CHINESE STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS IN THE U.S. BECOMING CHRISTIANS: 
A PROCESS OF ASSIMILATION AND IDENTIFICATION 
(AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF A CHINESE CHURCH 
AND CHINESE STUDENTS/SCHOLARS IN THE DC AREA)

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By

Zhijuan Fu, B.A.

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Zhijuan Fu, B.A.

Thesis Advisor: Diana Owen, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the cultural and social implications of Chinese students and scholars converting to Christianity as they adapt to U.S. society, and the ethical issues of self-identification. The main question addressed is: Why and how do Christian groups work to convert Chinese students and scholars as a unique social group? This research examines the proselytizing behavior from psychological and sociological perspectives.

The process of Chinese students and scholars becoming Christians is a process of assimilation and identification. It’s been found that Chinese Christian groups can better share the students and scholars’ religious habits but also give their members more devout religious experiences. Christian groups not only fit the Chinese students and scholars’ cultural and social necessities, but also provide them with an easy way to solve difficulties, assimilate into the U.S. environment, and attain ethnical identifications. The behaviors of the Christian group members greatly accelerate the conversion process. I built a model for process of proselytization.
Statistical analysis further supported these theories. Chinese students and scholars are eager to assimilate into American life; they also want to gain a sense of belonging through racial identification. The converters’ assistance motivates students and scholars to attend their religious activities; Christianity and the Christian group increase people’s life satisfaction levels. Though mostly atheists, Chinese students and scholars show positive attitudes toward Christian proselytism.
I want to start the thesis with my own experience of interacting with the studied Chinese Christian group.

Four semesters ago, I came to this country anxious to pursue a higher education degree and with extreme interest in the U.S cultural environment. However, I did not have any relatives or friends in the U.S. before I came here. Since I received the admission notice from Georgetown University, I was worried about my first days’ difficulties: Is there anyone who can pick me up at the airport? How can I find a place to live? Is my English good enough? How can I make friends?...... I believe these worries happen to most Chinese students and scholars in the U.S for the first time.

However, just several days before my arrival, I received an email from the Chinese Student Association asking me whether I wanted to arrange an airport pick up. I agreed and soon I received an email from a person who called himself Uncle John, and who represents a Chinese Christian group. He double checked with me about my arrival time and gave me advice on packing. Once I arrived, I was picked up on time, and I was assigned a room to live temporarily with two other girls. They cooked me Chinese food, and they helped me find an apartment and

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1 All the names appeared in this these are pseudonym name for privacy reasons.

2 The name of the group will be kept confidentially for privacy concerns. “The group” “the studied group” and “this group” in later text all refer to the same group under study.
roommates. I was so moved by their selfless behaviors. To show my gratitude, I went to their church a lot and started making friends there.

I soon realized this group continues to help a large number of new Chinese students and scholars every semester. There are usually almost one hundred people on their airport pickup schedule list. Their big houses are full of new students. By providing services to recently arrived Chinese students and scholars, they successfully receive the attentions of the newcomers to proselytizing activities. Many students and scholars attend church and some of them convert to Christianity soon. Because I became fascinated by this phenomena, I started this research.
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Writing a thesis in second language is a challenging but exciting experience for me. Here, I want to express my gratitude to everyone who helped me through this process.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.1 Introduction:

This research studies a Chinese Christian group and Chinese immigrated students who have contacted this group. The studied group focuses mainly on Chinese students and scholars. This group tries its best to build rapport with Chinese students and scholars to start the process of conversions. The students and scholars are mostly atheists or Communists who come to the U.S. to pursue educational or professional development. Through observation, I found that though most new students and scholars never had contact with Christianity before in China, and were not acquainted with the group members, some of them have been converted to Christians. (However, the exact number of converts was never disclosed by the group. But based on my current observation, there were more than ten people converted since the fall semester in 2011.) This condition sparked my interest in further studying the relationships among ethnicity, religion and sense of belonging for Chinese students and scholars.

I think this topic is really worth studying. When I was first abroad in the U.S., frustration, stress and loneliness pushed to find a group within which I could find some relief. A welcoming Chinese Christian group provides a solution. Based on this experience, I realized the importance of studying immigrated Chinese students’ and scholars’ mental status. While adapting to the new environment with culture shock, the newly-immigrated students and scholars, as a special minority group, also try to establish an identity to mitigate the contradictions and conflicts. Without a lot of options, religion becomes one of the most effective ways. It is definitely true that there is a lack of caring from the society concerning the mental status of Chinese students.
and scholars. I hope my thesis can draw the attention to a broader audience to investigate and care about the condition of Chinese students (or scholars).

This thesis is composed of three main parts. The first part serves as the research base, in which I will analyze a secondary database, “Panel Study - American Religion and Ethnicity” from the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA), to discuss the relationships among ethnicity, religion, sense of belonging and religious groups. The second part will discuss why students and scholars need Christianity and what the converters do from psychological and sociological perspectives. A model of the conversion process of proselytizing behaviors will be presented based on qualitative studies. The special methods the Christian group uses to help the execution of the process will also be presented. In the third part, an original survey of 198 Chinese student or scholar respondents in the DC area will be analyzed. With this quantitative study, I will discuss the new Chinese students’ and scholars’ life conditions regarding social relationships, economic conditions, life satisfactions, accommodation conditions and spiritual beliefs. I will also present their receptions of Christianity and converters. By combining the results from three studies, I will gain a better understanding of Chinese students’ and scholars’ mental status and how Christian proselytizing works.

1.2 Research Questions:
What is the relationship between ethnicity and religion? How do religious groups influence people? What are the cultural and social implications of new Chinese students and scholars becoming Christians as they adapt to U.S. society? What are the ethical issues surrounding self-
identification? What methods does the studied Christian group take to convert Chinese students as a unique social group? What do people think about Christian proselytism? This research examines the proselytizing process from psychological and sociological perspectives.

1.3 Hypotheses for secondary database analysis:

In the first part of the thesis, the following hypotheses will be tested through analyzing a secondary database:

H1a: People of different races participate in worship services at their congregations with varying frequency.

H1b: People of different education levels participate in religious education or religious training classes or groups with varying frequency.

H2a: Devout believers are more likely to be U.S. citizens than non-devout believers and nonbelievers.

H2b: Devout believers are more likely to be in happy relationships with their spouses than non-devout believers and nonbelievers.

H2c: Devout believers are more likely to be official members of their religious congregations than non-devout believers or nonbelievers.
1.4 Research Questions for Qualitative Studies:

Why are new Chinese students and scholars becoming Christians as they adapt to U.S. society?
What methods does the studied Christian group use to convert Chinese students and scholars?
What is the proselytizing process?

1.5 Hypotheses for original survey analysis:

The third part will test the following hypotheses through analyzing an original database:

H3: Students and scholars who are more likely to be involved with Christian groups (more likely to receive help from the Christian groups and attend the groups’ activities) are more likely to be satisfied with their current lives in the U.S.

H4: Students and scholars who reject the Christian groups’ proselytizing behaviors and who think the proselytizing behaviors less effective are atheists.

H5: Students and scholars who think it is easy to adapt to society, receive more help from Christian groups, and attend Christian activities are more likely to think the religious group successful.

1.6 Research Domain:

This study is not only a religious study, but also a cultural and sociological study that focusing on a special marginal group: the new immigrated Chinese students and scholars. There are not a lot of extant academic studies focusing on the religious life of immigration groups, and even fewer
of them focus on Chinese groups. I can find very little research related to the religious situation of newly-immigrated Chinese, not to mention the researches focusing on Chinese students and scholars. I want to fill this blank in the current literature and call for more social attention to marginalized groups like the Chinese student and scholar group. This study also will reference the fields of Chinese culture, social behavior, culture shock, Chinese history and ethnicity.

1.7 Outlines:

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will introduce the study by discussing subjects, research questions, methodologies, and motivations. In the second chapter, history and a literature review will be presented as a foundation for further studies. Chapter 3 serves as background research for further studies: the relationships within race, religion and religious group will be presented through a statistical analysis of a secondary database. Chapter 4 constitutes the qualitative study: I will describe my qualitative methodology, and analyze the collected data with textual analysis and grounded theory analysis. The fifth chapter contains another quantitative analysis of my original survey as a reflection on earlier discussions. The mental status of Chinese students and scholars will be analyzed. Chapter 6 will be a conclusion for the whole study where the main findings will be readdressed. Finally, in the last chapter, I will discuss findings, remaining questions, hesitations and expectations.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS

2.1 Literature Review:

“Religion has been regarded as a crucial institutional space both by assimilationists and cultural pluralists” (Kwai Hang Ng, 2002:195). Cultural assimilation means “the adoption by minorities of the larger group's cultural mores.” (Marks,1987: 1315) Immigrated students’ and scholars’ cultural assimilation is the process and endeavors of an immigrated student or scholar to get involved in the majority American life and being culturally accepted. Also, cultural pluralism, which also means “cultural identification”, is “a personality trait, is a persistent, long-term underlying characteristic that organizes cognitions emotions, and behaviors (E.R. Oetting, 1991: 33)”. Cultural pluralists aim at identifying themselves in the crowd. It is also true for Chinese students and scholars who want to get involved in the new environment in the U.S. and express their uniqueness of being Chinese at the same time. Since religion is regarded as a “crucial institutional space,” it is natural that “assimilation” and “identification” are the most obvious aims of the Chinese students and schoolrs in the process of conversion. In this thesis, “conversion” refers to the state that one adopted Christian faith; “converter” refers to a person who works to change others’ spiritual beliefs into Christianity.

In this chapter, I will analyze current literature mainly from these two perspectives: Immigrants’ wishes to identify their race in multicultural and multi-faith character of America; the Asians desires and difficulties in getting assimilated; religious literatures’ effects in proselytizing facilitation and cultural identification; how organizations work to fit these two needs; historical backgrounds and study blanks.
2.1.1 The multicultural and multi-faith character of North American society.

The United States is an immigrant, multi-ethnic, multi-religion country. According to Ng, Kwai Hang, in face of the multicultural, multi-faith condition of North American society, “core American values are funneled through the socialization of religion.” (Ng, Kwai Hang, 2002: 195) The first immigrants in North America were Puritans who also built the country of the United States. “23% of the American population is an immigrant or the child of an immigrant.” (Cadge, Echlund, 2007: 360) According to the results from the Gallup Research Center and a number of authoritative studies, in the United States “78% of American adults identify with some form of Christianity. Less than 2% are Jewish, less than 1% are Muslim, and 15% do not have a religious identity. This means that 95% of all Americans who have a religious identity are Christians. (Frank Newport, Dec 23, 2011: 1) In the U.S., Christianity is not only a spiritual rely for Americans, but also an important part of daily life for its believers. So it is natural that religion can help immigrants continue to adapt to the U.S. context (Fenton 1988; Haddad and Lummis 1987; Kashima 1977; Smith 1978; Warner 1994; Yang and Ebaugh 2001).

