats.

Figure 2: Population

Year	Churches	Participants	Respondents	Percent
2005	12	187	115	61.50%
2006	10	191	167	87.40%
Total	22	378	282	74.60%

Populations of 2005 and 2006 Youth Summer Retreats are reported in the above figure. In 2005, 187 participants came from 12 churches, and 191 participants came from 10 churches in 2006. In 2005 115 participants responded to the survey and 177 participants did so in 2006, however the author mishandled 10 surveys which could not be used for this data analysis so the available data is limited to 167 surveys. Though the actual response rate was over 90 percent, only 87.4 percent were used in the data analysis.

Figure 3: Characteristics of Samples

Gender	Numbers	Percent
Male	150	53.2
Female	131	46.5
Missing	1	0.4
Total	282	100

Born-again Christian		
Yes	204	73.2
No	20	7.1
I don't know	54	19.1
Missing	4	1.4
Total	282	100

Grade		
Jr. High	85	30.1
Sr. High	153	54.3
College & Staff	44	15.6
Total	282	100

Immigrant Status		
Less 5 years	39	13.8
More than 5 years	33	11.3
Born in USA	89	57.1
Total	161	100
Missing	121	No survey in 2005
Total	282	

Number of ROM & MORE retreats attended

1 Time	165	58.5
2 Times	56	19.9
3 Times	24	8.5
4 Times	14	5
5 Times	12	4.3
6 Times	2	0.7
7 Times	4	1.4
8 Times	5	1.8
Total	282	100

FINDINGS

1. Perception

1. Meaning of Spiritual growth (Q. 7)

   Respondents described their perception of spiritual growth in 22 ways that the author categorized into four groups as (1) relational, (2) intellectual, (3) social or moral, and (4) devotional.

   (1) Relational: 6 ways
      Relationship with God
      Submitting their Life to God
      Closeness to God
      Trusting God
      Obeying God
      Devotion to God
   (2) Intellectual (cognitive): 3 ways
      Better Understanding of God
      Better Knowledge of God
      Renewing my heart by reading Bible and Prayer
   (3) Practical or Moral or Social (activities): 5 ways
      Serving More and living More in Christ
      Maturity in serving God
      Adapting to the New Christian life
      Mature Christian life
      Growing & maturing in serving God
   (4) Devotional: 8 ways
      Having more faith in God
      Feel to have grown spiritually

> Mature in/through God,
>> Growth in Christ
> Mature faith in God,
>> Spirit to God
> Develop whole heart and life to God
> Filled with Holy Spirit

Figure 4: Cross-tabulations between Descriptions of Spiritual Growth

Gender

Gender	Description of spiritual growth				
	Relational	Intellectual	Practical	Devotional	Total
Male	36	15	2	63	116
	31%	12.90%	1.70%	54.30%	100%
Female	44	6	6	57	113
	38.90%	5.30%	5.30%	50.40%	100%
Total	80	21	8	120	229
	34.90%	9.20%	3.50%	52.40%	100%

n= 229

Born-Again Christian

BA Christian	Description of spiritual growth				
	Relational	Intellectual	Practical	Devotional	Total
Yes	59	18	8	86	171
	34.50%	10.50%	4.70%	50.30%	100%
No	8	1	0	8	17
	47.10%	5.90%	0.00%	60.50%	100%
I don't know	13	2	0	23	38
	34.20%	5.30%	0.00%	60.50%	100%
Total	80	21	8	117	226
	35.40%	9.30%	3.50%	51.80%	100%

n= 226

Grade

Grade	Description of spiritual growth				
	Relational	Intellectual	Practical	Devotional	Total
Jr. High	22	2	2	42	68
	32.40%	2.90%	2.90%	61.80%	100%
Sr. High	45	12	4	67	128
	35.20%	9.40%	3.10%	52.30%	100%
Col. & Staff	14	7	2	11	34
	41.20%	20.60%	5.90%	32.40%	100%
Total	81	21	8	120	230

| | 35.20% | 9.10% | 3.50% | 52.20% | 100% |

n= 230

Immigrant Status

Immigrant Year	Description of spiritual growth				
	Relational	Intellectual	Practical	Devotional	Total
1-4 Years	6	1	5	20	32
	18.80%	3.10%	15.60%	62.50%	100%
More than 5 Yr	11	4	0	10	128
	44.00%	16.00%	0.00%	40.00%	100%
Born in USA	23	7	2	44	76
	30.30%	9.20%	2.60%	57.90%	100%
Total	81	21	8	120	230
	30.10%	9.00%	5.30%	55.60%	100%

n= 230

Figure 5: People motivating student to participate in the retreat (Q. 4)

Persons	Sr. High		Comparison	Jr. High	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Self	49	32	>	20	23.5
Pastor	33	21.6	>	18	21.2
Friends	17	11.1	>	7	11.8
Parent	13	8.5	>	10	11.8
Teacher	3	2	<	4	4.7

N= 153 (Sr. High), 85 (Jr. High)

Figure 6: Helpful programs for Spiritual growth at Church (Q. 10)

Programs	Sr. High		Comparison	Jr. High	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Retreat	125	81.7	<	75	88.2
Friendship	59	38.6	>	13	15.3
Revival	51	33.3	<	35	41.2
Worship	49	32	<	31	36.5
Bible Study	39	25.5	<	24	28.2
Prayer	30	19.6	>	16	18.8

