

## ABC and XYZ:

### Religious, Ethnic and Racial Identities of the New Second Generation Chinese in Christian Churches

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The close relationship between religion and ethnicity has long been recognized by sociologists.<sup>1</sup> Since the 1970s, historians have documented the ways in which transplanted Christian churches served to preserve cultural traditions and ethnic attachments for earlier immigrants from various European countries.<sup>2</sup> Recent studies of some post-1965 Asian and other immigrant groups have confirmed the role of transplanted religious institutions in preserving ethnic culture and identity.<sup>3</sup> Although Christianity was not a traditional religion of Korea, by way of comparison, Korean Christian churches nonetheless serve ethnicity functions both for first generation immigrants and their children.<sup>4</sup> Chinese and Korean immigrants share many social, cultural and religious characteristics: both are from the Far East where Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism are major traditions but Christianity is not<sup>5</sup>; both began immigration to the U.S. in the second half of the nineteenth century; post-1965 immigrants have significantly superseded their respective predecessors in number; and a large proportion of the new immigrants in both communities are well-educated, middle-class families. Although these commonalities may lead one to expect similarities among Chinese Christians and Korean Christians in their ethnic and assimilation experiences, this is not entirely the case.

#### **Distinctions between Korean and Chinese Christians in the United States**

While Koreans and Chinese in the U.S. may be the closest two

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national-origin populations in their overall social and cultural characteristics, Chinese Christians and Korean Christians differ significantly in many ways; the most important of which for my purposes are: 1) whereas more than half of Korean immigrants were Christians before coming to the U.S., only a small minority in the Chinese American population were Christian before immigration and a majority of Chinese Christians in the U.S. have converted as adults from non-Christian backgrounds<sup>6</sup>; 2) whereas the Korean Christian church has been *the* dominant ethnic organization in the Korean American community, the Chinese Christian church is but one among many Chinese ethnic organizations and associations, one that used to be marginalized within the Chinese American community<sup>7</sup>; and 3) whereas many immigrant Korean Christians are entrepreneurs from a homogeneous South Korea, in my studies I have found that the vast majority of immigrant Chinese Christians are middle-class professionals from diverse origins—various provinces of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and many Southeast Asian countries.<sup>8</sup> The implications of these differences are critical for us in understanding the distinctive experiences of Chinese Christian immigrants and their children. First, due to historical and political connections between Christianity and Western imperialism in China, Christianity has been regarded as a “foreign religion” (*yangjiao*) by the Chinese public. In contrast, Christianity won many Korean hearts because of its resistance to Japanese colonialism. A common sarcastic remark to Chinese converts to Christianity was “one more Christian, one less Chinese.” In other words, becoming Christian means one risks losing her/his Chinese identity. Thus, one question is, can the Chinese American church help to preserve Chinese ethnicity? Second, to seek satisfaction of ethnic needs and maintain their ethnic roots, Chinese immigrants and their children have a variety of choices, including many Chinatown organizations of *huiguan* and new kinds of ethnic associations in the suburbs. These old and new Chinese ethnic organizations and associations often manifest more traits of traditional Chinese culture and attachment to China than the church.<sup>9</sup> This means that for Chinese churchgoers, their religious motivations should be as strong as, if not stronger than, their ethnic motivations. Third, because most church members are immigrant professionals from diverse origins, status competition within the Chinese church is not so much between individuals who have experienced downward social mobility, as found with many Korean churches, but more between cultural and sociopolitical sub-

groups.<sup>10</sup> Also, because Chinese professionals of cosmopolitan origins are often fully bilingual, resistance to holding separate English Sunday services may not be as strong as in Korean immigrant churches.<sup>11</sup> Identity construction within Chinese Christian churches is complex, a topic with which I deal elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> In this article I focus primarily on the role of the Chinese church in maintaining ethnicity among the second generation.

### **ABCs in Chinese Protestant Churches and their XYZ Identities**

American-born Chinese, commonly known as ABCs,<sup>13</sup> who grow up in Christian churches actually have not been rare in the century and a half history of the Chinese American community. Although Christianity is not a traditional religion of China, many Christian missions for Chinese immigrants and their children were established between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries by various American denominations.<sup>14</sup> Since World War II, the number of Chinese Protestant churches in the U.S. has rapidly increased from sixty-six in 1952 to over 800 by 1998.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to earlier mission churches for the Chinese, which were supported and staffed primarily by non-Chinese, most new Chinese churches have been established by Chinese immigrants themselves. Today, Protestantism is probably the single most practiced religion among Chinese Americans, even though Christians remain a small minority in mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.<sup>16</sup> A *Los Angeles Times* survey conducted in 1997 reports 26 percent Protestant Christians among adult Chinese residents in Southern California, 6 percent Catholics, and 20 percent Buddhists.<sup>17</sup> In the Greater Washington, D.C. area, there were twenty Chinese Christian churches in 1996, but only three Chinese Buddhist centers. In the Houston area, there are over thirty Chinese Christian churches, but only six Buddhist temples and groups. Therefore, a significant percentage of Chinese immigrants and their American-born children have had experiences in Christian churches. This article limits discussion to the identity construction of ABCs growing up in Chinese Christian churches. Comparisons with other ABCs in Chinese traditional religions and those who have no religious affiliation are important and interesting, but they are beyond the scope of this study, which is based on ethnographic data from Chinese Christian churches.

Since 1993, I have conducted participant observation, interviews and archival studies in Chinese Christian churches in the

metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C., Houston, and Chicago, and I visited Chinese churches in Boston, Miami, New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. In addition, I have been reading more than a dozen Chinese Christian magazines, newsletters, and internet discussion lists, which frequently report issues, events and problems in Chinese churches across the country. Between 1994 and 1996, I conducted extensive participant observation and interviews at the Chinese Christian Church of Greater Washington, D.C. (CCC). Most of the analyses in this article are based on data I collected at this church. The CCC is a typical Chinese church in several ways: evangelical in theology, independent in organization, and mid-sized in membership.<sup>18</sup> It was established in 1958 by more than a dozen Chinese students and immigrants and had an active membership of about 300 (adults and youth) in 1996.

