Chapter 19.
Training Next Generation Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Baptist Leaders for Mission

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The Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV) has three strategic priorities for our current season of ministry: to develop pioneering leaders, to connect better with younger generations and to embrace cultural diversity. This chapter begins to explore issues for BUV in addressing these priorities through training next generation immigrant leaders, especially Karen and Chin from Burma (Myanmar). The chapter is based on an overview of the Christian Research Association literature on immigration and youth cultures and implications for BUV training, alongside consideration of relevant BUV research, conversations and strategy development. It outlines possible future ministry development and further research and training needs.

BUV Cultural Diversity and Generational Bridging

Almost a third or 70 of BUV’s 216 churches worship in a Language other than English (LOTE). They used to be called “ethnic churches”, but that is a problematic term since all churches are “ethnic” in that everyone has cultural ethnicity. They are sometimes referred to as Multicultural or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) congregations, although LOTE churches themselves are usually mono-cultural with one linguistic group. BUV’s LOTE congregations include Arabic (1), Hungarian (1), Khmer (1), Nepali/Bhutanese (1), Slavic (1), Sudanese (1), Persian (1), Indian (Telugu) (2), Spanish (2), Indonesian (3), Filipino (Tagalog/English) (5), Romanian (3), Vietnamese (4), Korean (4), Samoan (5), Chinese (11), and most recently but increasingly Karen (9) and Chin (17). The 26 Karen and Chin congregations from Burma (Myanmar) have all started since 2000, yet now total more than a third of BUV’s LOTE churches.

Some of these cultural groups and churches have been in Australia for a number of generations. For example, Vietnamese and Chinese congregations include first generation immigrants, 1.5 generation immigrants (children who immigrated but who grew up in Australia) and second and sometimes third generation immigrants (children and

1. This will be presented at the Children, Youth and Mission Study Group at the 14th Assembly of the International Association for Mission Studies, August 11–17, 2016, Seoul, South Korea. The author appreciates conversations and constructive comments on this chapter by BUV staff Marc Chan, David Devine, Anne Wilkinson-Hayes and Meewon Yang, and by Samuel and Kim Chan.

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grandchildren of immigrants who were born and grew up in Australia). There are also usually sizeable numbers of international students who bring another set of perspectives. (Doan and Pallot 2016) But other cultural groups, including different groups from Burma who are mainly from a refugee background, have arrived in the last decade and are all first generation or 1.5 generation (and mostly under 40 years of age). The more recent arrivals may learn second generation lessons from other LOTE churches, including where leaders have been raised (or not) and faith contextualized (or not).

An intrinsic challenge of second generation young people is that they bridge or navigate two cultural worlds. They decide whether to identify with their traditional culture of their family heritage, or the majority Western culture where they study and work, or their own second generation culture, or socially construct their identity between all three. Straddling between these worlds can challenge wellbeing and mental health, foster marginalisation, and lead youth to leave church and faith (Chan and Chan 2015). Unlike western youth, however, who often leave as they finish primary or high school, second generation migrants usually stay and enjoy the community belonging of church until they are young adults (e.g., 25-30) and might then differentiate themselves and leave (Chan and Chan 2016; cf. Cronshaw et al. 2016).

Part of the cultural gap is language, but it is also a generation gap and differences in values. Samuel and Kim Chan explain that Australian-born Chinese do not hold as strongly to Confucian values (filial piety, harmony, honour and respect). Instead of feeling like there is no place other than simple submission, fighting or leaving (cf. Yee 2013), they counsel second generation, adopting the posture of missionaries and seeking to understand and respect these cultural differences (Chan and Chan 2015: 108).

Praxis Director Tim Jeffries similarly maintains that after encouraging second generation youth to celebrate their culture, respect their parents’ generation and show initiative, LOTE church leaders more willingly hand over power and responsibility. In fact, as the second generation can walk in both worlds they are invaluable leaders and can be of great service to their community. For example, Praxis and Werribee Karen intern Mi Doh Htoo developed a community project as part of his youth work studies on how young people can help the Karen community access community services. He is now doing a placement with Wyndham Youth Services, contributing to the Karen Church youth leadership team and making himself available to serve as a driver or community liaison helper. Rather than the Western dream of making their own way in the world, the Karen value of serving the family and community may well be closer to a gospel value and indeed worth learning from for our Anglo children (Allbright and Htoo 2016; Jeffries 2016).