Figure 7: Helpful persons who encourage spiritual growth (Q. 11)

Persons	Sr. High		Comparison	Jr. High	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Youth Pastor	85	55.6	>	58	68.2
Father	74	48.4	>	35	41.2
Mother	72	47.1	>	38	44.7
Pastor	60	39.2	<	45	52.9
Friends	46	30.1	>	16	18.8
Teacher	45	29.4	<	26	30.6
Sibling	26	17	>	7	8.2

2. Satisfaction with the retreat

Figure 8: Helpful/Moving Programs at Retreat (Q. 6)

Programs	Sr. High		Comparison	Jr. High	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Prayer	102	66.7	<	61	71.8
Praise	78	51	>	37	43.5
Sermon	50	32.7	>	21	24.7
Seminar	16	10.5	>	4	4.7

Figure 9: Plan of returning next year (Q. 8 & 17)

Grade	Sr. High		Comparison	Jr. High	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Q 8. Yes	128	84.2	<	78	91.8
Q 17. Yes	122	79.7	<	77	90.6

Figure 10: Reasons for participation (Q. 12)

Reasons	Sr. High		Comparison	Jr. High	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Personal renewal	101	66	>	47	55.3
New life perspective	94	61.4	<	57	67.1
Spiritual experience	45	29.4	<	28	32.9
Music	43	28.1	>	15	17.6
Rest	39	25.5	<	23	37.1

| Ministry Skill | 29 | 19 | < | 27 | 31.8 |
| Speaker | 18 | 11.8 | < | 16 | 18.8 |

Figure 11: Plan to take follow-up program (Q. 13)

Programs	Positive		Comparison	Negative/ No response	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Follow-up	180	74.4	>	75	26.6

  n= 277

Figure 12: Best three things in retreat (Q. 16)

Programs	Sr. High		Comparison	Jr. High	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Praise time	100	65.4	>	48	56.5
Prayer time	92	60.1	>	48	56.5
Keynote Speaker	56	36.6	>	26	30.6
Leaders	30	19.6	<	16	18.8

Figure 13: Plan to serve in Future Youth Ministry (Q. 14)

Programs	Positive		Comparison	Negative/ No response	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Serve youth ministry	189	74.9	>	91	25.1

  n= 281

Figure 14: Programs pastors will provide (Q. 15)

Yes	Relational	Intellectual	Practical	Devotional	No	No response
20	10	13	11	37	4	186
7.1	7.1	4.6	3.9	13.1	1.4	65.9

Figure 15: Plan for daily Christian spiritual life (Q. 20)

Programs	Positive		Comparison	Negative/ No response	
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Daily Christian life	279	98.9	>	3	1.1

  n=282

DISCUSSION

According to the data analysis by SPSS 14, there are several significant differences in the perception of spiritual growth among demographic variables such as (1) Born-again Christians, (2) Jr. High students and Sr. High students, and (3) immigrant status background. However, variables such as (1) gender and (2) times of retreat participation are not open to perception for obvious reasons.

Analysis of demographics

* Sr. High students have more born-again Christians.
* Sr. High students were more self-motivated than Jr. High students
* Sr. High students were more moved by praise than Jr. High students
* Sr. high students were more moved by the sermons than Jr. High students.
* Jr. High students expected to return to the following year's retreat at higher rates than the Sr. High students, 91.8 % compared to 84.2 %.

General Interpretation

1. The author can see the denominational characteristics of Korean Evangelical Church of America (KECA) in their perception of spiritual growth. The first type of spiritual growth (120 persons, 42.6%) was devotional, which focuses on more personal level. Then, it showed relational types with 81 persons (28.7%) persons and only 8 respondents (2.8%) in the practical type and 21 persons (7.4%) of the intellectual type. Since this trend is an understood emphasis within the KECA, this data suggests that churches keep their own denominational identity in their youth ministries.

2. Participants show that the primary motivation to encourage their participation was themselves (83), and then their pastors were the second strongest source of influence. Interestingly, their friends, at third place, held more sway than their parents, who were fourth.

3. With question 6, the most moving and touching program at retreat was reported as the prayer time; the praise time was second, and

sermons placed third. An interesting item of note is that prayer time at the retreat (Q. 6) was the top program while the same prayer programs at church (Q. 10) were only fourth. Retreat participants saw prayer time and other programs differently at the retreat and in their churches.

4. Top three helpful programs for faith growth were (1) retreat, (2) revival, and (3) worship in their respective churches. They saw that the retreat was the most helpful program while they saw worship in their churches was third. This was an encouraging result for youth pastors who are leading worship and preaching regularly.

5. Top three helpful persons for faith growth were (1) youth pastors (169 persons), (2) mother (131), and (3) pastor, with no specification as to whether this was their youth pastor or senior pastor, or even another pastor (126). Father (125) and friends (81) followed. Friends may have been the third most important group in encouraging students to participate in the retreat but only rated as the fifth most helpful group of people. It is also interesting to note that students placed more spiritual importance in their mothers than their fathers.

6. Jr. high students (more than 90 %) and Sr. high students (approximately 80 %) said that they would participate in the following year's retreat. This is very encouraging for youth pastors and leaders who were working for retreat programs.

Suggestions

The author suggests further research on retreats: Korean youth retreats in general including youth retreats in Korea, other denominational youth retreat programs, and other ethnic youth retreats to include groups that are primarily Caucasian.

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