Like their immigrant parents, ABCs who grow up in Chinese Christian churches face the challenge of constructing multiple identities, here referred to as XYZ identities. First of all, they attain and retain a Christian identity (X). Meanwhile, they were born Chinese, or *Zhongguoren* (Z) as commonly referred to by the Chinese themselves. In racially conscious American society, by birth they are also regarded as racially Asian (Y as in the "yellow race"), which becomes relevant especially during and after college.<sup>19</sup> How does the Chinese Christian church contribute to the identity construction of second generation Chinese? What are the common constructions of ethnic, racial, and religious identities among ABCs growing up in Chinese immigrant churches? Briefly speaking, my ethnographic data show that: 1) the Chinese church does help ABCs to maintain a Chinese cultural identity while facilitating their selective assimilation into the larger society; 2) continuous immigration and transnational ties between church members and Chinese societies (Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China) are important factors for the preservation of Chinese cultural traditions; 3) Christian beliefs may cultivate a universal identity beyond boundaries of Chinese and American identities for the youth; but 4) the social reality of ethnic and racial classifications in pluralist American society bounces many grownup ABCs back to either the ethnic Chinese Christian community or to the pan-Asian American Christian church. This article focuses on the second generation ABCs of contemporary communities<sup>1</sup>. However, it is helpful to discuss briefly the differences between old and new ABCs in their distinctive social-historical contexts.

## Differences between Old and New ABCs

There are several important differences between earlier and contemporary Chinese immigrants,<sup>20</sup> consequently between “old” ABCs (children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of earlier immigrants) and “new” ABCs (children of contemporary immigrants). Before World War II, most Chinese immigrants (*laoqiao* or *lo wa kiu*) came from specific rural districts around Guangzhou (Canton) in Southeastern China. In contrast, contemporary Chinese immigrants (*xinqiao* or *sin yi min*) come mostly from urban or urbanizing areas throughout China and elsewhere in Asia. Earlier Chinese immigrants were physical laborers and small business owners (hand-laundry shops, restaurants and gift shops), whereas many new Chinese immigrants are college-educated professionals who work in non-ethnic companies and governmental agencies.<sup>21</sup> Old ABCs commonly grew up in ghetto-like Chinatowns; moving out of Chinatown marked their families’ upward mobility. In comparison, most new ABCs began their American life in ethnically mixed suburbs.<sup>22</sup>

These socioeconomic and residential differences between old and new ABCs have significant impacts on their ethnic identities. Whereas old ABCs had to overcome many obstacles and make tremendous efforts to enter mainstream society, highly-educated contemporary immigrants and their children are generally more integrated into the public spheres of the larger society: From the beginning, new ABCs attend integrated public schools and universities, work among non-Chinese, and live in non-exclusive neighborhoods. Accordingly, for old ABCs, like their counterparts of European origins, the ethnic community in Chinatown was often a place to escape or avoid. For new immigrants and their children, however, ethnic organizations and associations in suburbia are formed to meet ethnic needs in their private lives (after school and work).

Earlier Chinese immigrants and their children suffered anti-Chinese violence and racial discrimination during the Chinese Exclusion period (1882-1943).<sup>23</sup> As a result, until the 1960s, total assimilation, or “the disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values,” was the prescribed ideal for the children and grandchildren of immigrants.<sup>24</sup> Under those circumstances, for ABCs who were striving to enter mainstream America, Chinese inheritance was very much a burden to be cast off. Contrary to their parents’ “sojourner mentality”—returning to China to retire—assimilation was a prevalent

ideal among the first American-born generation.

. . .to gain acceptance into white society, Chinese Americans must erase and uproot all traces of their Chinese cultural heritage and thoroughly conform to the values and behaviors of Euro-Americans. . . [some even] went so far as to anglicize their Chinese family names, suppress their Chinese language ability and accent, dissociate themselves from their relatives and Chinese friends, move out of Chinatowns if possible, and take advantage of modern cosmetology, some by dyeing their hair, others by undergoing plastic surgery to alter their eyelids, nose, and lips.<sup>25</sup>

Civil Rights and ethnic revival movements in the 1960s and 1970s forcefully asserted and affirmed diverse racial and ethnic cultures within the U.S. Since the 1960s, Chinese Americans have become perceived by the American public as a "model minority."<sup>26</sup> Within this atmosphere, Chinese immigrants and their children perceive Chinese cultural traditions more often as assets than liabilities. Therefore, new ABCs show greater appreciation for Chinese culture than did their predecessors. Some third- and fourth-generation ABCs (old ABCs) also began to seek out their cultural roots in China and the United States, although most have lost the Chinese language and most norms and customs.<sup>27</sup> Contemporary Chinese immigrant professionals have more resources than earlier Chinese immigrants to preserve Chinese culture and pass it on to their American-born and American-raised children. For example, since the 1960s, Chinese schools have flourished in the metropolitan areas with sizable Chinese immigrant populations.<sup>28</sup> These Chinese schools are mostly supported by volunteers and commonly assemble on the weekend (Saturday or Sunday) to teach school-age children the Chinese language, traditional values and customs. Many immigrant families can also afford to send their children to China for a summer and other holidays. These youth sometimes join cultural education programs sponsored by the Chinese government and other social organizations.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, new ABCs have more opportunities than old ABCs to be exposed to and appreciate the Chinese language and culture.

Among the new Chinese ethnic organizations in the suburbs, the Chinese Christian church is an especially important mechanism for preserving Chinese culture and affirming Chinese identity. This is because the church provides more regular and frequent meetings than most other ethnic associations, sponsors various cultural programs, proclaims Confucian values that are perceived as compatible with and supported by evangelical Christianity, and

promotes unity among the diverse subgroups that often fragment overseas Chinese communities. Certainly, the preservation of ethnic culture starts in the immigrant family. Parental intentions, efforts, time and material resources are all important factors influencing assimilation and ethnicity of their American-born children. Some immigrants put more emphasis on their children's assimilation into mainstream American society and put little effort into Chinese education, whereas many others insist on speaking Chinese with their children at home and create opportunities for their children to learn the Chinese language and culture. For these immigrant parents, the Chinese church is a welcomed extension of their efforts at home.