All Karen and Chin leaders with whom I have talked recognise the importance of connecting with their next generation. A big felt need is how to maintain the faith and belonging of youth and children, and how to equip them to help others who are younger. Werribee Karen Baptist Church’s Rev Gall Moe Dwi says, “The future is all about the young people” and “When we’ve lost the children, we’ve lost everything” (2016). Chin Baptist Church Pastor Arohn Kung explains leadership development is necessarily bicultural:

We have to prepare and plant now and recruit our young children to be qualified in the church in English as well as one or two dialects. We need bilingual leadership for Chin people. Otherwise we will lose many of our children and they won’t have a church to go to in the future. Unless we bring up our children well in faith, who will be the church of the future? (2016)

Rev Moo Hei, Pastor of the Karen speaking service of Croydon Hills Baptist Church, commented that whereas a Karen village pastor controls everything in church, it is important in Australia to delegate responsibility to young people and thus encourage next generation leadership development, and to do so learning from other Australian (Anglo) churches (Ha et al. 2016). Australian Zoting Church Pastor in Sunshine, Rev Za Tuah Ngur, sees ministry to children as one of the church’s main expression of mission, and is eager for resources and networks to help (Ngur 2016).

Mark Mullins explains sociologically that engaging the next generation is an imperative for all LOTE churches. LOTE churches are the institutions that most foster cultural maintenance for an immigrant group, yet over time successive generations progressively assimilate. It is a natural part of their life-cycle that the ongoing survival of the church requires adapting to the acculturated generations. In the second and third generations of the LOTE congregation life-cycle, they develop bilingual ministry and service options and ultimately some form of multiethnic life, or they cease to exist (Mullins 1987: 322-324). Karen and Chin churches do not want to see an exodus of their next generations and are eager to develop strategies to empower them.

As well as LOTE churches, other BUU churches have varying degrees of culturally-diverse representation reflecting a multicultural society. As a denomination, we are culturally and linguistically diverse. All churches face the question of what is happening to children and young people with faith formation, church belonging and leadership development. But the LOTE streams of BUU are growing the most, and feel the greatest need for help with developing new leaders and seeing lasting conversions and transformation among younger generations. The term “next generation” refers to all children and younger or emerging generations in our churches – whether first, 1.5 or second generation young adult immigrants, or Australian-born Anglo youth and young adults. There are challenges and lessons that apply to all next generation leaders, and things to learn across our cultural diversity. But our focus here is BUU’s next generation LOTE church leaders, especially Karen and Chin.

The overall goal is to explore models and practices of mission training for the next generation of BUU culturally diverse leaders. This is an action-research project developing realistic and viable plans for leadership development pathways in consultation with culturally-diverse church leaders. It is essential to develop initiatives in conversation with the church “elders” where these young leaders come from, and embedded in the community of churches with whom they belong. It is also imperative to give the next generation a significant voice about what strategy is needed. The project is part of the “continuous conversion of the church” that Darrell Guder (2000) appeals for. In this case the necessary conversion includes transformation towards intercultural intelligence of our denominational system.

Context – Victorian Baptists and Immigration (CRA research)

The research of Christian Research Association (CRA) has underlined the importance of understanding faith perspectives of immigrants and their children. CRA have been researching migrant and cultural diversity issues for over twenty years. The recent census data that I have analysed with CRA’s Senior Research Officer, Philip Hughes, has been especially informative for Baptists. The 2001-2011 census data shows that Baptists owe 98% of their growth over that decade to immigration growth (compared to 65% of Australian population growth from immigration). Of people living in Australia
who identify as Baptists in the 2011 census, 29.9% were immigrants and 17.3% were second generation immigrants. So almost half of Baptists were first or second generation immigrants (Hughes and Cronshaw 2015).

What, then, can we learn from the research of CRA about immigration, religion and the next generations of culturally diverse young people and their relationship with our churches? What follows is a literature review of the relevant CRA books and articles in conversation with developing BUV perspectives.

Religious plurality

In 1995 the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (BIMPR) commissioned Gary Bouma to explore immigration. Philip Hughes and others worked with Bouma, and CRA published the results as Many Religions, All Australian (Bouma 1997; reviewed in Hughes 1997: 12). It details the history of Australian immigration and the increasing cultural and religious diversity of migrants. With case studies of Vietnamese Buddhists and Muslim women, and a newly developed theory of religious settlement, the writers show how religious organisations often help in settlement. They also explored the dilemmas of authority, leadership, human rights, the faith of second generation immigrants and responses to religious diversity and plurality. Australia has only increased in religious pluralism since this book’s publication, and our next generation leaders are growing up in a pluralistic society we need to better understand. Moreover, second generation leaders with their necessary experience of bridging different worlds will be well placed to lead the church in navigating religious as well as cultural and generational plurality.