2.1.2 Assimilation and permanent aliens

“Evangelicals dominate the landscape of Chinese Christianity in North America today.” (Timothy Tseng, 2002: 251) Evangelicalism, which “emphasizes salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the authority if Scripture, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual”\(^3\), is a very important branch of Christianity

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\(^3\) [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evangelical](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evangelical)
movement. The rapid development of Evangelicals parallels the influx of Chinese immigrants from Asia over the past three decades. The reason for this can be explained by the strong desire of immigrants (including students and scholars) to get involved in America since it has been demonstrated that “religion influences immigrants’ adaptation in the United States” (Cadge, Echlund, 2007: 359) in different ways. In fact, not only Evangelicals, the process of being proselytized into Christianity is an American reidentification process for immigrants.

First, Chinese students and scholars want to be Christians to deal with discrimination caused by being minorities. This condition happens prevalently to Chinese immigrants. Not only first generation, even the second generation Chinese have a subtle sense of Orientalism as a subordinate race. The feeling of being subordinate stimulate the newly-immigrated Chinese students’ and scholars’ wishes to get assimilated. As I said before, since Evangelicals are dominant in American, it is highly possible that Chinese students and scholars want to “engage the public arena and join the Protestant efforts to overcome racial discrimination.” (Timothy Tseng, 2002: 255). This might be the reason why Chinese students and scholars are becoming members of evangelical Christian sects.

Second, since “an immigrant’s adaptation is likely to be facilitated” by “the presence of support from people of the same culture or origin,” (Ying, 1996: 3) the feeling of being assimilated by Christian groups can help the new immigrated students and scholars to adapt to the new culture environment so that they don’t stand out from their peers. “Theories that explain religious conversion in terms of material advantages or social needs…are not entirely convincing in the
case of Chinese immigrants.” (Ng, Kwai Hang, 2002: 200-201) Materially, the immigrants can get free resources or even financial aid from the local churches. More important, spiritually, they think God can “help them to overcome the obstacles and misfortunes they perceived themselves too powerless to overcome.” (Ng, Kwai Hang, 2002: 205) Chinese students and scholars in the U.S. may seek Christianity more eagerly since it’s obvious that these people have more difficulties in life, including culture shock, than natives. Also, being a member gives them the sense of communal care and love, loyalty and responsibility. The church provides for Chinese students and scholars a free social and mental space for learning the American way.

Third, Christianity is always adapting itself to some degree to accommodate Chinese culture since westernized Christianity challenges traditional Chinese culture in moral values and world view in several aspects. For an instance, the Protestant doctrine stressed that believers cannot worship other idols other than God, which has a big conflict with a very important Chinese tradition “ancestor and Confucius worship”. This conflict deterred the development and spread of Christianity for a long while. Not until two European preachers, Vincent Lebbe and Celso Costantini, explained that Chinese worship ancestors and Confucius to show their respect to ancestors and traditional culture and these activities should not be regarded as religious behavior, Pope Pius XII removed the ban on worshiping ancestors in China and solved the problem. Endeavors to adjust religious beliefs with Chinese culture like this happened to a lot of Christian religions in history. Until now, in order to get accommodation between American culture and Chinese culture, proselytizing religious groups use several techniques to minimize the cultural differences. In religious life, “the congregants create meanings with reference to their own
cultural constructs: they amplify aspects of meaning that seem to relate to their own culture and mute aspects that appear irrelevant.” (Ng, Kwai Hang, 2002: 205)

However, under most conditions, these efforts at assimilation do not work well. While “second-to fifth-generation Chinese Americans are becoming acculturated into white American cultural norms, they still cannot escape the taint of foreignness.” (Timothy Tseng, 2002: 263) During history, Asian Americans are always been characterized as foreigners by “externally-imposed labels and racial identities, such as Oriental, Coolie, Deviant, Model Minority and Gook.” (Paul M. Ong, 2002: Part1) This radicalization is mostly based on color, “the designation of yellow as the color of the oriental illustrates the social construction of a racial identity.” (Paul M. Ong, 2002: Part1) In U.S. society, “yellow” is used as an adjective meaning cowardly. In history, Asians occupied unwanted cheap labor positions, regarded as unassimilable heathens, and been called “Yellow Peril” for centuries. Though Asian Americans are recently labeled “Model Minority”, it doesn’t change the fact that Asia groups are still “permanent aliens”. (Timothy Tseng, 2002: 263) However, “an immigrant church or temple often provided ethnic communities with refuge from the hostility and discrimination from the broader society as well as opportunities for economic mobility and social recognition.” (Hirschman, 2004: 1206) Religious organizations can be used to mitigate the feeling of being aliens.

2.1.3. Identification and religion

Religion is an important identity marker for new immigrants which can help them to “preserve their ethnic customs, language, and group solidarity.” (Cadge, Ecklund, 2007: 362) Religion and
ethnicity grouping is determined by immigrants’ identification with a particular religious tradition. “Influences of both social and cultural changes in Chinese society and the identity reconstruction of immigrant Chinese in America's pluralistic social context on Chinese conversion” are decisive. (Xuefeng Zhang, 2006: 157) The process of proselytizing is a process of reidentification of one’s original culture. Religions “provide the necessary cultural space for immigrants to foster their own identity” (Ng, Kwai Hang, 2002: 195). For instance, for Chinese immigrants, going to Chinese churches may mean more than religious worship. Churches serves as platforms for people to communicate with compatriots, share Chinese customs and preserve Chinese culture. For these new Chinese students and scholars, Christianity is the majority religion in America; but the absorption of American culture may not lead to the eclipse of their original ethnic culture.

Religious groups emphasizing the Chineseness of the Chinese churches in order to draw fellow Chinese have many ways of reinvigorating Chinese ethnic culture. Together with increased racial identity, the need for religious identity increases. “Some scholars have suggested that religious identities become more salient for immigrants in the United States than in their nations of origin because of the role religions have in preserving ethnic identities.” (Cadge, Ecklund, 2007: 363) They celebrate Chinese festivities for the congregants to refresh their “traditional cultural symbols and practices.” Always providing Chinese food is also very helpful for culture recognition. Being a bilingual church helps the immigrants to a chance to come in contact with different aspects of American mainstream culture. (Ng, Kwai Hang, 2002: 208)
However, since “minority cultural sources and values are by definition less valued than the
dominant culture's,” minority culture resources are “not easily available”. (Wenh-in Ng, 2004: 126) For Chinese students and scholars from areas where Chinese are not much populated (like D.C. area), it may be extremely difficult for them to find sufficient cultural resources for racial identifications. This condition furthers the necessities of immigrants for a place full of cultural identifiable resources (like churches).

2.1.4. Texts: The Bible and other literature

As Samuel Ling said, “Christian leaders and missionaries have long recognized the strategic importance of literature as a tool for evangelism and discipleship.” (Xuefeng Zhang, 2006: 157) Lots of literature has been used to facilitate proselytizing. There are four main categories of literature in doing this job: “literature for leaders”; “apologetic literature for seekers including books, booklets, and magazines”; “training literature for new believers, including books and magazines”; and “scholarly books, such as a Christianity and Chinese culture series.” (Xuefeng Zhang, 2006, 157)

The Bible has a great cultural impact on the formation of immigrants’ Christian faith. Chinese Americans are willing to interpret their experiences and read the Bible from their own ethnic perspectives. By studying immigrant children’s behaviors in using bible, Tseng found “evangelical biblical interpretation has been bound by two perspectives: (1) the European immigrant experience as the model for their identity discourse; and (2) a white American evangelical universalism that subordinates racial identities. Consequently, there is a subtle
Orientalism implicit in second-generation Chinese evangelical discourse that needs to be critically engaged and eventually excised” (Timothy Tseng, 2002: 255). Since Christianity is always regarded as a "western religion", immigrants need a sense of rootedness in an identifiable culture. The Bible tells them who they are and how they are related to the world and God so that immigrants’ religious self-consciousness sense can be “nourished and deepened.” (Jones, Arrandale, 2007: 315)

Some Christian literature focuses on mitigating the contractions between Christianity and Chinese culture. For example, many Christian minisionaries came to China during the wars, especially during the Opium War. Christianity was regarded as invasion tool which aims to corrode Chinese spirits. (This history will be further discussed in later part.) Although most of the Christian publications introduce the basics of Christianity, such as what is Christianity, who is God......; there are also some books focus on “introducing the positive contributions that missionaries made to the anti-opium war” in response to the idea that “most Chinese have been taught that missionaries were the tool of western imperialists.” (Xuefeng Zhang, 2006: 158) These literature can further promote the proselytizing of immigrated Chinese students and scholars who used to have misunderstanding of Christianity.

So, it is clear that Bible and other forms of literature are helping the Chinese students and scholars to get involved in Christianity and being assimilated. Literature plays a key role in proselytizing and overcoming alienation.
There are also culture specific myths and stories to help Chinese students and scholars to identify their ethnicities. Since “for non-western children, the ethnocultural dimension of their identity stands out as a distinct aspect of their being, but something which the dominant society does not guarantee to nurture since it is not seen as a ‘norm’, creation and other myths foundational are necessary for their identification.” (Wenh-In Ng, 2004: 126)

2.1.5. Organizational endeavors

“Members of a racial or ethinic minority group share an ethnic social and cultural heritage, such as language, family structure religion, ethnic signs, symbols and artifacts, value orientations and gender roles.” (Kwan, Sodowsky, 1997: 51) The similarities within groups make it much easier for group members to assimilate each other religiously. Religious proselytizing requires organizational attempts. “Adopting a congregational form in organizational structure and ritual is one of the central processes that contribute to the transformation of immigrant religion in the contemporary United States.” (Cadge, Ecklund, 2007: 362) “Fellowship groups, cell groups, and district family meetings have played an important role” in proselytizing processes. (Zhang, 2006: 151) For the studied Christian group, making social connections with Chinese students and scholars is their most important way to start conversion.