### **The Chinese Language**

The Chinese school is a common feature of contemporary Chinese Christian churches in the U.S. In many metropolitan areas, it was often a Chinese Christian church that started the first Chinese school. In the Greater Washington area, the first Chinese school to teach Mandarin was established by the Chinese Christian Church of Greater Washington, D.C. (CCC). In the church's early years, Sunday school was sometimes used to teach children Chinese characters with Christian content. When the church grew and the number of children increased, a Chinese school was formally started in 1971. It held classes on Saturdays or Sunday afternoons for children of all grade-levels between kindergarten and high school. CCC members took pride in opening the first Chinese school in the area, which shows the salience of its members' Chinese identity despite their Christian faith. Although some non-church related Chinese schools were later established and even superseded the church's school in number of students and stringent pedagogy, the CCC's Chinese school nonetheless has continued to help church members to learn the Chinese language and culture.

The Chinese church also creates a generally favorable atmosphere for ABCs to learn the Chinese language. For suburban Chinese residents, no other type of ethnic organization or association provides such regular weekly activities or offers as many opportunities for interaction between ABCs and immigrants as the church does. Besides the Chinese school, children and youth are encouraged to speak Chinese at Sunday worship services, fellowship group meetings, and other church-related gatherings. Because they attend public and ethnically mixed schools, ABCs generally

prefer to communicate in English. For the spiritual benefit of the young people, Chinese immigrant churches, which usually began monolingually in a Chinese dialect (Mandarin, Cantonese, or Taiwanese), now hold bilingual (English and Chinese) or trilingual (English and two Chinese dialects) Sunday services. Many also develop separate monolingual English Sunday services. For example, the CCC started as a Mandarin church in 1958, but soon held English Sunday schools for children and youth. In the early 1970s, English was added to the Sunday worship service in addition to Mandarin and Cantonese. In the trilingual service, the preacher usually speaks Mandarin, which is translated into English, sentence by sentence, by a person standing alongside with the preacher behind the pulpit. Another person, invisible to the congregation, simultaneously translates every sentence into Cantonese, which is transmitted wirelessly to earphones in designated pews. The trilingual service may be a fascinating event to observe, but it is unsatisfactory for many participants, especially young people. At the CCC, and many other Chinese churches as well, when ABCs began requesting a separate English Sunday service, for a long time immigrant parents resisted. Some lay leaders feared that a separate Sunday service might lead to a division or split within this nondenominational church<sup>30</sup>; some parents regarded attending church as a family activity and wanted to sit beside their teenage children in the same service; and some members found the bilingual translation helpful for them to learn another language. Following persistent complaints from the young people, along with an increase in the number of grownup ABCs, the CCC finally started a separate English Sunday service in 1986. Meanwhile, intended to preserve and signify unity within the church, a combined Sunday communion service for all church members is held on the first Sunday of each month. In the combined service, everything is spoken or translated between English and Mandarin Chinese; ABCs are encouraged to participate in singing Chinese hymns and giving testimonies in Chinese.

Classic theories of immigrant assimilation regard losing the original language as inevitable.<sup>31</sup> Many European ethnic groups strived hard to preserve their original language, but most fought a losing battle.<sup>32</sup> The extent to which the Chinese church can succeed in passing on the Chinese language to American-born generations is an open question at this time. Many Chinese immigrants acknowledge that Chinese is not an easy language for American-born children to learn. Some middle and high school students



resist, resent, and even stop learning it when their parents do not insist. Nonetheless, most ABC children at the CCC have at least learned good conversational Chinese. My interviews with immigrant parents and some grownup ABCs show that after entering college and away from their parents, a few ABCs completely abandon the Chinese language and even go so far as disconnecting themselves from any Chinese ethnic groups. However, many other ABCs have taken Chinese language courses for credit and have become fully bilingual. Therefore, the language retention rate seems high among new second generation ABCs growing up in Chinese churches.

At the CCC, the use of English has increased along with the maturation and increase in number of American-born children. However, forty-years after its founding, the Chinese language is still dominant in Sunday services and other church gatherings. Continuous immigration is an important factor. Since the late 1950s, waves of Chinese immigrants have joined the CCC. The founders were students from Taiwan and Hong Kong who, after the Immigration and Nationality Amendment Act of 1965, adjusted to immigrant status upon finding employment. Subsequently, their parents came to visit and live with them. Ethnic Chinese from Vietnam came as refugees in the mid-1970s. Beginning in the 1980s, many Chinese students and immigrants from the People's Republic of China have joined the CCC, while immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other Asian countries also continue to arrive. The presence of recent immigrants makes it necessary for the church to provide Chinese language Sunday services. In the 1950s, the memberships of some Chinese churches founded before World War II were predominantly English-speaking, adult ABCs. However, soon the post-1965 immigrants outnumbered ABCs in these churches. Consequently, the churches increased the use of Cantonese and many also added Mandarin. For example, the first Chinese Presbyterian Church in San Francisco (established in 1853), the First Chinese Baptist Church in San Francisco (established in 1883), the interdenominational Chinese Union Church in Chicago (formed in the 1920s), the interdenominational Chinese Community Church in Washington, D.C. (formed in 1935), and similar churches are all trilingual (Cantonese, Mandarin and English) today.

Another factor that contributes to Chinese language preservation is the multi-layered transnational ties with Greater China (Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China and Singapore). Many new immigrants have family members or close relatives in Chinese

societies, to whom American-born children are sometimes taken for a visit on holidays for the purpose of strengthening familial ties. In addition, Chinese church leaders maintain close relationships with their previous churches in Asia, often exchanging speakers for church revivals, spiritual retreats, and evangelistic meetings. These speakers from Asia help to draw ABCs' attention to and spark their interest in Greater China. More importantly, some parachurch organizations, such as the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, the Campus Crusade for Christ, and some Chinese Christian organizations, mobilize Christian college students to go to China for short-term missions, or mission-motivated programs for teaching English and learning Chinese in China's schools and universities. Many ABC college students have spent a summer or a year in China through these programs. Chinese churches commonly encourage ABC college students to participate in these programs in Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China, and often provide financial support for doing so. After a summer or year in a Chinese society, many young people have improved their Chinese language skills, gained deeper understandings of and greater appreciation for Chinese culture, and contemplated future careers in or related to Greater China. Among such young people was a young man I met while I was visiting a Taiwanese Presbyterian church in the Greater Washington D.C. area in 1994. After interviewing the senior pastor, who strongly supported Taiwan independence from China, I had the chance to converse with his son. During our conversation, this law school student insisted on speaking Mandarin rather than English, and explained to me that he had visited Taiwan several times and recently spent a summer in mainland China. These trips made him think that bilingual lawyers would be in great demand in the rapidly growing markets of Asia. This young man liked to seize opportunities to practice and sharpen his Mandarin. Evidently, one of his incentives for mastering the Chinese language comes from perceived career opportunities, including a missionary career, in the booming Asian economies and modernizing Chinese societies. In this respect, the transnational ties of the Chinese church help ABCs to see opportunities and enable them to achieve first-hand experiences in Chinese societies.