Youth subcultures

CRA researcher Sharon Bond reviewed research from the Australian Youth Subcultures on the Margins and in the Mainstream project, including identity and conflict in what she termed “ethnic youth subcultures” (White 1999; Bond 2000). She commented on the centrality of identity construction for youth subcultures, accentuated by ethnicity:

Young persons born overseas and second generation youth must locate themselves with respect to their parent cultures and languages as well as the ethnic majority Anglo-Australians. Support networks and friends are important for such young people who may be highly visible because of their physical characteristics or behaviour and thus come under more scrutiny from other young people and members of the community.

Bond explained that identity is a matter of self-description (who young people say they are, based on shared language, culture or religion) and/or ascription (who others say they are, including sometimes stereotypical assumptions). Culturally diverse youth often experiment with different identities, changing how they self-describe for support or to shield themselves against conflict and racism. Bond appeals for celebrating positive stories of different cultural groups (rather than stereotypical accounts of violence or crime) for the sake of community spirit and pride, as well as broader respect from others in Australian society.

Medium or message?

Bond also reviewed Anya Wood’s Melbourne-based research of language and faith, Medium or Message? (Woods 2004; Bond 2004). Woods celebrates cultural diversity as part of the essence of church and a corrective to ethnocentrism:

Clearly, multiculturalism in the Australian Church is a great challenge, not because it goes against the tenets of the Christian faith – in fact, exactly the opposite – but because of the ethno-centric and essentially monocultural walls which the Christian Church in Australia has, in the past, built around itself (2004: 6).

Woods argues denominations need to be aware of the importance of language of the heart and cultural identity, and work with churches on cross-generational issues of faith, language and culture.

Woods’ research investigated two or three congregations across seven denominations in Melbourne, including Arabic and Spanish Baptist churches (in Brunswick and Dandenong). There is usually a close connection of language with ethnicity and religion, and, in some religious communities, a special language is prescribed for worship. However Baptists do not tend to prioritise any particular liturgy or language since the Baptist emphasis on the personal relationship with God allows use of intimate and ordinary language. Also Baptist worship usually uses ordinary language and has no set liturgy. This may be part of the effectiveness of Baptists with non-English speaking background groups. Yet some churches including Baptists may prioritise community language use not for religious reasons but for cultural maintenance. Furthermore, people sometimes come to Baptist churches from other denominational and cultural backgrounds, bringing their own assumptions about liturgy and worship language.

Woods differentiates churches focused on linguistic/cultural maintenance from those focused on communicating the gospel, and suggests the latter are more positive about the future. “Medium” focused groups offer youth programs in community languages for cultural preservation, even if the language capabilities of second generation youth is limited, but “message” focused churches offer programs in English when convenient. These language choices are especially a challenge for youth ministry since youth in LOTE churches are not homogenous but include international students, those who migrated as children, and second and third generation, all with varying proficiency in their community language and English. Woods comments that language is not likely to be the only reason for declining participation of youth, and that youth can also feel distanced by traditional liturgy. If second generation migrants feel worship is disconnected from or strange to the world they inhabit for the rest of the week, then they are more likely to devalue it or stop participating. This potential cultural distance may also apply to other aspects of church life, including approaches to governance and behavior norms.

Woods’ research raises two issues for Karen and Chin churches. Firstly, given the importance of Chin and Karen languages and dialects, it would be helpful to utilise or develop resources for worship and mission training in Karen and Chin languages, and contextualise existing resources for use in the Australian context. Marc Chan, BUV’s Multicultural Inclusion worker, comments that use of resources in the “language of the heart” from people’s country of origin helps them to maintain their identity. He observes that Burmese refugees have a range of existing resources, but they could helpfully be modified to reflect the change in the way in which churches are developing in Australia (Chan 2016).

Secondly, Chin and Karen churches feel the tensions of linguistic/cultural maintenance and engaging relevantly with younger people in English. Young people and pastors sometimes find it difficult to negotiate with their churches for some youth programs or worship in English. Moreover, young people learn in Western forms at school, but the churches and leaders do not necessarily know how to run Sunday School or Youth Group in such forms. It will be helpful to develop and model different ways to help Karen and
BUV churches are represented across this range of culturally diverse forms of ministry (Yang 2012). As well as mapping the ways BUV churches gather for worship and express inter-cultural ministry, it would be worthwhile to conduct an audit of cultural diversity in governance and decision-making. It is imperative that the voices and leadership of LOTE church members are welcomed in the broader denomination. It would also be worth investigating the missional goals of various churches. Some focus or limit mission to those who share their culture and language, whereas others recognize a call to broader mission and see language as a challenge to grapple with rather than a boundary to work within.