The current situation in most churches in the U.S is that people focus on proselytizing to their intimates. New convert members are “primarily family members, friends, and people from other churches.” (Bibby, 1974: 189) Though it is hard to recruit new members, it is one of the important tasks for religious organizations.
There is a considerable amount of research on how proselytizing works to recruit religious members. “In general, the evangelistic endeavor consists of three interrelated parts: pre-evangelism, evangelism, and post-evangelism.” (Zhang, 2006: 152) “The pre-evangelism mainly focuses on befriending non-believers.” (Zhang, 2006: 152). In order to build a rapport, a lot of endeavors need to be undertaken. Several studies suggest that religious groups “foster networks that often lead to mortgages, housing, jobs, and business opportunities that facilitate social and economic adaptation.” (Cadge, Eckund, 2007: 363) As a very important agent of the churches, student fellowships work mainly for students’ and scholars’ conversions. “Many studies illustrate the range of formal and informal social services immigrant have access to through local religious organizations upon arriving in the United States.” (Cadge, Ecklund, 2007: 363) The religious fellowships that work to convert students and scholars follow a process of proselytizing similar to that of other religious organizations.

2.1.6. Filling the gap

There is a gap in the research on religious proselytizing and conversion. “Existing sociological theories of conversion are mostly based on studies of individuals who convert into cults.” (Yang, 1998: 237) Though there is a considerable amount of researches study on the reasons, factors and mechanisms that how proselytizing works to recruit new members, very few of these studies focused specifically on new Chinese immigration groups. There is even less researches studied the Christian proselytizing toward Chinese students and scholars in the U.S.
Religious proselytizing requires organizational attempts, but the situation in most churches is that they fail apparently in proselytizing to outsiders. According to a five-year study of 20 proselyte-minded north America churches, such mechanisms did not work effectively on recruiting outsiders. Disappointingly, most new convert members are “primarily family members, friends, and people from other churches.” (Bibby, 1974: 189) However, the studied Chinese religious groups in the DC area, different from other Christian groups, are more effectively in recruiting outsiders, even strangers.

Though there is a considerable amount of researches study on the reasons, factors and mechanisms that how proselytizing works to recruit new members, few of these studies focused on specific new Chinese immigrated groups.

This paper tries to fill the gap by presenting the special case of Chinese students’ and scholars’ mental status and proselytism process. It explains the success of the religious group in this study in recruiting outsider students and scholars into their religious group.

2.2 Historical Background:
How Christianity developed in China is crucial for understanding the initial attitudes of local Chinese toward this religion. Christianity has a more than a 1000 years of history, which is longer than both Buddhism and Marxism.
However, when Christianity was introduced into China, it did not spread widely because it did not conform with traditional Chinese culture. For instance, when first introduced to China during the Tang Dynasty, the distribution of Christianity was forbidden because of the prosperity of Taoism. Also, Christianity was prohibited by Feudal rulers who think the one god doctrine of Christianity may impact the supremacy of their governing. Starting from the 19th century, when missionaries from the UK (and other western countries) came to China during the Opium War, “Christianity was regarded as part and parcel of Western imperialism, the spiritual opium for conquering the Chinese nation.” (Yang, 2001: 373) Chinese took some actions to resist the proselytizing of Christianity. For instance, the famous Boxer Movement was mainly aiming at dispelling Christianity from China: many missionaries and Christians were killed. For this historical reason, many Chinese regarded proselytizers as cultural invaders. Becoming a Christian was difficult during that time because “strong anti-Christian sentiments” in China defines becoming a Christian as losing Chinese identity (Yang, 2001: 373).

However, the contributions of the missionary people can not be denied for the Feudal Chinese society. They built modern hospitals, schools, orphanages and spread modern industrial technologies in China. Even though the influences of these contributions were very limited to small areas, Christianity survived in China during that hard time relying a lot on these facts.

The situation has changed since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. When Chinese Christianity declared its independence from foreign countries’ religious institutions, especially, since the Reform and Open Policy in 1978, Chinese Christianity started to lose of its
"foreign religion" stereotype. Since 1978, the number of believers in China soared. However, according to the law, religious activities must be held in religious places rather than private houses. So, family churches, which are actually the most prevalent churches in China, are not legally allowed by the government.

The current number of Christians in China is very hard to estimate. First, since family churches which have most believers are illegal by current policy, the estimations of the amount Christian members in these family church vary greatly. Second, since Chinese are educated atheism, many people refuse to disclose their true beliefs. Some studies claim there are 100 million Christians, which accounts for almost 1/10 of the total population; however, some studies think there are about 20 million Christian believers.

Also, 80% of the believers are in rural areas, with low social status and low incomes. They mainly consist of housewives, senior citizens and civilian workers. Though Christianity has a large number of believers, it is still not fully accepted by the upper class and urban people. (ccctspm.org, 2010).

The atheism education situation in China makes people less likely to be religious. (Most Chinese are agnostics rather than atheists according to the complexity of Chinese spiritual culture. This point will be further discussed in Chapter 4.) Also the historical background of Christianity in China makes it hard for a Chinese person who grows up in a traditional Chinese cultural environment to accept Christianity over other religions and beliefs. Third, the low social statuses
of current believers make it harder for this religion to be accepted by the highly educated students and scholars under study here. So, we can assume that the studied Chinese Christian group’s efforts to convert Chinese students and scholars in the U.S. cannot be easily accomplished.
CHAPTER 3: AMERICAN RELIGION AND ETHNICITY

Why do people build religious groups? What can they get from their groups? Why do people attend their racial religious groups? In light of these questions, I think it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the relationships within religion, ethnicity and religious groups in the U.S. before I start studying Chinese students’ and scholars’ proselytism conditions. In the following part, a secondary analysis of survey data will be performed to research race’s influence to people’s religious life and the connections between religious beliefs and religious group participation will be discussed.

3.1 Data Resource:

From the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) online, I decided to use the data from a study named “Panel Study – American Religion and Ethnicity.” It is an “unprecedented, multi-level panel study focused on religion in the United States, with a particular focus on capturing ethnic and racial diversity.” (thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/PSARE.asp) This database has 2,610 cases and 666 variables. It provides me with a big enough sample and multiple perspectives for quantitative study. Also, the random and independent sample employed can be trusted, thus the survey result should be more convincing.

3.2 Hypotheses for this part:

H1a: People of different races participate in worship services at their congregations with varying frequency.
3.3 Brief description of the project:

I use multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test H1a and H1b. Dependent Variables are ordinal level data, include question art_3: “How often do you attend worship services at your congregation?” and question art_7: “In the past twelve months, how often have you attended religious education or religious training classes or groups?” The factors are “Education level” and “Race”.

For the second hypothesis, I used OLS regression. I will use factor analysis to find the similar questions from a series of questions to define a new variable “devout believers” as my dependent variable. My independent variables are: Qdm_1e “Are you a United States citizen”; Qca_7 “Are
you an official member of this religious congregation”; and Qarq_2 “How satisfied are you with the love and affection you receive from your spouse/partner.”

3.4 Conceptual and Operational Definitions:

H1a & H1b:

By definition, “Race” means “a group, especially of people, with particular similar physical characteristics, who are considered as belonging to the same type, or the fact of belonging to such a group.” Qrace_all will be analyzed: “Respondent's race.” (1=Caucasian, 2=African-American, 3=Hispanic, 4=Asian) (“Native American” category is deleted for the extremely small number of respondents.)

“Education level” means “the process of teaching or learning in a school or college, or the knowledge that you get from this.” Educational level refers to the stage of learning achievement. To study the respondents’ educational levels, Qdm_2 will be used “What is the highest level of schooling you have completed, or what is the highest degree that you have earned?” (1=No high school diploma, 2=GED, 3=High school, 4=Vocational/technical diploma, 5=Associate's degree, 6=Two-year religious degree, 7=Bachelor's degree, 8=Master's but not religious degree, 9=Master of Divinity or other religious post-college degree, 10= Doctorate degree, 11=Professional degree beyond B.A./B.S.) For convenience, I recoded and renamed “Education

\(^4\) http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/race_2

\(^5\) http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/education?q=education
level” for future analysis: 1,2,3=1"lowleveldegree"; 4,5,6=2"careeredcation";
7,8,9=3"highleveleducation"; 10,11=4"professionaleducation".

“Worship” means “to have or show a strong feeling of respect and admiration for God or a god.” In Christianity, worship services are meetings that get believers together to worship God.6”

“Congregation” means “a group of people who have come together in a religious building for worship and prayer.” Qart_3 will be used as the variable to understand the respondents’ worship services attendance condition in their congregations: “How often do you attend worship services at your congregation?” Variables ask respondents’ frequencies of attending worship services. 1=Never, 2= Once or twice a month, 3= Several times, but less than once a month, 4= Once a month, 5= 2-3 times a month, 6=Once a week, 7= Twice a week, 8= Three times a week or more. For better analysis, I recoded and renamed this variable as: 1=1 "Never" 2,3,4=2 "sometimes", 5,6,7=3 "frequently" 8=4 "very frequently”.

“Religious education” means the teaching of a particular religion’s beliefs, doctrines, rules, etc. Question art_7 will be used to analyze the frequency of respondents in attending religious education: “In the past twelve months, how often have you attended religious education or religious training classes or groups?” Variables ask respondents’ frequencies in attending religious education classes. 1=Never, 2= Once or twice a month, 3= Several times, but less than once a month 4= Once a month, 5= 2-3 times a month, 6=Once a week, 7= Twice a week, 8= __________

6 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/worship_1?q=worship
7 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/congregation?q=Congregation
Three times a week or more. For better analysis, I recoded and renamed this variable as: 1=1 "Never" 2,3,4=2 "sometimes" 5,6,7=3 "frequently" 8=4 "very frequently”.

H2a, H2b & H2c:

“Religious belief” refers to “a mental state in which faith is placed in a creed related to the supernatural, sacred, or divine.” (Mourad, 2009: 6) “Devout” means “believing strongly in a religion and obeying all its rules or principles.” “Devout believer” refers to a person who strongly believe in his religions.

The following questions might be used for factor analysis in deterring whether a person is a devout believer:

ama_3, Sexual intercourse before marriage is wrong.

ara_2, I have a personally meaningful relationship with God.

ara_4, I believe that God loves me and cares about me.

ara_1c, God created the world in six, twenty-four-hour days.

ara_1d, I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs.

For all the variables that are analyzed by factor analysis, respondents are asked to choose how strongly they agree with the statements. 1=strongly disagree, 2=Somewhat disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Strongly agree.