### **Chinese Customs, Norms, and Moral Values**

Chinese immigrant churches commonly celebrate several Chinese traditional festivals, especially the Chinese New Year. At the

CCC, the Chinese New Year is celebrated with various activities, especially a *jiaozi* (boiled dumplings) banquet where people make and eat dumplings together like a big family. This celebration has multiple functions. It is a nostalgic time for the immigrants, an evangelistic time to bring non-Christian Chinese into the church, and a jolly time to introduce Chinese customs to their American-born children. However, due to their evangelical Protestant theology, Chinese Protestant churches are obviously highly selective in passing on Chinese cultural customs. For example, during the Chinese New Year festival, Chinese Protestant churches do not follow many traditional customs, such as offering sacrifices to ancestors, holding dragon and lion dances, and distributing little red packets for good luck. These customs are still very common among non-Protestant Chinese American groups, but are perceived by Chinese Christians as incompatible with Christianity.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to children of earlier immigrants who sought total assimilation, contemporary immigrants and their children in Chinese churches prefer selective assimilation, which simultaneously means selective preservation of Chinese culture. The ethnic church, as part of a private sphere separated from integrated public spheres of school and work place, serves as a social mechanism that immigrants use to fend off unwelcome aspects of American customs and values while selectively preserving Chinese norms and values. At church and fellowship group meetings, a frequent topic is how to better educate children. Chinese parents are in constant fear of their children receiving bad influences in the "free American society." To guard against bad influences, parents try to fill their children's extracurricular schedule by sending them to camp meetings, pressing them to study the Chinese language, and bringing them to private music and sport classes. They also rely on the church for meaningful and attractive youth activities. The most recommended strategy, as I heard many times in various Chinese churches, is "to bring the kids to the Lord." Once the children become true Christians who love God very much, the reasoning goes, parents do not need to worry about them any more. A mother of three teenage boys once told me:

I was worried for my second son. He is a high school student. The teens' fellowship group once was on the edge of becoming a social and dating club. Several parents were worried about this when they sensed the tendencies, but we didn't know what we could do. These are youth at a rebellious age in this free American society. But God is really wonderful. Right then the English

Pastor gave a sermon: "True Love Waits." It was an excellent sermon. My boy understood the preaching very well and liked it very much. The pastor asked these young people to make a commitment to God, write it down and keep it for themselves, that they would wait for the true love. After that the teens fellowship returned to normal.

Conscious of their minority status, Chinese immigrant parents at the church also teach their ABC children to "be proud of yourself" and "dare to be different." American society is at once a society of conformity and contention.<sup>34</sup> Peer pressure for conformity is pervasive in school. At the same time, individuals and groups have to assert their distinctiveness or uniqueness to gain recognition or respect. A popular woman speaker at the CCC spoke about this at a fellowship meeting:

Having American friends is necessary for your kids, but only to a certain degree. There are too many problem teenagers in American society. Some Chinese children become problem teenagers because they are too Americanized. They conform too much to the peer pressure. Don't say we must immerse ourselves into American society. What is American society? Girls who are participating in math contests are seen as nerds by white American students. We need to teach our kids "dare to be different." Teach them to have self-confidence about what they do and be proud of what they are. We must have rules. For example, don't allow your kids to stay overnight with other kids. Peer pressure may be strong on your kids. But after two or three times, others will accept the difference, and even respect your kids, and would let your kids go home before midnight without problems.

She said that white American parents, including those who attend churches, often have low expectations of their children. They ask their children to "do your best," which is often only an excuse for failure. Mixing with such children would bring bad influences on Chinese children. The pastor told a story in a sermon that echoed that of the woman speaker. A Chinese family used to attend an American church. The parents became unhappy about the fact that their daughter received some B grades in school. When they asked about it, the girl replied, "I have done my best." When they asked again, she ruffled, "I am doing better than many of my friends in school and church. They got C's and B's but their parents still love them without a fuss. Why are you so harsh on me?" The daughter felt disappointed to be Chinese, and her parents felt helpless to respond. Later, they found a Chinese church

your father and mother—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3). However, they often claim that *xiaoshun* means to show respect rather than complete obedience to parents, and counterbalance demands on children with scripturally-backed independence for young people: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24), where leaving the parents and being united with his/her spouse are highlighted. Furthermore, these so-called *Chinese* traditional norms and values are hardly unique to the Chinese, or unique to East Asians. As a matter of fact, a conservative Anglo assistant pastor at the CCC, who was responsible for ministering to English-speaking ABCs between 1988 and 1996, frequently proclaimed these moral values and insisted on men’s leadership status in spiritual affairs. Interestingly, this Anglo pastor learned no Chinese language and showed little interest in Chinese culture during his eight years of service in this Chinese church. Chinese immigrant parents and ABC members liked him very much, not because of his cultural stands, but because of his conservative theology and effective ministries to the young people. Simply put, the evangelical Chinese church promotes values that together can be called “this-worldly asceticism” or the “Protestant ethic” in Weberian terms, although they have a Chinese flavor. Based on interviews with second generation Korean Christians, Chong argues that “the more ‘religious’ a member, the more embracing s/he tends to be of the traditional values espoused by the parents.”<sup>36</sup> While my data resonate with this observation, I think it is inappropriate to label these values and norms uniquely Korean or Chinese. Without Christian justification, reinterpretation, and transformation, these values would not have the grounds upon which to be proclaimed in the church. The Chinese particularism has to be accordant to the Christian universalism for these evangelical Christians who take Christian identity seriously.

### **Being Christian in Pluralist America**

Chinese immigrant churches have not only converted many Chinese immigrants, they have also been successful in socializing the children into Christianity. Through Sunday school classes and fellowship activities for children from kindergarten to college, Christianity often “naturally” becomes part of their life. At the CCC, a thirteen-year-old girl’s simple testimonial on her applica-

tion form for baptism is typical:

I have been coming to church and going to Sunday school at this church since I was very little. I am not sure exactly how I became a Christian, probably because I was exposed to so much of the Scripture and teachings at a young age. I accepted Christ as my savior.