**Spirit of GenY**

The Spirit of Generation Y Project interviewed 155 young people including nine immigrant and eight second generation immigrants, showing different perspectives to faith. (Hughes 2004a) The young immigrants, from different cultural groups, spoke positively about faith and attending church with their extended families. It is unclear whether they regularly attended church worship, or only for family and community events. Several spoke of God helping them and feeling close to God. They expressed the feeling that they were judged by religion rather than being able to judge or evaluate faith, and, in contrast to most Anglo-Celtic youth, these immigrant young people said they should not question or doubt God (or ministers, teachers or fathers).

Second generation young people still felt strong connections with their parents' cultural background as well as their adopted country, and most were still involved with their church and faith. However, there was a little more ambivalence about questioning faith:

In many cultures across the world, the sense of authority is important and faith is an aspect of life that is transmitted in an authoritative way and is not to be questioned. Faith is something that belongs to the whole community, and worship is an important part of the life of many ethnic communities.

As ethnic links begin to weaken a little among second generation immigrants, it would seem that young people feel a little freer to question aspects of faith. Yet, there remains hesitation, even a sense of guilt sometimes, in challenging the tenets of faith (Hughes 2004a: 11).

Some had left church and some had changed churches or attended other denominations such as Pentecostal churches. Hughes suggests that attending a church of a different denomination may be an "Australian" option while maintaining the faith traditions of their parents (2004a; also Hughes 2009b: 3-4).

Kim Chan suggests that not questioning or doubting is consistent with traditional Confucian values and helps make young people acceptable to their parents. A crucial question is whether this perspective will keep them in the church, or whether they will find a "first generation" style of faith difficult to maintain. First and second generation youth are often comfortable in a LOTE church enclave as they navigate teenage and early young adult years, when other factors marginalize them from Anglo-Australian society. As they grow beyond 25, they may develop completely different responses and frameworks (Chan and Chan 2015; cf. Chan and Chan 2015). Our conversations with the next generation in LOTE churches needs to include those of differing ages and stages, and prophetic rebels who have left as well as loyal stayers still in the churches.

**National Church Life Survey**

CRA have published findings from the National Church Life Survey (NCLS) which has investigated the cultural background and attitudes of migrants. NCLS 2001 asked about involvement in (so-called) ethnic ministry and relationship with LOTE congregations.
NCLS shows that Baptists are more culturally diverse and more involved in ministry among culturally diverse groups than Uniting and Anglican churches, but less than Catholic and Pentecostal. NCLS is translated into a number of languages but NCLS figures underrepresent migrant attenders because of lower participation of monoethnic churches (Powell 2004; Powell 2009). With another five yearly NCLS coming later in 2016, it will be important for BUV to encourage LOTE churches to participate in NCLS and make financial support available.

Religion and Immigration

Hughes and CRA have been mapping the influence of immigration on religion in Australia through articles analysing census and other data (Hughes 2004; 2009; 2012). Hughes explains that since World War II, Australia’s cultural and religious landscape has transformed from when 80% of the population belonged to one of four Christian denominations (Anglican, Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian) till now when a much smaller proportion of the population identifies with these denominations, and many other groups are growing including diverse denominations such as the fast growing Oriental Orthodox, other world religions such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, and those who register “no religion” (Hughes 2004b: 1-3).

Of people who identified as Christian in the 2011 Census, 22.5% of were born overseas and 19.1% were born in Australia of parents born overseas (second generation Australians). As mentioned above, of those who identified as Baptists in Australia, 29.9% were immigrants and 17.3% were second generation. So almost half of Australians who identified as Baptists were first or second generation immigrants. This partly explains why Baptists owe 98% of their growth of 2001-2011 to immigration growth. Between 2001 and 2011 Baptists grew from 309,205 to 352,497 but this included 42,412 immigrants who identified as Baptist (Hughes 2012b: 1-5). Without these Christian immigrants who identified as Baptists, there would have been the same number of Baptists in 2011 as 2001 and Baptist numbers would not have kept up with population growth (Hughes and Cronshaw 2013).

Moreover, compared to average Australian churchgoers, immigrants are more committed with church participation and tend to be younger. They bring a natural vitality to Baptist or other churches. This may be because they are more religiously committed from their backgrounds. Or they may become more strongly involved as they seek new levels of belonging and support (Hughes 2009b: 2). However, the research shows that as they and their children spend longer in Australia, they become less involved. In the 2009 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, 26% of immigrants reported attending services of religion at least monthly, compared to 14% of Australian-born people. However immigrants’ involvement tends to decline as they and their children live longer in Australia:

- 29% of migrants who have arrived in Australia in the last 20 years attended monthly or more, compared with
- 26% of migrants who lived in Australia 20-30 years;
- 23% of migrants in Australia 30-50 years; and
- 10% of migrants in Australia for more than 50 years.