8 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/devout
“Citizenship” is “the state of being a member of a particular country and having rights because of it.” "U.S. citizen" refers to a person whose nationality is U.S. Qdm_1e will be used to test whether a respondent is a U.S. citizen: “Are you a United States citizen” Respondents are asked to choose within the following two variables: 1= Yes, 2= No.

“Relationship” means “the way in which two or more people feel and behave towards each other.” Respondents’ relationships with spouses will be studied through Qarq_2: “How satisfied are you with the love and affection you receive from your spouse /partner?” Respondents are asked to choose within: 1=Completely dissatisfied, 2=Somewhat dissatisfied, 3=Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4=Somewhat satisfied, 5=Completely satisfied.

“Official member” means the person “baptized or enrolled in a church” and officially accepted by other group members. Whether a person is an official member of his group can be told from the following question: Qca_7 “Are you an official member of this religious congregation?” 1=Yes, 2=No.

3.5 Analysis

For H1a, “People of different races participate in worship services at their congregations and in religious education or religious training classes or groups with varying frequency.” Then for H1b,

---

9 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/citizenship?q=citizenship
10 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/relationship_2
11 http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/member

25
“People of different education levels participate in worship services at their congregations and in religious education or religious training classes or groups with varying frequency.” The overall model is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the model for these two hypotheses is not supported. I cannot reject the null hypothesis.

In an attempt to get a significant result for this overall model, I tried different factors including health condition, gender, income, age, marriage situation, region and citizenship, but none of the models are statistically significant. I considered that perhaps this model will work for specific groups; so I selected individuals who are either Christian, male, female, religiously devout, and official members of a religious group. None of these model worked.

But when I ran ANOVA for the “race” factor only, it was statistically significant. According to the results of ANOVA tests, the differences between “Asian” and two other main racial groups: “Caucasian” and “African American” in attending worship services are big and significant; however, Asian people have similar behaviors in attending worship services to the other minor race group: “Hispanic”. In total, Asian group is the group attends worship services least frequently (as shown in Table 3_1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple Comparisons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent Variable: [ASK ART_3 IF ART_2=2. ELSE SKIP TO ART_5.] How often do you attend worship services at your congregation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3_1 Racial groups' differences in worship services attending

As shown in Table 3_2, the differences between Asian group and other groups in religious education attendance frequencies are almost all significant. Asian people are less likely to have religious educations compared to people of other races. (Caucasian group and Hispanic group have similar frequencies in attending religious education.)
The uniqueness of Asian groups in religious behaviors including attendance at worship services and religious education make this group different in the U.S. religious culture.

H1a, which uses “race” as the factor variable is statistically supported; however, H1b, which uses “educational level” is not statistically supported. According to all the tests, “race” seems to be the only factor that is significant in differentiating people’s religious behaviors including the frequencies of attending worship services and religious educations. Also, as a minor race group, Asians have unique religious behaviors in attending worship services and religious education: Asian people are least likely to have frequent religious activities.

### Table 3.2 Racial groups’ differences in religious education attending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>-0.113</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.113</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>-0.381*</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.381*</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.110</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.110</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The uniqueness of Asian groups in religious behaviors including attendance at worship services and religious education make this group different in the U.S. religious culture.

H1a, which uses “race” as the factor variable is statistically supported; however, H1b, which uses “educational level” is not statistically supported. According to all the tests, “race” seems to be the only factor that is significant in differentiating people’s religious behaviors including the frequencies of attending worship services and religious educations. Also, as a minor race group, Asians have unique religious behaviors in attending worship services and religious education: Asian people are least likely to have frequent religious activities.
In addition, “education” cannot differentiate people from one another for any specific groups in this analysis. People of different education levels have no obvious difference in their religious behaviors including attending worship services and religious educations.

H2: I developed an index to define the concept of “devout believers”.

Here is the list of the questions in determining whether a person is a devout believer or not:

ara_2, I have a personally meaningful relationship with God.
ara_4, I believe that God loves me and cares about me.
ara_1d, I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs.

The results indicate that “official member” is a significant variable (sig at .005 level) in defining whether a person is a devout believer in his or her religion. These two variables have a positive relationship to each other. H2c “Devout believers are more likely to be official members of their religious congregations than non-devout believers or non-believers” is supported.

However, both “spouse relationship” and “citizenship” are not statistically significant indicators in defining whether a person is a devout believer. These two variables are not statistically significant. I cannot support the H2b “people in happy relationships with their spouses are more likely to be devout believers than non-devout believers or nonbelievers” and H2c “people who
are U.S. citizens are more likely to be devout believers in their religions than non-devout believers or nonbelievers” (see Table 3_3 & Table 3_4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>devoutbeliever</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you a United States citizen?</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation: .028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you an official member of this religious congregation?</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation: -.168**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with the way that you and your spouse/partner make decisions in your relationship?</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation: .078**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3_3 Factors’ Correlations to dependent variable “devout believers”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficientsa</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>Unstandardized Coefficients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Constant)</td>
<td>13.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you an official member of this religious congregation?</td>
<td>-1.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with the way that you and your spouse/partner make decisions in your relationship?</td>
<td>.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a United States citizen?</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: devoutbeliever

Table 3_4 OLS Regression Coefficients for H2a, H2b & H2c
In conclusion, devout believers are more likely to be official members of these religious congregations; but they are not necessarily U.S. citizens themselves nor do they have happy relationships with their spouses.

3.6 Conclusion of secondary data analysis:

There is an obvious relationship between ethnicity and religion. People of different ethnicities have different religious behaviors. Among a number of factors, it seems race is the only factor that can differentiate people based on their religious behavior, including attending worship services and religious education. Education seems to have no influence in changing people’s religious behaviors regardless of group. Asians are least likely to attend worship services in their congregations and religious education, which indicates the uniqueness of Asians’ religious behavior.

Devout believers are more likely to be official members of their religious congregations, but they are not necessarily U.S. citizens themselves and do not necessarily have better relationships with their spouses. It seems the sense of being a member of a religious group is a very important factor in deciding whether a person is devout. A sense of belonging to a group makes people more serious and devout.

These findings contribute significantly to the study of the Chinese Christian group’s conversion practices in three key areas. First, religious congregations based on race may be more attractive to people than those based on other factors since people of the same race are more likely to share
similar religious behaviors. The studied Christian group is run by Chinese immigrants and works primarily to proselytize to Chinese immigrants including students and scholars. This shared race makes the group itself more attractive to new Chinese students and scholars who are interested in Christianity. The shared religious behaviors of the Chinese race makes the group a priority for students and scholars in choosing Christian groups. Different from other Christian groups, the studied religious group has an advantage by being a Chinese group.

Second, joining a religious group can strengthen one’s confidence in his or her religion. People in religious groups are more likely to be devout believers and have the confidence that: “I try hard to live all my life according to my religious beliefs,” “I have a personally meaningful relationship with God,” and “I believe that God loves me and cares about me.” It is obvious that believers in a religious group have a better relationship with God and live a better religious life. So, it is important for a believer to get involved in a religious group. The studied Chinese religious group is a place where Chinese Christian immigrants can share their beliefs and support each other. Gaining a sense of belonging with other Chinese peers makes the group especially attractive for Chinese students and scholars who are interested in Christianity.

Third, however, Asian groups are least likely to attend worship services and religious education compared to other races. This condition increases the difficulty of Chinese Christian groups’ conversion work.
In a word, the Christian group gives its members a sense of belonging to make them more devout believers. The group’s natural composition of Chinese members makes it attractive to Chinese students and scholars who have similar religious behaviors as the group. However, Asian groups attend worship services and religious education less frequently than other race groups, which increases the difficulty of Chinese Christian groups’ proselytism.
CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE STUDIES: WHY AND HOW CONVERSION WORKS

The result from the first part that “official religious group members are more religiously devout” explains the question “why do people build religious groups”. The finding that “race differentiates people in religious behaviors” explains why Chinese students and scholars choose Chinese Christian groups instead of other groups. This result makes me more interested in the religious conversion behaviors of Chinese Christians, as a unique racial group. Also, I will study how Chinese people are recruited into groups to strengthen their beliefs.

With these interests, I started this chapter. This chapter is a combination of textual analysis and grounded theory studies. First, the main two subjects of this thesis: Chinese students and scholars in DC and the Chinese Christian group will be introduced. Second, the methods used in this part of the study are described in more detail. Third, six core concepts (keywords) will be explained in order to further construct my theory. The fourth part discusses how conversion works from both students’ and converters’ perspectives. The fifth part is the grounded theory study where the process of conversion is depicted. The sixth part is a conclusion for qualitative studies.

4.1 Subjects:

4.1.1 Chinese students and scholars in DC:

In this thesis, the new Chinese immigrants that I am interested in studying are different from the imported laborers of one hundred years ago. They are mostly highly educated students and scholars (older than 18) who came to the U.S. voluntarily for higher education or better career development and have lived in the U.S for no more than three years. Most of them spent their
earlier life in mainland China. Since they were educated with socialism since childhood, these people were mostly atheists or even Communists. However, because of the political domination of the Communist Party in China, becoming a Communist is regarded as a political behavior rather than a reflection on a person’s religious interest. Different from old immigrants, these people are more likely to be regarded as aliens in the U.S. and they may feel powerless in this different environment. Most of them have no relatives or friends in America prior to arrival. Help from a religious group may be the only assistance they receive.

4.1.2 The Christian Group:
In this study, I focus exclusively on a Chinese Christian group in the DC area as my case study. However, due to privacy considerations, I will keep the name of this group confidential. This group does a lot of work to help newly-immigrated Chinese people. Before the beginning of every semester, the group’s members help newly-immigrated Chinese people, who are mostly students and scholars. The group members provide airport pick ups at the students’ and scholars’ first arrivals; they also provide temporary living arrangements, Chinese food and transportation for the newcomers. While offering help, they invite the students and scholars to attend their religious activities. With these efforts, they have proselytized a lot of new Chinese people to Christianity. This DC area Chinese Christian group has been converting students and scholars for nine years. Most members are not real preachers, but only devout Christians. Most of them belong to a high social status and are able to support their religious group financially. Though this group itself is loosely organized and the number of its members is not stable, it belongs to a
national organization China Outreach Ministries (COM), which has existed since 1959 and covers 49 universities in America.