For these ABCs, their Christian identity evolves without much struggle, at least until they enter college.

Entering college, away from immediate oversight by their parents, ABCs growing up in Chinese churches take divergent paths. Because of their religious indoctrination, as my interviews with Chinese parents and ABCs at the CCC and other churches reveal, few quit the faith or completely stop attending church.<sup>37</sup> Some remain committed to Chinese Christian groups. Indeed, Chinese Christian fellowships are noticeably active on many university campuses.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, the universalism of Christian identity propels many college student ABCs to explore and experiment with various churches and to seek out non-Chinese Christian groups. Many become active participants in the Campus Crusade for Christ, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, the Navigators, or independently organized Bible study groups and prayer meetings.

However, these Christian-universalist ABCs often find themselves rejected by the larger society. Before high school, the youth may not seriously think about racial and ethnic matters. When they do, some desire to get out of ethnic church which they regard as stifling. Karen, a Chinese girl growing up in a Chinese church in Maryland, refused to accept a college scholarship designated for minority students. As a matter of fact, she was offended by the fact that she was offered such a scholarship without her applying for it. Karen wanted to compete with other Americans on an equal basis without considering her skin color or ethnic background. In college, however, these young people begin to face the realities of race and ethnicity. In contemporary pluralist America, racial and ethnic classification is a routine item on various school-related forms that constantly remind students of their racial and ethnic identity. The reality is that American institutions often enforce racial and ethnic groupings, even among religious groups that proclaim universalism. Harry, a young man who grew up in the CCC, wanted to mix with people of other races in college. Attending a state university in the Greater Washington, D.C. area,

Harry became a regular participant in activities organized by the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). However, the IVCF organized regular Bible study and prayer groups separately for whites, blacks, Chinese, and Koreans on this large campus. When he tried to break these group boundaries by attending non-Chinese and non-Asian groups, he often felt a lack of welcome. After two or three years of trying, he came to realize that the racial and ethnic grouping was a hard reality that he had to face. As an American-born Chinese, he could not simply become an "American," that is, a person who has no ethnic or racial label in this racially and ethnically conscious society. Later, in his junior year, this engineering student began to seriously read about the history of Chinese Americans. He subsequently attended a large University of California campus for graduate school, where students of Chinese and Asian origins have been more numerous. Harry's experience of being "bounced back" is not exceptional. Some young people may not seek to transcend ethnic identity as consciously as did Harry, but subtle boundaries work unconsciously. Pat, a young woman in the CCC who graduated from a state university in Maryland two or three years ago, told me in an interview:

Most of my close friends in high school and college are Asian, well, actually, Chinese. I don't know why. I didn't intend it that way. I had some [white] American friends. But those friendships didn't last long. I don't know why. Really. But I find many ABCs are like me.

As their ethnic-consciousness is awakened or sharpened in college or the work place, some ABCs find that the ethnic church provides a sense of social belonging, psychological comfort, and religious meaning. In other words, social integration into the public spheres of work and school provokes a desire to congregate with fellow Chinese on the weekend. This is true even for some who did not grow up in the Chinese church. David was born in a Christian family in Hong Kong and immigrated to the U.S. as a small child. His family attended non-Chinese churches in several places in the U.S. After college, David found his first job in the Washington, D.C. area and joined a Baptist church in his neighborhood. At this church, whose members were almost all white, David enjoyed the preaching very much. He even rededicated himself following an altar call. When he wanted to become more active in the church, such as organizing some group activities, however, he found that opportunities were few for him. Strongly de-

siring to serve the Lord, he sought and found the Chinese Christian Church of the Greater Washington, D.C. Since joining this Chinese church, David not only has had plenty of service and leadership opportunities, including teaching English Sunday school and serving as a deacon on the Official Board, he has also learned to speak Mandarin. Interestingly, during my interview with him, several times he referred to the Anglo assistant pastor at the CCC as the "foreign pastor" (*weiguoren mushi*). Similarly, Pat, the young woman I mentioned above, referred to the Anglo assistant pastor as the "American pastor." These incidents indicate ABCs' distinction, consciously or unconsciously, between "we Chinese" (*zhongguoren*) and "they foreigners" (*waiguoren*), just as Jews distinguish themselves from "gentiles."

Once back in the Chinese church, however, some of the "bounced back" ABCs become frustrated with the more traditional immigrants and the stifling ethnic church. Some of these more Americanized ABCs try to change the Chinese church from within, pushing for a transition from an immigrant to an ethnic church. However, as mentioned above, due to continuous Chinese immigration and increasing transnational ties with Chinese societies, for most Chinese Christian churches in the U.S., further acculturation or greater Americanization is hard to achieve at this time, and is unlikely in the near future. Failing to change the whole church, some grownup ABCs fight for the autonomy of the English congregation within the Chinese church. With the support of some open-minded pastors and immigrant lay leaders, the English service at the CCC, as in many other Chinese churches, gained the freedom to form its own leadership team and design its own format and style for the English Sunday service.<sup>39</sup> However, some ABCs who could not bear the frustrations left CCC.

An alternative for the ABCs who are first bounced back to the Chinese church by the pluralist American society and then again bounced out of the Chinese church is joining a pan-Asian American church. In the last decade or so, some "Asian American churches" have emerged in metropolitan areas, especially on the West coast. Leaders of these churches claim that they are *true* Asian American churches because the church membership is often a mixture of American-born Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, and Southeast Asians. These churches are monolingual in English, and consciously target descendants of various Asian immigrants, especially East Asians. The reasons given for establishing such churches, as revealed in their discussions on internet forums, in-



clude the facts that: 1) these church members grew up in an ethnic (e.g., Chinese or Korean) church but want to speak only English in a less ethnically focused environment; 2) as Asians, they all look similar with yellow skin and black hair; 3) they share some residual Confucian or Asian values; 4) they have had similar experiences of being subtly or blatantly discriminated against by others in the larger society; and 5) some are children of inter-Asian marriages who find it difficult to remain in a church comprised of one particular ethnic group. The number of such churches is small, probably between one and two dozen at this time. These pan-Asian churches appear to constitute racial formation in process. How identities are formed and evolve in these churches remains to be observed, but this alternative identity construction is theoretically and practically important.

