Christian Churches Have Positive Influences on Chinese Students

Dan Qiao

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Instructor Kyongson Park

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Abstract

Many Chinese students are not familiar with Christianity. As a Chinese student interested in Christianity, I had the experience of going to the Greater Lafayette Chinese Alliance church during my first semester at Purdue University. In order to discuss the topic whether Chinese students benefit from Christian churches or not I combined my formal proposal, interview report and my synthesis paper. With the supporting ideas of my interviewee and several scholars, my argument is that since more and more Chinese students choose Christian churches as they study in the U.S.; Christian churches give those non-religious Chinese students positive influences.

*Keywords:* Christian churches, benefits, Chinese students, positive.

Christian Churches Have Positive Influences on Chinese Students

**Introduction**

Being taught materialism in politics classes, many Chinese students have limited knowledge about Christianity. As a freshman of Purdue University, I spent a large amount of time experiencing the bible study and Sunday worship of Greater Lafayette Chinese Alliance church in my first semester. After witnessing the rapid population increase of this Christian community and the significant similarities shared by the members of this Chinese church, I decided to study why Chinese students choose Christian churches when they study in the U.S. and whether churches have positive influences on Chinese students’ life. I researched on the significance of high convert rates in Chinese Christian churches and proved that Christian churches benefit Chinese students.

**Methods**

In order to do my research, I visited the Greater Lafayette Chinese Alliance Church weekly, attending two main activities offered by the student fellowship: bible study and Sunday workshop. There I became acquainted with Ms. Chen, a second year PhD at Purdue University also a group leader of the Purdue Chinese Christian fellowship. I conducted an interview with Ms. Chen about her personal experience of getting familiar with Christianity and her point of view of being a Chinese Christian. Also, I searched for articles from scholars and researchers on line to support my argument.

**Positive influences of Christian churches**

The fact of history has proved that Christianity has a positive influence on society so that Christians are able to be contributive in various fields. DeMar (2009) supports this idea in his work by giving several examples of great Christians who did outstanding contributions to the world. My interviewee Ms. Chen also admitted that her characters were changed after believing in God: “I felt the deep love from him (the God) so I think I need to share this deep love to others. So I start to feel that I need to help other not because I want something back from them but because the Christ loves me.”

Since it is clear that Christianity has the power to influence people, it also has a close relationship with international students studying in the U.S. Christian churches are conclusive communities that welcome both domestic and international students. Due to this characteristic, it is common to see international students who are considered as the minorities of the campus grow interest in Christianity and Christian churches. Lacina (2002) states that some students experience loneliness; others may have problems due to their unfamiliarity with U.S. customs and values (p.21). Although schools need to take the role of solving problems for international students, she illustrates that “There appears to be no greater influence on cultural customs and practices than religion” (p.23). Christian churches offer a solution to International students facing social problems. Hence, there are specific reasons for Chinese people to choose church communities.

The article of Yang (1998a) introduces a common characteristic in many Chinese-American churches, that is, a high convert rate among adults. “Most of them converted to evangelical Protestantism after coming to the United States” (p.240). The article gives a conclusion that social and cultural changes in China, institutional factors and the universal challenge of modernity have impacted Chinese to become Christian (p. 254). Yang (1998b) in another article, conversion and identity construction: the role of the Chinese Christian church in the USA, also talks about the role of a Chinese church. It is a converting agency: the construction and re-affirming of a meaning system based on Christian faith is most important for the church and the participants. It is an assimilation agency: it is a home for the “selective assimilation,” holding traditional moral values but based them on the newly accepted Christian ground. It is also an ethnic center: it not only maintains Chinese identity by network construction, but also transforms the Chinese pride to a Chinese mission which stimulates Chinese Christians to evangelize to other peoples (p.?).

Answering why Christianity have the attraction to Chinese people, Kuo (2014) indicates that “Christianity with a Chinese character” has been created because of the historical transformation of Chinatown and the practical help that the churches have rendered their parishioners in meeting their social and psychological needs. Similarly Wang (2004) presents her idea in her article that social-cultural changes in China prepare PRC students for accepting a religious belief, while the institutional context in the U.S. eventually lead them to becoming evangelical Christians. Chinese evangelical organizations have played a very important role in recruiting Chinese converts. The institutional contexts in the United States make it possible for them to claim a religious belief. The evangelical missionaries provide them a religion that is more acceptable to them (conclusion and implication).

**Conclusion**

Based on my research, Christian churches have the capacity to influence Chinese students. Churches are conclusive communities that offer chances for students to learn about Bible and Christianity. Students can also meet new friends from vast fields and seek for mental supports from seniors and priests in Christian churches. These advantages are attractive to international students, especially Chinese students. As Yang (1998a) points out, the historical and psychological factors both explained Chinese students’ conversion to Christianity. For Chinese students, conversion doesn't necessarily mean switching from one religion to another. Students who were non-religious also convert to Christians because of the positive influences of Christian churches. As a result, the population of Chinese Christian churches has increased rapidly for the recent years, which makes the influence more powerful and widespread. Just as Ms. Chen said that God helped her to overcome her heavy burdens and to feel relieved and refreshed in social and academic life, I believe that Chinese students benefit from Christian churches after joining the church community.

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