Based on the historical background section, it can be seen that these Chinese students and scholars may have natural psychological aversion towards Christianity and they are mostly atheists. Theoretically, they are very determined in their beliefs and are not easily converted to theists. However, it seems that this Chinese Christian group has had great success in proselytizing them. What are the interpersonal, social and psychological methods those proselytizers use to convert atheists? How do Chinese students and scholars start to feel they need a religion? What can the students and scholars gain from being Christians materially and spiritually? What’s the process of conversion? All these questions will be discussed in this chapter.

4.2 Methods:

This qualitative part of this study is a combination of textual analysis and grounded theory study.

In this part, transcripts of translated testimonies of several group members and interviews with related persons will be analyzed with the methodology of textual analysis. Interviews with the group members and fellow Chinese students/scholars, including possible believers, converts and opponents will also be used.\footnote{12 All interviews were conducted in Chinese and translated into English.}
In addition, a great part of this section is carried out within the methodological framework of grounded theory (Burkhard Blasi, 2004). The data of this study is mainly based on a three month ethnographic observation including my own experience, attendance at Friday gatherings, attendance at Sunday gatherings, participation in American festivals, special events and participation in special Chinese festivals.

4.3 Key concepts: The most pertinent concepts (categories) in this chapter.

4.3.1 Exchange

“Many evangelical efforts too win religious converts among immigrants begin with the provision of needed services.” (Hirschman, 2004: 1224) Exchange serves as the first and most important step in the students and scholars’ conversions. Once the newcomers receive help from the religious group, they start to feel an obligation to attend religious activities and to speak openly to group members. The power of these obligations is not material, but spiritual. By offering all kinds of recourses, such as social opportunities, free food, and free transportation, the proselytizers encourage church attendances and gain more possibilities to convert Chinese students and scholars. From the students’ and scholars’ perspective, they show their appreciation to the group members by attending the group’s activities, and being open to the group members spiritually. The newcomers use their attendances to exchange with the converters help. This exchange serves as a very important step in the young immigrants’ conversions.

4.3.2 Social Platform.
As foreigners, the students and scholars are limited to socialize within their small circles. They are more likely to feel lonely and get homesick because they are detached from their native country and society. Though the total number of Chinese is relatively big in the DC area, their dispersion across the city makes it hard to know new Chinese friends. Under these conditions, the religious group provides social platforms for the lonely students and scholars to meet new people, make new friends, and get useful information. For example, the welcome parties at the beginning of each semester invite everyone to come and provide an opportunity for people to know each other. During the dinners on every Friday night, the newcomers are also encouraged introduce themselves to others in the group. Students and scholars are more willing to come to the group’s activities for social opportunities even without religious reasons.

4.3.3 Intimacy

This religious group is extremely interested in keeping in touch with newly-immigrated students and scholars in every possible way. They contact newcomers frequently through emails, social networking systems (SNS), phone calls and home visits. They get personal information about new immigrants including names, genders and email addresses even before the students and scholars come to America in order to arrange free airport pick up services. After the newcomers’ arrivals, the converters try their best to remember everyone’s name. To remain connected with the students and scholars, they send emails every week to announce their weekly activities. They also use SNS to keep in touch with the newcomers. Through constant communications, they build rapport with new students and scholars. The members start to be regarded as friends who are more reliable and whose words are persuasive.
4.3.4 Envy/Admiration

“Behavioral acculturation was found to be strongly related to life satisfaction, and to work and life stress” (Au, Garey, Bermas, Chan, 1998: 12) The converters try to present themselves as life models for students and scholars by showing their superiorities in acculturation. Most of the converters have high social statues, happy families, beautiful houses, high education degrees, decent jobs and good salaries. The students and scholars admire and respect them for their success and happiness. The adoration of members’ lives promotes the newcomers to imitate the group members’ behaviors and make it much easier for young students and scholar to accept the advice from the wise people. According to the interview with Henry\textsuperscript{13}, a student converted to Christianity in less than six months, we can see the great power of life examples in conversions. “I even found that one of my course’s teacher is a Christian and also a group member. After that, I took the initiative to go into the church”. The admiration of a person may lead to changes in spiritual beliefs.

4.3.5 Vulnerability

Entering another country, feeling the culture shock, studying in a totally different language, being far away from home, feeling the financial pressure and many other related things make Chinese students and scholars feel frustrated. Culture shock is also described as “acculturative stress” in some earlier studies. “Acculturative stress is defined as the conflict a racial or ethnic minority person experiences when one’s culture comes into continuous, first hand contact with a

\textsuperscript{13} All interviewees’ names have being replaced to protect the interviewees’ identities.
vastly different dominant culture.” (Kwan, Sodowsky, 1997: 60) Immigrants, especially students and scholars, always encounter several situations that make them extremely weak emotionally such as “psychosomatic ailments, anxiety, depression, and cultural marginality” (Kwan, Sodowsky, 1997: 60). These difficulties include failures in courses, unpleasant family issues, breaking up relationships, losing jobs or scholarships, etc. In this thesis, “Vulnerability” is defined as a condition caused by situations that are too tricky and too painful for the students and scholars to face alone. On one hand, when feeling vulnerable, the students and scholars are much more likely to look for help from outside sources and are open to other people’s kindness. Wise, experienced and sophisticated Christian group members seem to be the most reliable and helpful ones. On the other hand, the converters are very sensitive to the students’ and scholars’ weaknesses and take advantage of these situations. At first, the converters take the initiative to contact these students and start conversations with them. Then, they keep in touch with this person, give him advice, help to solve the problem, and try to get the person out of his vulnerable condition by introducing religious activities because “religious participation and rituals can often fill the psychological void and create a sense of belonging and community for newcomers.” (Hirschman, 2004: 1228)

4.3.6 Pressure to Conform

“Social influences shape every person’s practices, judgments and beliefs” (Solomen E. Asch, 1955: 17). People attend the group’s activities not always for the sake of being interested in religious issues, but also for the reason of conforming with fellow compatriots. If one or more of one’s close friends are interested in Christianity, that person might be “forced” to attend
Christian events. The pressure to conform is very common and may be extremely helpful to proselytism. “When social pressure was high, greater self-doubt was associated with less attention to the stimulus” (Abraham Tesser, Jennifer Campbell, Susan Mickler, 2006: 217). If the students’ or scholars’ close friends are Christians or attending church regularly, they will be less alert to the stimulus (the converting behavior) and less skeptical to follow the majority. In this case, proselytizing is much easier for converting even atheists. However, the attitude of the majority is inconsistent. It may also jeopardize the existing rapport. As time passes, more and more students and scholars get bored and stop going to church. The interview with Jane, a Chinese graduate student, also confirmed this situation. “Two months ago, we went to church every week. Everyone went to church, so did we. But now, fewer and fewer people attend their Bible Studies, so do we.” Pressure to conform works only when the majority is supportive to the Chinese Christian group.

4.3.7 Self Accomplishment/Benefits

The converted students and scholars can feel great self accomplishment from two perspectives. First, there is a hierarchy inside this group. Converted people are given more privileges. They are chosen to lead prayers before dinner, to be the lead singers, and are most frequently introduced while socializing. Being different from non-group members gives these new believers a feeling of honor and privilege. It’s very possible that the likelihood of attaining privileges is an effective factor to prompt the students and scholars to accept the religion. Second, “religion may offer another approach to a total life commitment and a sense of accomplishment” (Richard L. Gorsuch, 1995: 66). Several interviewed new immigrants expressed that their benefits of being
Christians include attaining inner peace and better social relationships. Therefore, the newcomers may accept the religion for utilitarianism consideration.

4.4.1 The cultural and social necessities of being a Christian

In this part, I will discuss the cultural and social necessities of being a Christian from the Chinese students’ and scholars’ perspective. Earlier explained concepts will be used. Transcripts of translated testimonies of several group members, interviews with Chinese students and scholars who are associated with this group, and emails sent by the group will be analyzed through textual analysis.

4.4.1.1 Social need

As mentioned earlier texts, being a “social platform” is a very obvious function of the studied Chinese Christian group. As a social platform, the group provides the newcomers a community where they can get ethnicity identifications. “Many immigrants, historical and contemporary, joined or founded religious organizations as an expression of their historical identity as well as their commitment to building a local community in their new country.” (Hirschman, 2004: 1207) The group’s social platform function attracts a lot of participants. Chinese students and scholars are socially limited within their small circles. Going to church and religious events are regarded as attending social activities. For example, one converter’s email stated: “We would like to invite you to come and join us for a fun-filled evening. It is so great that we have the opportunity to meet each other again.” (The group members had met a lot of students and scholars before this email was sent out when they were providing airport pickup service at the newcomers’ first
arrivals.) By offering social activities including dinners, parties, religious gatherings, etc., the group can even attract the attendance of people with no religious intentions. According to the interview with Annie, who is not interested in this religion at all, she still goes to the activities for their delicious food and for chances to get together with friends. Additionally, she said “I have to admit that I sort of love their gatherings because I can meet other co-age people and learn some religious things.” The group members seem to be happy with people attending their activities for whatever reason. They always mention “feel free to bring your friends” in their emails. This condition is totally understandable: with more attendance, there will be a larger possibility for the proselytizers to do their missionary work.

As mentioned before, since a lot of older members in the group are relatively “successful people” (professors, scientists, business owners, etc.), they can provide the new immigrants useful life advice and important career opportunities. Several new immigrated students even admitted that they got internship opportunities from the group members.

More importantly, as mentioned before, since “social influences shape every person’s practices, judgments and beliefs” (Solomen E.Asch, 1955: 17), students and scholars attend the group’s activities may want to conform with fellow compatriots. Jane demonstrated this point when she said that “if my friends go, they will ask me for company, or I will be alone at home”. However, when the majority doesn’t attend their activities, the religious group loses its attractiveness as a social platform. Thus, the pressure to conform may backfire to stop people from attending.
4.4.1.2 Material needs

Churches and other religious organizations “play an important role in the creation of community and as a major source of social and economic assistance for those in need” (Hirschman, 2004: 1207). Students and scholars in the DC area, especially the newly arrived ones, may be eager for material help. While being asked the question “have you accepted help from the religious group when you were first here” in the interviews with new students and scholars, one interviewee replied “Yes. I had nobody else to rely on. I was picked up by John and I stayed at he and Auntie Wang’s house for three days. I really appreciated their help.” By offering all kinds of material resources including free food, free transportation, and a welcoming environment, the converters get appreciation of the newcomers.