### **Conclusion**

In the long history of Chinese immigration to the United States, a significant proportion of American-born Chinese have grown up in Christian churches. These ABCs face the challenge of constructing multiple Christian (X), racial Asian (Y), and ethnic Chinese (Z) identities in pluralist American society. Whereas old ABCs experienced strong anti-Chinese discrimination and sought total assimilation in American society, new ABCs live in a social context more favorable to their ethnic culture. New Chinese immigrants and their American-born children in the Chinese Protestant church commonly seek and experience selective assimilation and selective preservation of ethnicity. Chinese immigrants selectively preserve Chinese cultural traditions based on their Christian beliefs, reinterpret Confucian values and norms according to Christian principles, and pass the Chinese language and transformed culture to the American-born generations. Continuous immigration and transnational ties between church members and Greater China are important factors for the preservation of Chinese language and cultural traditions. Therefore, many churched ABCs appear to retain their Chinese ethnicity. Some ABCs in college are propelled by the universal Christian faith to try to transcend ethnic, racial, and other secular identities. However, most are bounced back by the social reality of pluralist America either to the Chinese or a pan-Asian American church.

The analyses in this study also demonstrate distinctive experiences of Chinese Christians. In the United States, Chinese Christians are a minority within minority, most immigrant Chinese are

adult converts from non-Christian backgrounds, and they come from diverse societies. Within this convert group, Christian identity takes priority over ethnic Chinese identity or Chinese identities rooted in the diverse subcultures within the Chinese Christian community. Traditional Chinese values and norms are sifted through their newly achieved evangelical Christian beliefs. While immigrant Chinese Christians consciously seek to preserve and pass on the Chinese language and culture to their American-born and American-raised children, their preservation is selective and transformative, and they appear to be quite open toward changes and innovations, such as holding separate English Sunday services for ABCs. Therefore, while some ABCs who grew up in the Chinese church may explore alternatives in non-Chinese churches, dropouts who completely stop attending any church seem few. Further research is necessary to achieve a clearer picture about the retention and drop-out rates among ABCs growing up in ethnic Chinese churches.

The analysis in this article is based on ethnographic data from Chinese Protestant churches. It shows that the ethnic church has made significant contributions to the ethnicity of the second generation, even though Christianity is not a traditional religion of the Chinese and the church does not hold a central place in the Chinese American community. Further studies are needed to examine the identity construction processes of ABCs growing up in Chinese Buddhist temples, other religious groups, and non-religious communities. Studies of pan-Asian American religious communities, as well as comparisons across ethnic groups, will also shed light on the complexity of race, ethnicity, and religious identities among Chinese and Asian Americans in contemporary, pluralist American society.

## Notes

I am grateful to Pyong Gap Min for his encouragement and constructive comments. I would also like to thank Helen Rose Ebaugh, Janet S. Chafetz for their reading of earlier drafts.

1. See Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1947); Max Weber, "Ethnic Groups," in Talcott Parsons et al., eds., *Theories of Society, I* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961); Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, second ed. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960); Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1964).

2. See Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Prelates and Peasants: Italian Immigrants and the Catholic Church," *Journal of Social History* 2:3 (Spring 1969), 217-268, which is also in George E. Pozzetta, ed., *American Immigration and Ethnicity: A 20-Volume Series of Distinguished Essays: Volume 19: The Immigrant Religious Experience* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), "Ethnicity: A Neglected Dimension of American History" in Herbert J. Bass, *The State of American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1970); Martin E. Marty, "Ethnicity: The Skeleton of Religion in America," *Church History* 41:1 (March 1972), 5-21, which is also in George E. Pozzetta, ed., *American Immigration and Ethnicity: Volume 19: The Immigrant Religious Experience* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991); Jay P. Dolan, "Immigrants in the City: New York's Irish and German Catholics," *Church History* 41:3 (September 1972), 354-368, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); Timothy L. Smith, "Religion and Ethnicity in America," *American Historical Review* 83 (December 1978), 1155-1185, which is also in Pozzetta, ed., Volume 19 of *American Immigration & Ethnicity*; Harold J. Abramson, *Ethnic Diversity in a Catholic America* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973).
3. See Y. Y. Haddad and A. T. Lummis, *Islamic Values in the United States: A Comparative Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Raymond Brady Williams, *Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan: New Threads in the American Tapestry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); John Y. Fenton, *Transplanting Religious Traditions: Asian Indians in America* (New York: Praeger, 1988); articles in an special issue of *Amerasia Journal* on "Racial Spirits: Religion and Race in Asian American Communities," 22:1 (Spring 1996); and various chapters on diverse new immigrant religious communities in the *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and New Immigration*, edited by R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).
4. Won M. Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, "Religious Participation of Korean Immigrants in the United States," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29:1 (1990), 19-34; Pyong Gap Min, "Cultural and Economic Boundaries of Korean Ethnicity: A Comparative Analysis," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14:2 (April 1991), 225-241; "The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States," *International Migration Review* 26 (Winter 1992), 370-394; Kelly H. Chong, "What it Means to be Christian: The Role of Religion in the Construction of Ethnic Identity and Boundary Among Second-Generation Korean Americans," *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 59:3 (Fall 1998), 259-286.
5. In China, Catholic Jesuits first conducted successful missions in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but clashes with Chinese culture and the Dynastic government halted the development of Christianity in China. The first Protestant missionary to China, Robert Morrison from England, arrived in China in 1807. However, only after the Opium War (1840), when British gunboats