Hughes commented that religious groups often provide immigrants with a place of community belonging and shared language and values, but that the importance of such a place declines with time. The attendance at a church of second generation immigrants is down to the same as the Australian average of 14% (Hughes 2012b; also Hughes 2015). The church in general is “haemorrhaging” the faith of young people (Cronshaw et al. Forthcoming 2016). We need to pay special attention to the faith and church involvement of immigrant’s children as their declining participation is more dramatic.

Moreover, of church attenders aged under 64 years, 41% are migrants. The future of the church depends to a large extent on welcoming and inviting their contribution. This includes adjusting facilities and language accessibility, but also understanding cross-cultural differences. Rev Dr Si Khia explains that Chin churches, in contrast to Anglos, recognise authority as being predominantly male, that age is important, and that teachers have a hierarchical relationship with students (2016). Hughes comments many immigrants come from cultures which value tradition, respect for authority and elders. This is different than typical Anglo-Australians, and part of why church attracts immigrants while alienating other Australians (Hughes 2012b: 5-6, 8). These are some of the specific values that Chin (and perhaps Karen) Hughes summarised some of these differences in a presentation to Baptist leaders:

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<th>Table: What appeals in faith</th>
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<tr>
<td>To immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious faith confirms sense of order and identity</td>
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<td>Expressed in ritual</td>
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<td>High level of involvement</td>
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<td>Uncritical faith</td>
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<td>Hierarchical authority</td>
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I would like to hear more from Chin and Karen groups on these matters. For example, ‘ritual’ is a negative word for some Baptists. These differences create a tension for migrant second generations. Hughes concluded pointedly in his article on immigration’s impact on religious groups:

The children of migrants often feel strongly the tensions between these two worlds and the two sets of values. They are deeply aware of the respect their parents expect and the respect for tradition and the Church which their parents value. But they are equally aware that being true to their own thinking and being critical, especially of authoritative organisations and structures, is valued widely in the Australian context. Continuing the high level of commitment to faith in the second generation of immigrants is a great challenge for the whole Church as well as for migrant families (Hughes 2012b: 8).

Young people from LOTE churches have a lot to offer their own churches and the broader church and society, especially as multicultural leaders. BUV wants to respond to this challenge and develop ways to welcome and celebrate the contribution of next generation leaders from LOTE churches, with appropriate mentoring and training in cultural intelligence.
Baptists in Australia

Philip Hughes and I investigated the role of Baptist immigrants and their faith in Baptists in Australia (2013), exploring Baptist history and distinctive features and Australian statistics and trends. Given that so many Australian Baptists (almost half) are first or second generation immigrants, we thought it important to identify where these migrant Baptists came from, what languages they spoke and where they settled.

Baptists have welcomed immigrants from many parts of the world, but never more than in the last decade. Overall, 30% of Baptists were born overseas (close to 100,000 people), but 44% of Baptists born overseas have arrived since 2000. The rising figures tell the story:

- 286 Baptist migrants living in Australia arrived before 1940;
- 1,269 arrived between 1941 and 1950;
- 3,960 arrived between 1951 and 1960;
- 7,954 arrived between 1961 and 1970;
- 8,931 arrived between 1971 and 1980;
- 15,220 arrived between 1981 and 1990;
- 16,327 arrived between 1991 and 2000; and

Baptist immigrants have come from many countries around the world. Many Europeans arrived after World War II including Slavic refugees. Spanish-speaking churches started in the late 1960s as migrants came from South and Central America. Since the 1970s Vietnamese congregations grew.

Nevertheless, the largest single groups were mostly from English-speaking countries (immigrants from Europe, Northern America or New Zealand making up 10.1% of the current Australian Baptist community). Yet there are also sizable groups born in the Middle East or Asia (overall now 13% of Baptists, compared to 9% of the Australian population). The largest Asian “sending” countries of Baptists to Australia are:

- 12,410 from China or Hong Kong;
- 5,804 from Myanmar;
- 4,512 from the Philippines;
- 4,122 from Malaysia;
- 2,787 from Vietnam;
- 2,541 from Korea;
- 2,153 from Thailand;
- 1,766 from Indonesia; and
- 1,710 from India.

The 2011 Census showed approximately 80% of Baptists spoke English at home, and the ten other most spoken languages were:

- 12,071 Cantonese;
- 7,804 Mandarin;
- 4,495 Afrikaans;
- 3,977 Karen;
- 3,713 Tagalog or Filipino;
- 3,189 Vietnamese;
- 2,790 Korean;
- 2,618 Arabic;
- 2,324 Spanish; and
- 1,901 Burmese.