However, when taking advantage of the group’s offers, the students and scholars feel obligated to pay back the group. This is how “exchange” works. The ways to show their gratitude include going to church, attending group activities, and being open and honest to close group members spiritually. Just like a new student, Ming, said in one interview: “They are so generous and so nice to me all the time. They really care about me. I’m very open to their help. I would regret if I make them feel isolated or disappointed.” Another new student, Meng, who is very resistant to Christianity, said, “I don’t want to betray my own beliefs for several free meals and a temporary living place;” however she still admitted that she participated in their religious activities to show her appreciation for the group members’ kindness. Since the Chinese students and scholars group is a disadvantaged group in society and has little capability of paying back the converters materially, under most conditions they have to choose to release their obligation in an alternative
way---by paying back spiritually. Most new immigrants, especially students and scholars, have no choice but to build rapport with group members and accept invitations of their activities. They exchange their attendance for the converters’ help.

4.4.1.3 Easy answer to difficulties.

As explained earlier, “vulnerability” conditions happen more frequently to new immigrants than other groups of people. “Income, ethnicity salience, external ethnic identity, and loss of face were significant predictors of acculturative stress” (Kwan, Sodowsky, 1997: 51). As Hirschman said, “it is only through religion, or other spiritual beliefs, that many people are able to find solace for the inevitable human experiences of death, suffering, and loss” (Hirschman, 2004: 1207). When in a vulnerable and stressful situation, a religion such as Christianity can give the newly-immigrated students and scholars a quick and easy answer to all their difficulties. It’s understandable that “new immigrants become more religious after arriving in the United States in order to maintain cultural continuity following the trauma of international migration” (Hirschman, 2004: 393).

It is true that the students and scholars are more likely to start accepting religious conversion when they encounter difficulties. According to Richard Gorsuch, “Religion may offer another approach to a total life commitment and a sense of accomplishment” (Richard L. Gorsuch, 1995: 66). As mentioned earlier, the benefits of being Christians include attaining inner peace, mental relief, better social relationships, and so on. Immigrants may accept this religion for utilitarianism. Several students said they felt great self accomplishment and gained the benefits
mentioned above in the process of being converted. Most importantly, they feel "involved" in the group’s religious community, which greatly relieves their feel of being “forever alien.” Religion is an easy solution to their mental emptiness and loneliness.

According to interviews, the converters encourage people “to live a life led by God.” A converted student, Mike, clearly expressed his reason for being a Christian from this perspective. As Mike stated: “without them, I would not know how deeply a belief can influence our lives. With their experience and guidance, I got to know where my life direction is.” The definition of “life direction” that the Christians always mentioned is different from the typical social definition in the U.S which refers to career choice or material goals. Here, Mike referred to “life direction” as a life led by God, rather than led by one’s own will and choices. Maybe Christianity is a safer and easier life choice than struggling by oneself.

Proselytizing works most effectively when the students and scholars face heartbreaking situations. Here is a part of a PH.D student’s testimony speech at a family gathering (He was recently converted):

I’m the only child in my family. I have no siblings. My cousin was my closest friend. She just married less than one year ago. But she passed away in a big fire after her marriage. At that time, I was devastated and didn’t believe in anything. I felt like my life was a tragic drama. And soon after that, my grandpa passed away. [Pause] Happiness is so short. [Pause] Life cannot always be like the life you wish it to be. Happiness is offered by God. If you feel happiness, then good for you; if you cannot feel happiness, just believe He has some other plans for you. After these sufferings, I realized that I’m not alone. God is always with me and He can hear my prayers.
From his words, it is prominent that Christianity helped him greatly in solving his devastating life problems. By thinking that “just believe He [God] has some other plans for you”, the student became more relieved when facing his cousin’s and grandfather’s deaths. Also, the feeling that “God is always with me” released his stress and loneliness of being away from family in these emergencies. These difficulties work as a catalyst in his conversion process.

4.4.1.4 American Dream

It has been statistically proved that immigrants with more “mainstream American-Oriented activities” are more likely to be satisfied with their immigration experiences. (Ying, 1996: 3) It’s every immigrant’s dream to get involved in the mainstream America and to realize his American Dreams. An important and effective way to join the mainstream is to get into the main religious groups to gain an ethnic identity since “immigrants become Americans by first becoming ethnic Americans” (Hirschman, 2004: 1206). As discussed in earlier chapter: “race” differentiates people from different religious behaviors, official religious members have better religious experiences. A Chinese Christian group, compared to other religious groups, is a good choice for Chinese students and scholars to join the religious mainstream while gaining ethnical identifications. An older gentleman group member (who used to be a scientist) shared his testimony during one gathering:

“Why did you come to America? There is a saying in Chinese that life is all about fulfilling goals. But do you know what’s the most important goal you must fulfill in the U.S.? Know Jesus Christ! Know him; you will get peace and happiness. This is much more important than degrees and money.”
Like him, many converters depict Christianity and Christian life as a main part of the “American Dream”.

On one hand, in the process of merging into religious mainstream in the United States, some students and scholars want to learn “American way” to fulfill their American dreams. On the other hand, by expressing the importance of Christianity in the U.S., the proselytizers persuade students and scholars to believe the process of being converted can be a process to revise and update “their own cultural categories, symbols, and practices” to get used to the huge culture shock (Kwai Hang Ng, 1998: Abstract).

4.4.1.5 Intimacy with compatriots and being loved

Being socially different as foreigners in the U.S. makes Chinese students and scholars more likely to become intimate with Chinese peers. There is no doubt enrolling in a Chinese group is an effective way to identify oneself as Chinese and to receive love from fellow compatriots.

The new immigrants’ desires of becoming familiar with compatriots and being loved by colleagues are noticed by the proselytizers. By providing Chinese food and celebrating Chinese traditional festivals, the Christian group attracts many homesick students and scholars. If we analyze this condition from the perspective of the words they use, the proselytizers’ efforts are also very obvious. First, they speak and write in Chinese a lot. Their emails and gatherings are mostly bilingual (both Chinese and English). Second, group members incorporate Chinese sayings and Chinese culture into their activities. For instance, while they send messages about
the “Mid Autumn Festival Party,” they express their blessings to the Chinese students and scholars in their emails with the Chinese expression: “Huanduzhongqiu,” which means “Happy Moon Festival.” Third, they always emphasize “Chinese food will be provided” in activities’ publicity.

On the Chinese students’ and scholars’ side, believers do receive mental benefits from being loved by this religious group. As Tyson said in his interview:

I love my group and my church. We sincerely treat each other as brothers and sisters, no matter who we are and what our social statuses are…. we share experiences with each other, take care of children, the poor, and the disabled. I admit that, at first, I had some utilitarian thoughts to attend their activities. I thought I could integrate into the community and get to know more people who could help me with my study and career quickly and conveniently. But I was really moved after a short while. This big family's warmth is so true and so precious. We are very close to each other. I can feel the intimacy I had never expected to have in a foreign country.

Tyson used “family” instead “group” to metaphorize his religious group. This shows his intimacy and closeness with other group members. however, he still defines his current living environment as “a foreign country,” which shows his loneliness being abroad. According to Tyson, group members care for each other, defining themselves as children of God and their relationships as “brothers and sisters” just like people in other Christian groups.

Furthermore, the composition of group members (children, young adults, middle aged and elders are all included) is very similar to the natural composition of family members (which also consists of members of different ages). Attaining the feeling of being in a family in an unfamiliar environment is of course attractive to the young immigrants. With these special characteristics,
this Christian group became more interesting, more necessary, or even desirable for the students and scholars.

4.4.2 The conversion power of words (What do the proselytizers do?)

After discussing why Chinese students and scholars become Christians, I want to know what the proselytizers do to accelerate the conversion process. In this part, I will study the power of words (verbal and textual) in the process of proselytizing with the methodology of textual analysis. I will also analyze a national proselytizing website, which several members of the studied group work for and aims to recruit immigrated Chinese students, the contents of several emails sent by members of the studied religious group, and the translated transcripts of its believers’ testimonies. With these texts, I want to further examine the procedure of proselytizing.

4.4.2.1 Denotation of Christian identity

One of the most obvious characteristics we can tell from the group’s first emails is that group members are very honest of admitting their Christian identities. Every semester, before the arrival of new students and scholars, this group contacts universities’ Chinese student associations proactively. These associations to send emails to their new enrolled students and scholars asking whether they need airport pickups and temporary housing upon their first arrivals. The ones who are willing to accept help need to contact group members directly. In that way, the group gets the contact information of a great portion of new Chinese students and scholars. (Afterwards, they send emails to invite new students to church regularly.) While
sending packing advice and travel tips before newcomers’ departures, they are not hesitant in showing their Christian identities. Here is an example email:

Dear Chinese students:
I would appreciate if you can tell me the number of days you need temporary housing. It is easy for me to make temporary housing for you, if I know it.
You do not have to respond if you do not need temporary housing. Sorry to bother you.
In Christ
John
"I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." - Ephesians 4:1

As this email shows, even before meeting with the new immigrants, group members started to emphasis their identities as Christians. Phrases like “In Christ” or “In His love” are the most frequently used words in their emails. From these emails, the newcomers can easily realize that the offerings are from a Christian group and can decide whether they want further connections with this group. Also, quoted passages from the Bible are consistently used at the end of emails. For example, “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. - Ephesians 4:1.” This sentence not only indicates their religious identities, but also expresses the reason why they are offering the help: they are doing these offers “for God”.

Of course, while indicating their Christian identities, they are taking the risk of being loathed by the receivers who are anti-Christian or believers of other religions or atheists. People who are strongly against Christianity may delete these emails immediately. But in fact, these conditions rarely happen.
This condition may be caused by the fact that most people in China do not follow a religion. Different from the U.S., there is no major religion in China during the past couple thousand of years. Even though people are educated about Communism since childhood, most of them are actually pantheists instead of atheists. On one hand, because of current political situation in China, communism is regarded to be a political theory instead of a spiritual belief. The beliefs in Communism are not as stable as the beliefs in a religion. On the other hand, traditional Chinese spiritual culture which has been spread for thousands of years makes Chinese people theists. Based on these facts, the proportion of people who have natural objections to Christianity is very small. Also, because of the multi-beliefs situation in China, most people respect others’ religions and beliefs, and they do not disdain proselytizing behaviors.

The studied group’s Christian identity is also very recognizable on their website. (www.chinesestudentsusa.net). This website does not belong to the studied group, but belongs to a national organization, COM (China Outreach Ministries). Some group members work for COM. Though according to the name of the website, it seems to be a normal website for immigrated students and scholars, but once you open it, the traces of Christianity are actually everywhere. For example, on this website, even in a simple search for visa solutions, “life and Christian faith” appears on the top of each individual page.