- knocked down the closed door of China under the Qing Dynasty, did Christian missions begin to penetrate Chinese society. See Julia Ching, *Chinese Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993).
6. About Korean Christian immigrants and the centrality of the church in the Korean American community, see Hurh and Kim; Min. In contrast, too few Chinese immigrants had been Christians before coming to the U.S. Since the beginning, Christian churches were established in the U.S. in order to convert non-Christian Chinese immigrants rather than to serve Chinese immigrants who had been Christians. For contemporary Chinese immigrant Christians, a majority are adult converts and many of them became Christian in the United States. See Fenggang Yang, "Chinese Conversion to Evangelical Christianity: The Importance of Social and Cultural Contexts," *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* 59:3 (1998), 237-257.
  7. Among many historical and sociological studies of Chinese American communities, few discuss Chinese Christian churches: see, for example, Victor G. Nee and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ: A documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); Jack Chen, *The Chinese of America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); Bernard P. Wong, *Chinatown: Economic Adaptation and Ethnic Identity of the Chinese* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982); Peter Kwong, *The New Chinatown* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987); Chalsa M. Loo, *Chinatown: Most Time, Hard Time* (New York: Praeger, 1991); Timothy P. Fong, *The First Suburban Chinatown: The Remaking of Monterey Park, California* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994). Some mention the church in passing: see, for example, Charles Caldwell Dobie, *San Francisco Chinatown* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1936); Francis L. K. Hsu, *The Challenge of the American Dream: The Chinese in the United States* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1971); Stanford M. Lyman, *Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 1974). These scholars' biases against Christian churches could be a reason, but the lack of social influences of Chinese churches upon the ethnic community is probably also an important factor. Betty Lee Sung's *Mountain of Gold: The Story of the Chinese in America* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1967) is exceptional in devoting a whole chapter to praise positive contributions of Christian missions and pastors in their community services. When the church is discussed, it is commonly seen as an assimilation agency on the margin of the Chinese community: see Melford S. Weiss, *Valley City: a Chinese Community in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenman Publishing Company, 1974); Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: A History of the Chinese Diaspora* (New York: Kodansha International, 1994).
  8. See Fenggang Yang, "Tenacious Unity in a Contentious Community: Cultural and Religious Dynamics in a Chinese Christian Church," in *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, edited by R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 333-361; *Chinese Christians in*

*America: Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, forthcoming in 1999); and "The Chinese Gospel Church: Sinicized of Christianity," in *The Religious Mosaic: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*, edited by Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet S. Chafetz (AltaMira Press, forthcoming in 2000)!

9. For a description of traditional Chinatown organizations, see Lyman. New forms of ethnic Chinese associations include same-province associations, alumni association of Chinese universities, civic associations, and cultural clubs. See Yang, *Chinese Christians in America*, chapter three; Hsiang-Shui Chen, *Chinatown No More: Taiwan Immigrants in Contemporary New York* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992).
10. See Yang, "Tenacious Unity in a Contentious Community."
11. Helen Lee in "Silent Exodus: Can the East Asian Church in America Reverse the Flight of its Next Generation," *Christianity Today*, August 12, 1996, 50-53. She states that the resistance of immigrants to adopting English is a major reason for the "silent exodus" of second generation people from immigrant Chinese, Korean, and Japanese churches. However, she may have over-generalized experiences of Korean churches onto that of Chinese churches and Japanese churches. Many Chinese immigrants come from English-speaking societies, such as Hong Kong and Singapore, and are bilingual or multi-lingual. In many Chinese churches, English was adopted in Sunday services long time ago.
12. Yang, *Chinese Christians in America*.
13. Those who immigrated to the U.S. as children with their parents are often referred to as American-raised Chinese (ARC). Because of their similarities with ABCs in their identity construction, in this article I use American-born Chinese or ABCs to mean the overall second generation of Chinese immigrants.
14. The first Chinese mission church was established in 1853 in San Francisco with the support of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. Then Baptists, Congregationalists, and Methodists started their own missions to the Chinese. By 1890, there were seven Chinese mission churches and many Chinese Sunday school classes within American churches. In the early decades of the twentieth century, some denominations cooperated to form interdenominational mission churches, such as the Chinese Union Church in Chicago and the Chinese Community Church in Washington, D.C. Most of the mission churches gained financial and administrative independence in the 1960s and 1970s. See Horace R. Cayton and Anne O. Lively, *The Chinese in the United States and the Chinese Christian Church* (New York: Bureau of Research and Survey, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States, 1955), Wesley Woo, "Protestant Work Among the Chinese in San Francisco Area, 1850-1920", Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, 1983; Timothy Tseng, "Ministry at Arms' Length: Asian Americans in the Racial

- Ideology of American Mainline Protestants, 1882-1952," Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1994. About the impacts of these Christian churches on Chinese immigrants and their children, also see Judy Yung, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995); Timothy Tseng, "Chinese Protestant Nationalism in the United States, 1880-1927," *Amerasia Journal* 22:1 (Spring 1996), 31-56.
15. See Cayton and Lively, and Wing Ning Pang, "The Chinese American Ministry" in *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches, 1995*, edited by Kenneth B. Bedell (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1995). The latest *Directory of Chinese Christian Churches, Fellowship Groups, and Organizations*, compiled in 1998 by the Ambassadors for Christ, Inc. (AFC) in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, lists over 800 Chinese churches in the United States. In comparison, there are only about 150 Chinese Buddhist temples and associations in the U.S.: see Yu Lingbo, *Mei jia huaren shehui fojiao fazhan shi* (A History of Chinese Buddhism in the United States and Canada) (Taipei: Xin Wen Feng Publishing Co., 1996).
  16. Despite intense missionary work for more than one hundred years since the mid-nineteenth century, Christians remained a tiny minority in China, less than 1 percent by 1949 when the Communists took power. See Jonathan Chao, "Cong Huaren Jiaohui Fazhan Shi Kan Jiaohui Zengzhang (From the Development History of Chinese Churches to See Church Growth)," in *Jindai Zhongguo Yu Jidujiao Lunwenji* (Essays on Modern China and Christianity), edited by Lin Zhiping (Taipei: Yuzhouguang Press, 1981), 345-362; G. Thompson Brown, *Christianity in the People's Republic of China*, revised edition (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1986), 78. In Hong Kong and Taiwan, Christians were about 5 percent of the population in the 1980s. See Gail Law, ed., *Chinese Churches Handbook* (Hong Kong: Chinese Coordination Center of World Evangelism, 1981); Allen J. Swanson, *Taiwan Jiaohui Mianmian Guan* (Aspects of Churches in Taiwan: Retrospective and Prospective in 1980) (Taipei: Taiwan Jiaohui Zengzhang Cujin Hui, 1981).
  17. John Dart, "Poll Studies Chinese Americans, Religion," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1997, B5. A survey cited by Won M. Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim ("Religious Participation of Korean Immigrants in the United States," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29:1 (1990), 19-34. It indicates a similar proportion of Christians among the Chinese. Meanwhile, some surveys find a lower proportion of Christians than Buddhists among the Chinese. See Pyong Gap Min and Lucy Chen, "A Comparison of Korean, Chinese and Indian Immigrants in Ethnic Attachment," paper presented at the 1997 Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association.
  18. Among today's about 1,000 Chinese Protestant churches in the U.S., a great majority are conservative in theology and about half are non-denominational independent churches. See Wing Ning Pang; Fenggang Yang, "Chinese Protestant Churches in the United States: Expla-