Census birthplace statistics reflect the existence of communities of Baptists which arose as a consequence of missionary activity. They also reflect that Baptists in Australia have encouraged the formation of LOTE Baptist communities.

Of the 42,416 Baptist immigrants arriving in Australia 2001-2011, more settled in Victoria than any other state:

- Victoria received 10,669 immigrant Baptists;
- Queensland 9,716;
- New South Wales 9,474;
- Western Australia 8,703;
- South Australia 2,369;
- Northern Territory 517;
- Australian Capital Territory 500;
- Tasmania 467 (Hughes and Cronshaw 2013: 74-77).

Sydney and Melbourne, and capital cities in general, attract a higher proportion of immigrants than other parts of Australia. This places a particular responsibility on Victorian and Melbourne-based Baptists to give priority to welcoming and embracing CALD newcomers.

Migrant families and churches

The most recent CRA research relevant to LOTE Next Generation training explored how churches help or hinder migrant and refugee families as they settle (Hughes 2015b). Immigrants often find a sense of community in a faith community with whom they share language and values. Their children want to find a place in Australian society and necessarily navigate the cultural differences and family expectations. Other research has addressed the “tug-of-war” that second generation immigrants feel between their background culture that sometimes ignores their Western influences or education, and Western society that does not always recognise their cultural uniqueness (e.g., Tiatia 1998). But there has been minimal research on the faith of second generation Australians and how churches help or hinder. CRA interviewed small groups of youth, parents and leaders from a Sudanese and Chinese church about differences in culture and worship patterns.
The Sudanese church, mainly refugees, had struggled with English. They held a strong sense of community and interdependence. They appreciated the church supporting them like a big family, and offering lots of youth activities — sport, music, socials and youth group. The Sudanese expressed a strong sense of faith and gratitude, despite famine and war they had experienced. They said they were not as distracted by material things causing them to forget God like their Australian neighbours. The community was feeling the tension of different forms of discipline for children in Australia, and navigating age and gender-related roles. Sudanese girls felt pressure to look after younger siblings and do more housework, and there was some questioning of their dowry system. A strong respect for older people meant children were expected not to question parents, and younger leaders in church were expected not to publically disagree with elders. The church has leaders with an Anglo background and has morning services in English, which helps the youth negotiate Australian culture. Parents and students said they would especially appreciate help with English language and extra tutorial support for their young people to get to university (Hughes 2015b: 2-6).

The Chinese (Cantonese) Church interviewees also noted a greater respect for older people and parents, and more reserve with feelings and opinions than other Australians. They said that people in China and Australia both tended not to take religious faith very seriously and were more concerned with family life and making money. Most children of the first wave of immigrants worshipped in a neighbouring English church or nowhere. The Chinese church was doing more than the Sudanese church to preserve Chinese language and culture, but this may be isolating for some youth. They felt the tensions of cultural and generational differences (Hughes 2015b: 6-8).

Hughes concluded that most denominations are multicultural and need to understand cultural differences and sensitivities around values and roles. CRA is eager to extend this project among other churches (Hughes 2015b: 6-8). A similar study among BUV Chin and Karen churches could be valuable to help us understand how they are navigating life and faith in Australia, but also investigating how they understand and practise mission. BUV needs to help resource all our churches in helping immigrant families settle in Australia and maintain their faith. Part of the challenge is that young people have arrived from Burma or via refugee camps where they had lots of free time and have missed school years. Rev Kung compassionately explains they can fall into a vicious cycle of purposelessness fuelled by stress, depression, lack of education and English, unemployment, distrust of police, alcohol and drug abuse, shame and isolation, and gambling (2016). Karen and Chin churches support people through all sorts of social care issues and it would be valuable for BUV to explore how best they might help.

Next Generation LOTE Church Leadership Development (BUV research)

CRA offers helpful background research on immigration and religion, but BUV have started some specific research into Burmese churches and leadership development, on which this project on training LOTE church leaders for mission is being built.

Firstly, a group of researchers from the Baptist Union have investigated the life and mission of Karen and Chin Baptist churches in Australia, recognising the significant source of growth and new opportunities and challenges for multicultural ministry that 9,500 Baptists from Burma have brought to Australian Baptists over two decades (Cronshaw et al. 2013). We celebrated their strengths and identified challenges, including English and employment, and specifically for the need for church leadership training and hosting networks. One other big issue was how to help them in mission beyond Chin and Karen. The issue of supporting mission back in Burma, since many do want to settle permanently in Australia. Rev Ronald Suh, pastor of Melbourne Mizo Church, said with a sense of destiny for local mission, “God has called us here for a reason” (Cronshaw et al. 2015: 266).