Though the denotations (signs) of Christian identity are not overwhelmingly redundant, while reading these emails and searching the website, they are still influencing their readers (who are most possibly new immigrated students and scholars) in a subtle way.
4.4.2.2 Showing of care

The converters have great interests in the students’ and scholars’ immigration lives. They always express their care for the newcomers in every possible way in their words. For example, even from their first emails, they show their concern for students and scholars by giving them traveling and packing advice, and even inviting newcomers to stay in their houses if they need. Thoughtful sentences like “Do not over weight your luggage. The overweight charge of $150.00 can buy many things here;” “Please pay attention to your own belongings before you leave;” and “Remember to bring your underwear and towels if you want to spend a night at my house” can be easily found in their emails. They also send emails after exam weeks to see how the students performed, and send travel tip emails before holidays: “Have you finished your finals? How do you feel now? Welcome to come to attend our Bible Study Group. Can’t wait to see you all;” “What’s your plan for the coming holiday;” “Did you have fun in the past several days.” These worlds are not only non-religious, but also very supportive of and considerate to newcomers. These words are more likely to be said by close family members than by strangers.

Intimate relationship can promote the process of conversion. These caring words are not only really helpful to the inexperienced students and scholars, but also helpful in furthering the relationship between converters and new immigrants. With these methods, the proselytizers can make their group more like a “family” rather than a simple Christian group. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, letting people feel at home when they are at church accelerates the process of conversion.
4.4.2.3 Giving, not receiving

“Helping others in need, including new immigrants and the poor, is considered as one of the missions of many churches” (Hirschman, 2004: 1212). The converters think of their proselytizing behaviors as kind offerings, rather than as receiving people’s favors (trust, for instance) to Christianity. They define themselves as servants rather than converters, developing better reputations in the process of conversion.

From their website, the implication of being “helpers” is obvious: “Our workers have all had their lives transformed by knowing God and are all committed to serving Chinese people.” With the word “serve,” they show how they define their behaviors. Also, they use the word “help” rather than religious guide for their religious activities. For example, in the title of an article from their website: “a conference to help prepare Chinese scholars and students to successfully return home as followers of Christ,” “help” is used to indicate Christian proselytizing.

The group members also define themselves in the same way: “We can help you with your difficulties in life”; “Professor Zhang is going to have a special speech tonight titled ‘Difficulties in Life and Study’”. Because their converting behaviors are conducted in the name of offering help, they will be more acceptable and less likely to cause negative mentalities for the students or scholars.

One testimony speech from a middle age Chinese Christian named Jimmy clearly expressed the motivation of their proselytizing behaviors:
“Christians are loved and have the most great grace ever in the world. We want to share our unexhausted grace from God with others. We don’t want to be selfish people who don’t tell anyone about their happiness and don’t share their happiness with others. I want to express my gratitude to the person who shared God’s love with me twenty years ago. We are also very glad to share His love and grace with you, my new friends! You are here, you are not coming here randomly with no reason. God led you here, and He told us to share our happiness with you!”

From his speech, it’s very obvious that group members do not think they proselytize for the aim of religious accomplishment, but rather for the wish to share happiness and grace they received from their belief. They are doing conversions with noble intent, rather than evil intent. However, their behavior may embarrass non-believers. For example, they sometimes ask everyone at the gathering to talk about their thoughts of God, whether they are believers or not.

4.4.2.4 Denotation of intimacy

Group members keep in touch with students and scholars through frequent emails. They start to emphasize on their intimacies with students and scholars in their emails once they have more interaction with them.

Core group members have their own titles (nicknames) when addressing the young new immigrant students and scholars: they call themselves “Uncle John”, “Auntie Wang”, “Uncle Tom” when they do self introductions. They also use their nicknames to refer to themselves in emails: “remember to email auntie back so I can get you registered for Sunday worship,” or “welcome to our home and have a feast of uncle’s great turkey.” “Uncle” and “auntie” normally refer to relatives and family members. Instead of being called “Mr” and “Mrs,” they suggest and strengthen their close relationships with the young immigrants by referring to themselves as
family members. For most Chinese students and scholars who have no relatives in the U.S., having close relationships with convertors is an attractive thing.

Through constant interaction with the students and scholars, real intimate rapport can be gradually built.

4.4.2.5 Denotation of authority

Also, with these special nicknames, core group members establish their authority within their Chinese community. In Chinese culture, titles like “uncle” and “auntie” not only refer to close relationships, but also show one’s respect to older people. Different from the U.S., in China, older family members have sovereign power in directing and commanding youths. Although the authority of elders have decreased in recent decades, Chinese people still very much respect and obey them. By being called “uncle” and “auntie,” group members actually receive respect from the young students and scholars. With these seemingly simple appellations, the group members indicate their authority in this Chinese religious community.

In addition, group members show their authority by making requirements and setting agendas. While inviting students and scholars to their events, they make specified requirements for attendees’ punctuality and attendance: “we will pick you up at the Rosslyn Metro station. Please come at 9:30 am, no later than 9:45, or we will miss you.” They also make itineraries for attendees to follow: “Friday morning, Outlet Mall, crazy shopping......Friday afternoon, group Friday gathering......Sunday, worship.” Unlike in most community groups, the attendees, who are
mostly new immigrated Chinese students and scholars, have no right in determining the agendas. The agendas are always set before the events. However, attendees are not required to stay for the whole event time; they are free to leave at anytime they want. However, those who leave early may not be able to get the free transportation service provided by group members. Since the churches are always away from public transportation stations, the guests are actually somehow “forced” to stay for the whole time.

With these authorities, the converters gain power through their proselytizing behaviors: newly-immigrated young students and scholars are more likely to obey the instructions of these honored group members. That is to say, people can be more easily converted.

4.4.2.6 Denotation of superiority

In fact, most group members are not real preachers, only long time devout Christians. But their superiority in life can be easily recognized. Since many group members are former immigrated Chinese students and scholars with high degrees themselves, they are mostly in good financial condition. Most of them have high social statuses and are able to support their religious group financially. They never hesitate in admitting their superiority, which is very different from Chinese traditional culture that implies that people should always be humble. These superiorities make them the best mentors for young and unsophisticated new immigrants.

It is easy to tell their high living standards from their activities and the words they use. Their activities usually provide free Chinese food, drinks, and all necessary facilities. The expenses of
activities are always covered by wealthy members. Also, they provide free transportation to all
the attendees: “if you choose to attend…..We will pick you up there.” Their big houses can
accommodate a lot of guests: “welcome to visit my home.” These words indicate their ability in
providing material help for their group.

By showing their material superiority, the converters set themselves up as life models (high
incomes, high social status, etc) for students and scholars. The new immigrants’ adoration of
group members’ lives compels them to imitate their activities. This definitely makes it easier for
students and scholars to accept the group’s advice. As mentioned before, for Henry, a converted
student, the influence of the life models is prominent: “I even found that one of my teachers is
Christian and also a group member. After that, I took the initiative to go into the church.” The
adoration of faculty and the willingness to get familiar with people he respects attracted him in
the first place. As Henry notes, “She convinced me that there is a fundamental difference
between God and humans. We don’t need to ask so many questions about Him, but just believe
in Him.” His words tell us how important the advice from the respected person is to these young
students and scholars.

Also, group members think they have happier lives than non-religious people. One group
member talked about her worry of non-Christians’ inner peace. She believed that non-believers
were just like her before she became a Christian. She said: “they are always worrying about their
degrees, their jobs, everything. They can never rest.” Through the power of suggestion, she
talked about the benefits of being a Christian: “give your life to God, just like me. He will make
every decision for you. You can live even happier than I.” Indeed, not only do the members’ social statues and material advantages attract the young students and scholars to imitate their behaviors, the members’ happiness also works to promote proselytism.

According to a testimony speech from a converted Chinese scholar, the adoration of Christian families’ happiness is a very important part for his religious decision:

The culture of Christianity is very different from my own culture. I used to be a so-called Buddhist when I was a little boy. I went to the temples with my family. I saw many devout Buddhists there, but I don’t think they live happier than me. But when I came to America, my neighbor brought me to church. They were very friendly to me and they seem to live much better than I did, spiritually, not materially. Under this comparison, I realized Christianity can make families better.

In this case, the believers’ happy lives, rather than their material wealth, was the real reason that attracted a student or scholar to Christianity.

4.4.2.7 The endeavor in recruiting more.

The converters show their desire to recruit Chinese student or scholar, second generation immigrant or even Americans, in their words, in many ways. They are extremely interested in recruiting new people into their group. Sentences like “please invite your roommates, friends, and classmates to come to our event for us” can be seen almost in every one of their emails. They work on recruiting Chinese students or scholars, in particular. According to the introduction of China Outreach Ministries’ website: “we are a national organization of Americans and Chinese who serve students, scholars and their families from China studying at universities in North
America.” They even invite “everyone from China to participate whether they have religious beliefs or not.”

In addition, the converters are always working on breaking barriers that stop people from joining the group. This Christian group always claims that their group is a bilingual and multi-racial group. Racially, their attendees are not limited to Chinese. People from other races are also welcomed. Politically, the group members include both mainland Chinese and Taiwanese. They are very open to political differences and welcome every Chinese heritage. From the linguistic aspect, they do prayers, sing worship songs and do almost every activity in both Chinese and English. This endeavor makes their activities also attractive for non-Chinese and second-generation Chinese immigrants who have no or low capabilities in Chinese language.

Their endeavors in enlarging their group help them greatly in gaining more influence in Chinese communities.

4.5 How proselytizing works—a cyclical process of converters’ changing roles

By making connections within key categories in earlier texts, a theory can be formed. The following section presents a model of converters’ changing roles in a circular process. On one hand, the roles of the studied group members are always changing according to their relationships with the new students and scholars (see Figure 1). Their roles keep changing until they are eventually prepared to proselytize. On the other hand, the students’ and scholars’ reasons for attending the activities are also changing according to the development of life in America.
Once one student or scholar is converted, he (or she) will act as a new converter to start the process all over again. Then I am going to discuss the different phases in the process.