- nations for Their Growth, and Their Conservative and Independent Tendencies," paper presented at the 1995 Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, St. Louis, Missouri. Over 90 percent of these churches were established by Chinese new immigrants since the 1950s; pre-World War II churches have received many new immigrants; and some third- or fourth-generation Chinese can be found in the well-established new immigrant churches.
19. The word "Chinese" in Chinese (Mandarin) is *zhongguoren* and the latter is what the Chinese call themselves. Therefore, it is appropriate to use "Z" to represent Chinese identity. I pick up "Y" for the racial identity because Chinese immigrants and their children, when distinguishing themselves from people of other racial groups, often refer to themselves as of the "yellow race" or having "yellow faces." "X" is commonly used to represent "Christian."
  20. New immigration from China began earlier than many other Asian national groups. When the Chinese exclusion acts were repealed in 1943, an annual quota of 105 immigrants from China was granted. Following World War II, several war-related acts allowed tens of thousands of Chinese women and men to come. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China by the Chinese communists in 1949, several thousand stranded Chinese students, scholars, and government officials were granted permanent residence. See Thomas W. Chinn, ed., *A History of the Chinese in California: A Syllabus* (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1969), 28-29; S. W. Kung, *Chinese in American Life: Some Aspects of Their History, Status, Problems, and Contributions* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), chapter 5.
  21. Of course, there are also many contemporary Chinese immigrants who have little education and live in poverty. See Morrison G. Wong, "Chinese Americans," 58-94 in *Asian Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues*, edited by Pyong Gap Min (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 1995).
  22. About Chinatown Chinese, see Lyman; Nee and Nee; Wong; Kwong. About new Chinese immigrant communities, see Chen; Fong.
  23. See Sucheng Chan, ed., *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Kevin Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, eds., *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).
  24. Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 81. Also see Rose Hum Lee, *The Chinese in the United States of America* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1960); Robert E. Park and Ernest Burges, *Introduction to the Science of Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921); and William Carlson Smith, *Americans in the Making: The Natural History of the Assimilation of Immigrants* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1939).

25. L. Ling-chi Wang, "Roots and the Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," in *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*, edited by Tu Wei-ming (Stanford University Press, 1994), 185-212.
26. See "Success Story of One Minority in the United States," *U.S. News and World Report*, December 26, 1966, 73-78; "Asian American: A 'Model Minority,'" *Newsweek*, December 6, 1978, 39-41; Keith Osajima, "Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960s and 1980s," in Gary Y. Okihiro et al., eds., *Reflections on Shattered Windows* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1988), 165-74.
27. See Wang, especially 206-208.
28. In the Greater Washington area, there were more than thirty Chinese schools in 1996. In the Houston area, there are over forty Chinese schools in 1998. According to a *Los Angeles Times* report, about 85,000 to 90,000 students nationwide attend Chinese language schools on Saturdays or Sundays, and there are 140 Chinese schools in Southern California from the San Gabriel Valley to San Diego. There are also many Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese schools. These schools usually operate from rented public schools, or are affiliated with churches, Buddhist temples, and Chinese community centers. They commonly offer instructions in reading, speaking and writing, and some cultural activities as well, which range from martial arts to brush painting to music lessons. See Tini Tran, "Asian Language Schools Foster Skills, Traditions," *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 1998.
29. See, for example, Vanessa Hua, "A Cultural Awakening: Trip Helps Young Chinese Americans Shape Their Identity," *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 1998. Hua reports that about 1,000 young Americans of Chinese descent (ages between eighteen and twenty-three) would go to Taiwan for a six-week cultural and language program instituted and subsidized by the government of the Republic of China in Taiwan. There are similar programs in Hong Kong and mainland China.
30. Within the heterogeneous Chinese Christian church in the U.S., unity in diversity is delicate and carefully protected. For a detailed discussion, see Yang, "Tenacious Unity in a Contentious Community."
31. Will Herberg says, "sooner or later the immigrant will give up virtually everything he had brought with him from the 'old country'—his language, his nationality, his manner of life—and will adopt the ways of his new home." See *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, second edition (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1960), 27-28. See also Mark Mullins, "The Life-Cycle of Ethnic Churches in Sociological Perspective," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14:4 (1987), 321-334.
32. See, for example, Daniel S. Buczek, "Polish-Americans and the Roman Catholic Church," originally published in *Polish Review* 12:3 (1976), 39-61. Also in *Immigrant Religious Experience*, George E. Pozzeta, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991).



33. These traditional activities are commonly seen during the New Year's celebration in the Chinatown, in Chinese Buddhist temples in the U.S., and even Chinese Catholic churches.
34. See Robert Bellah et al, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Some scholars even suggest that people gain a sense of being American "by turning aspects of a carefully nurtured sense of separate identity against a vaguely defined concept of mainstream or dominant culture." In R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 19.
35. Chong.
36. *Ibid.*, 269.
37. My interviews were conducted within mid-sized and large Chinese churches that were established by new Chinese immigrants and have had good English ministries. Therefore, my findings may not apply to those ABCs who grew up in churches established before World War II or those smaller churches. Nonetheless, I think that Helen Lee's assertion of "silent exodus" may be exaggerated by alarming ministers who fear to lose any adherent. Some Korean American scholars, according to Karen Chai, observe that "most 'grown-up' second-generation Korean Americans do not attend their parents' church" (see Karen Chai, "Competing for the Second Generation: English-Language Ministry at a Korean Protestant Church," 295-332 in *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, edited by R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 300. But this does not mean they do not attend *any* church. Moreover, Lee may over-generalize second-generation Korean Christian experiences onto East Asian Christian experiences. There are some estimates about the high dropout rates of Korean young people from immigrant churches (see Chai, 300), but, as far as I know, no informed estimates available about the dropout rates of ABCs from Chinese churches.
38. A quick internet search of student organizations at various universities would find many active Chinese Christian groups. Rudy V. Busto, "The Gospel According to the Model Minority?: Hazarding an Interpretation of Asian American Evangelical College Students," *Amerasia Journal* 22:1 (1996), 133-147.
39. See Fenggang Yang, *Chinese Christians in America*. For a comparison of similar dynamics in a second generation Korean congregation, see Karen Chai.