Another bigger challenge is how to foster ministry for second-generation Karen and Chin young people. Of 5,600 Burma-born people in Victoria in 2011, 31% were aged 0-25 and another 22.7% were 26-34. They are very young churches with a high proportion of teenagers and young adults. Almost two-thirds (63.4%) are in a family consisting of two parents with children (compared to 47.1% in the broader population). Youth and family ministries are critical. Many parents and church elders want to maintain their cultural identity, but do not want to isolate themselves or their children as they learn English and adapt to local careers, gender roles and parenting styles. The young people themselves are usually eager to adapt, and sometimes struggle to decide to what extent they can honour or whether they need to leave their culture behind. Chin and Karen have appreciated lay leadership training and network meetings and multicultural pastors’ retreats hosted by BUV, and Whitley College’s TransFormation program with its monthly Saturday Diploma classes for LOTE students. There is also a need for training in local mission including understanding Australian culture and appropriate evangelism (Cronshaw et al. 2015: 272-273, 277). Chin and Karen people have a strong sense of mission, but it is usually focused on supporting mission back in Myanmar or hosting week long gospel crusades with international guest speakers here in Australia (Kung 2016).

This is part of the basis for the proposed clusters for training Next Generation LOTE church leaders for mission.

Secondly, Stacey Wilson and I examined Generation Y emerging leadership development (Cronshaw and Wilson 2016). We identified that growing Generation Y leaders requires: a culture of mission-focused leadership development; opportunities of apprenticeship of learning by doing; mentorship; empowering and collaborative leadership model; financially sustainable training and ministry; and reframing our definition of leadership. Within this context, it is necessary to take into account gender, age and cultural diversity.

We recommended adopting these frameworks and developing individual coaching and “communities of practice” group coaching for 15-40 year old emerging leaders. BUV is appointing a Next Generation Mentoring Network coordinator and local churches will be invited to nominate prospective mentors and emerging leaders. BUV will pair 25-40 year old emerging leaders with mentors. Younger 15-25 year olds will be invited to participate in group coaching cohorts or “communities of practice” that combine input on mission and leadership with space for action-reflection on faith and ministry experience. These programs will cater for Anglo and other culturally diverse leaders. But from our conversations with LOTE church leaders and to cater especially for CALD emerging leaders, we also recommended hosting regular conference days, retreats or camps for biblically-based leadership development as combined Multicultural Ministry and Next Generation events. More importantly, we need to consider the cultural differences for Gen Y leaders within LOTE churches and what frameworks and methods best help them grow in faith and leadership.

Ongoing conversations with Karen and Chin leaders, including the interviews for this chapter, suggest that mentoring, learning communities and seminars would be valued,
but an important place to start for training next generation leaders is to equip them for children’s and youth ministry. Chin churches can get Chin Sunday School resources from Burma and America, and Karen teachers can translate English or Burmese resources. But pastors say they need improvement in interactive and learner-centred teaching methods and locally contextualised content, and guidelines for Bible teaching, discipline and child psychology (Ha et al. 2016; Ngur 2016; Sikhia 2016). Next generation leaders such as Allbright, Mi Doh and Marry say they need mentors and role models. They want to learn from what is happening successfully in churches of other cultures, and put into practice some of the activity based learning they have experienced with Praxis. They also commented that any training must be built on relationship and trust, so next generation leaders can learn who BUV is (Allbright and Htoo 2016; Ha et al. 2016). A commonly favoured timeslot for this kind of learning community is Saturday mornings, including lunch, so leaders and teachers can eat together. The focus could begin with children’s and youth ministry, but include faith formation in a next generation LOTE context and equipping them for mission in Burmese and Australian cultures.

The need for ongoing conversation and mutual learning is underlined by the complexities of the issues involved. Rowan Lewis, Whitley College’s NEXT coordinator, reported that the principles that guide NEXT faith formation are Western, and that Chin and Karen young adults also need to grow in owning their own faith, but the trajectory and process will likely be different to Anglo Australians (Lewis 2016). Rev Moo Hei, Matt Moran and Marry at Croydon Hills are developing mission trips to liminal places such as Uluru and the Thai-Burma border so that young people of Karen and other cultures can explore their faith and identity in the context of mission and cultural difference (Ha et al. 2016).

Samuel Chan asserts that resources and training programs are a good start, but not enough for really influencing second generation Christians. Influence will come best from entering into the community and not just being another service deliverer that LOTE church parents deliver their children to, alongside music lessons and school. Chan urges entering into the life of second generation culture, really seeking to understand the young people and their experience, and tailoring training and mentoring and providing companionship to suit. It is the task of a good missionary even as we seek to cultivate the heart and skills of missionaries in Karen and Chin young people (Chan and Chan 2016). From another perspective, it calls for high intercultural intelligence in teachers and mentors, an area that many of us may need more training in, even as we seek to cultivate that intelligence in Karen and Chin communities in bridging to Anglo society (Jeffries 2016).

Ultimately, new training programs are not just for the sake of LOTE churches, but for developing the intercultural intelligence of our denominational system. This is a project of “diaspora missiology” which seeks to develop three directions of mission:

- “to” diaspora people who come to us;
- “through” them to reach their own people, whether here or back in their home countries; and
- “by and beyond” them as we encourage them to engage in cross-cultural mission, as “bridge peoples” (Smith 2010).

Diaspora missiology focuses on reaching, but also sending, migrants and refugees with the gospel. It recognises the balance of Christianity is shifting from the West to the Majority World, and that the church in the Western world has a lot to learn from other contexts.
Preface

Purpose

Approaching retirement, it is an opportune time to reflect. My life has centred around identifying how people finding meaning and purpose in life and the role of the Christian faith in that process. At one level, it is a personal story which has its roots in the traditions and practices of my family. It is a story which has its origins in England, which involved an extended time in Thailand, and has largely unfolded in Australia. At another level, it has become the story of the Christian Research Association and the search for the place of faith in a changing Australian context. I will begin with the historical context of the great changes that have shaped both my life and the current Australian context.

The purpose of telling the story is to identify what has been learnt through it about faith in the Australian context. The analysis of the context demonstrates that there are, in fact, a multitude of cultures and sub-cultures in Australia. Faith takes different expressions among people of different generations, among immigrants and people born of Australian-born parents, in rural and in urban contexts. Thus, the process of charting faith in the Australian context is complex and multi-faceted.

In telling the story, it becomes clear that some parts of the Australian cultural landscape have been charted in detail, while other parts remain largely ignored. There is still much work to do to understand the Christian faith in the Australian context, and this book points to some of those opportunities.

Sections of This Book

This book is divided into three parts. Part 1 is my own reflections on ministry and research. It includes a discussion of my primary question of the relationship between faith and culture, an account of how the CRA has addressed that question through its many research projects, and a summary of the conclusions that I have come to through the research.

Parts 2 and 3 are essays from other people who have been part of the story of the Christian Research Association. I invited a number of people who have been colleagues and partners over the years to contribute to the book. My thought was that these contributions would reflect something of the diversity of ways in which the CRA has touched people and churches and other religious group. It would also indicate something of the diversity of challenges for faith in our contemporary world. I invited people to write long or short contributions. Consequently, the materials in both of these sections of the book vary greatly in length and are written from many different points of view. I was not seeking compliments in inviting people to contribute, although I am grateful for their generous words and have not edited them. Rather, my hope was that this book, in reflecting on the past, would point to a future for Christian research.

Part 2 contains comments on the work of the Christian Research Association. Rev Dr Neville Carr, the first chair of the CRA Board, has written briefly of the foundation of the CRA and has commented on the theological foundations of some of the themes in Part 1. Prof Rev’d Gary Bouma, another former chair of the CRA, comments on the original vision of the CRA and the constraints which have shaped the CRA.

Abbreviations

ACU - Australian Catholic University
CALD - culturally and linguistically diverse
CRA - Christian Research Association
ITIM - Interchurch Trade and Industry Mission

LOTE - language other than English
LRIN - Lausanne Researchers International Network
NCLS - National Church Life Survey
UCA - Uniting Church in Australia
UKCH - UK Christian Handbook
The last 50 years have seen more rapid change than at any time in human history. Changes in technology have changed every aspect of life: from contraception to computation, from communication to community formation. These changes have affected the ways in which Australians have sought meaning in their lives, from the fulfilment of duty to the maximisation of subjective wellbeing. They have affected deeply the role that religion has played in life with the focus moving from the preservation of tradition to personal spirituality.

Over the past 30 years, the Christian Research Association has charted these changes. It has done so through the examination of census and survey data and through interviews with thousands of individuals. It has examined these changes in youth culture and rural culture and has explored the impact of migration and the rise of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. It has suggested ways in which churches and schools might respond to these changes.

Part 1 of this book tells the story of these changes and how the Christian Research Association has charted them. Part 2 contains contributions from various researchers discussing how the Christian Research Association has served the churches. Part 3 explores some extensions of and parallels to the work of the Christian Research Association in relation to religious institutions, migration and other research.

The story told in this book is a personal story for Dr Philip Hughes, the senior research officer of the Christian Research Association from 1985 to 2016. But it is also a story of global significance as Christian and other religious institutions grapple with changes to their place in society and their roles in changing perceptions of life.