![Figure 4.1 The cyclical conversion process](image)

4.5.1 Phase 1: Helper.

At the very beginning, the group members offer timely and instructive help to total strangers for free. The religious group help Chinese students and scholars continuously. Their help not only refers to helping students and scholars at their first arrivals, but also includes helping these students and scholars with their daily problems in later days. There is no doubt the help new students and scholars received at first is really timely and instructive. The most timely help at
first place includes airport picking ups, temporary housings, and transportations. They also offer a lot of instructive help as mature adults and local Americans. They instruct young students of how to open their bank accounts; they help them with reviewing the contracts for renting apartments, and they teach them basic living skills including cooking and cleaning. Also, the first gatherings are worked as social platforms for the new students and scholars to make friends.

On the other side, students and scholars attend their religious activities for the first time when they receive aids. This is regarded as the first step of the whole circular process by getting involved in the group. In this phase, most students and scholars are not going for the reasons of being interested in the religion, but for gratitude to the group members’ help. Also, the church gatherings provide their social platforms to make friends. It’s clear that “exchange” works to give the new students and scholars their first experience with Christianity.

4.5.2 Phase 2: Friend.

After the students’ and scholars’ first several attendances, the Christian group members try every possible way to keep in touch with them. They pay a great deal of attention to this connection. An example of this is that even though most members are older people, they put a lot of technical effort into using the modern communication channel: the internet. Most group members use Social network systems (SNS) to keep in touch with the young newcomers. In order to “make friends” on Renren (Chinese SNS like Facebook), Auntie Wang, a core member, used to tell me about her experience of studying typing in simplified Chinese. It was hard for her to use the Chinese phonetic alphabet to type at first, but she conquered that difficulty after several months.
With these efforts, they build intimacy with the young new immigrants and begin to be regarded as friends.

On the students’ and scholars’ side, they are still very likely to regard religious activities as their social platforms. But at this phase, they are not only becoming friends of fellow Chinese, but also becoming friends with group members and proselytized students and scholars. As time passes, intimacy between students and the group is strengthened. Much of the communication between them is one-way and indirect (such as emails, SNS messages, flyers, etc). For example, the group emails about regular church activities do not always receive replies. However, this communication ensures the group members’ presences in students’ and scholars’ lives by constant connections. With these efforts, the converters can maintain their rapport with students and scholars.

4.5.3 Phase 3: Mentor/Advisor.

The group members work as mentors or advisors to give further timely and instructive help to the students and scholars to prompt the development of the whole process. Further help arrives when new students confront difficulties and show their vulnerabilities. “The idea of community- of shared values and enduring association- is often sufficient to motivate persons to trust and help one another, even in the absence of long personal relationship” (Hirschman, 204: 1207). So, the success of this step relies on the success of earlier steps which try to recruit newcomers into the big Christian community by giving help and building rapport. In the case of Ho, a boy who lost his father before he converted, he showed his extreme weakness when he “was so desperate and
heartbreaking at that time,” that he “even thought about suicide”. During his suffering time, several Chinese Christians in his university community from the group gave him the most generous help to relieve his grief. They came to his home to talk with him, they invited him to their home, they drove him on road trips, and they of course brought him to church activities.” This help made him “finally got peace in front of god and god took my grief away.” Also, group members provide speeches addressed by experienced professors and social celebrities. These speeches are very helpful and instructive for the daily lives of young immigrants or even for their learning and career development. Being life mentors help the Christian group’s members to prompt the students’ and scholars’ proselytizing process greatly.

When in a new environment, people feel the excitement and happiness at the very beginnings. During the first days, newcomers regard new and different things as interesting experiences. However, when this “honeymoon” phase passes, the new students and scholars start to feel more vulnerable than ever before. Difficulties and suffering, then, emerge. Since many of the group members are “successful” people in the immigrant community, the young students and scholars admire or even envy these members’ lives. They are also more willing to imitate these mature adults’ behaviors. With admiration, the students and scholars start to think that they could not only relieve the stress of being newcomers but also have happiness like the group members.

4.5.4 Phase 4: Converter.
Then comes the best opportunity for converters’ proselytizing. After the third phase, students and scholars start to get interested in imitating the group members’ behaviors, and take the initiative in getting religious information.

On one hand, the group members became real converters to work directly on the students’ and scholars’ conversions. They answer newcomers’ religious questions, give Christian speeches, send out free Bibles, share their own religious experiences in gatherings, encourage newcomers to make their belief decisions, invite newcomers to each others’ baptism ceremonies, and so on. During this phase, the behaviors of the group members as converters are mostly the same as any other religious organizations’ converters.

On the other hand, the new immigrants are ready to make big life decisions and changes. After going through the vulnerabilities, their admiration for the group members may transform into the determination to imitate their behaviors. In order to relieve the stress of culture shock and immigration, achieve spiritual peace like group members, and live a new life like their models, newcomers start to accept the religion. In that process, other than religious receiving, the new students and scholars will start to feel a sense of self-accomplishment. They can receive benefits including becoming new leaders in church, being especially taken care of by the group members, attaining mental relief, getting a sense of group identification in the brand new environment, and the feeling of being "involved" in American culture. All these privileges of being a Christian work as catalysts to convert the students and scholars.
4.5.5 Phase 5: New converters appear.

This is the last phase of one cyclical process, but it is also the start of another new round. Since some students and scholars have already converted to Christianity in the former phase, they get involved in the group’s further proselytizing processes. If one new student or scholar is converted, he or she will work proactively to bring his or her friends to Church. The appearance of new converters helps greatly to facilitate the new immigrants’ conversion process and to introduce more outside students into the group. If one is surrounded by Christians who attend religious activities regularly, he will be more likely to attend as well. Pressure to conform works very effectively in this phase.

With more group members, the power of the group becomes greater than before.

To sum up, in addition to the mentioned five phases, there is a whole, cyclical model of how proselytizing works on these students and scholars who were mostly atheists. Though the process of every individual Chinese student’s conversion is different from that of others, this basic process can be recognized almost from everyone’s experience.

4.5.6 Developments of the cyclical process

Under most conditions, the process is executed step-by-step. Converters always start their work as helpers for the students and scholars; then they become friends with them. Next, they proselytize while mentoring and advising the students and scholars to deal with difficulties. Finally, the newly-converted newcomers become converters themselves and a new process starts
over. (Helper-Friend-Mentor/Advisor-converter). But things do not always develop so steply and routinely. In the following text of this study, several different, but normally happened conditions will be described and analyzed.

4.5.6.1 Step by Step:
These are the most ideal and normal conditions of proselytism. Under these conditions, the roles of the group members change in the order of the process, from helpers to friends to mentors, and become converters at the end. These conditions illustrate an ideal model: it happens most frequently to the successfully converted students and scholars. However, things don’t always develop so smoothly.

4.5.6.2 Skipping steps:
• For students and scholars who don’t need help: The converters will start the process by skipping the “Helper” step for students and scholars who don’t need help. This condition happens most frequently if the outsiders are introduced into the group by group members or attendees. These students or scholars may be wealthy, highly independent, or have help from other resources (relatives or friends in the U.S.). These outsiders may only come to the church because they are interested in the religion or social activities, not because they feel gratitude of getting help from group members. They are also not seeking help from the group. The conversion process may start from the friend step, and then directly jumps to the converter step. (Friend-Converter)
• For students and scholars with former Christian experience: Some of the students and scholars may have contact with Christianity before they immigrated. These people may come to the church for direct religious help. Under this condition, the conversion can start right away from the “Converter” step. (Converter)

• For students and scholars who meet tough difficulties: When students are vulnerable, they are very easily persuaded and proselytized. As mentioned in earlier texts, for the ones who encounter family emergencies, the proselytizing works very effectively. Under these conditions, building intimacy with these students and scholars may even be unnecessary and the Friend step can be skipped. Even without closeness, the vulnerable young students are still willing to open their hearts for mature adults and mental relief from the group. The conversion can be started within a short period. The process may start with the Helper step, sometimes going through the Mentor step, and then going to the Converter step very quickly. (Helper-Mentor-Converter) or (Helper-Converter)

4.5.6.3 Standstill:
Quitters may lead to the standstill of the whole process. Once the students and scholars acclimate to the new environment and stop accepting help, a big proportion of them will stop going to church. When that happens, there is no way for the converters to move on to further steps and they stay as helpers. (Helper)
• For students and scholars who attend for goals other than religion: Since the church is regarded as a social platform, many students and scholars who attend church activities, even who attend on a regular basis, are not attending for interests in the religion, but for the social opportunities with compatriots. In that case, these new immigrants will stop at the friend step, and will not accept conversions from the group members. (Helper-Friend)

• For the hardheads: Several students and scholars have good personal relationships with the Christian group, they attend church activities regularly, and they are open to the conversion from the group, but they are not converted and some even remain to be atheists. If this is the case, conversions fails temporarily and the process stops. The Christian group cannot thoroughly convert them and recruit them to enlarge the group. (Helper-Friend-Converter)

4.5.6.4 Retrogression:
People may drop off the process at any step. This condition happens when new students and scholars attend church irregularly or stop attending church activities. It may also happen if conversion fails and repulses the students and scholars. For whatever reason, if the students and scholars stop frequent connections with the group, the previously built rapport may disappear as time passes. Once friendship decreases or disappears, if the converters still want to do the conversion job, they have to rebuild rapport with these old friends once they come back to church. However, if these students and scholars are just coming back to church for more help or for social reasons, then the rebuilding of friendship may not happen. The roles of the group
members move between the helper and friends steps and no further conversion can work.

(Helper-Friend-Converter-Friend) (Helper-Friend-Helper)

4.5.6.5 Conservative new members:
Some newly proselytized students and scholars are relatively conservative. They may be more likely to regard religion as a personal and private thing, and less likely to be converters themselves. If this is the case, the new converters will not appear. However, this condition does not hinder the conversion developments of other group members.

4.5.7 Special Methods to Ensure the Success of the Process
There are several hints of how proselytizing is processed to recruit outside students and scholars in the model. Additionally, since the group members, students and scholars are all Chinese, the importance and uniqueness of being Chinese is very clear: Immigrants always “bring new forms of Christianity” that have “shaped the content and the language of services in many existing churches.” (Charles Hirschman, 2004: 1206) The following part shows the specific methods this religious group uses to explain the uniqueness in converting Chinese immigrations.

4.5.7.1 Fulfilling American dreams: get into the mainstream
This point has being discussed in earlier texts from the newcomers’ perspective. As mentioned before, the group members always express the uniqueness of Christianity in the U.S. and encourage students/scholars to get into the mainstream. This method is mostly used in the converting phases.
4.5.7.2 Use of natural intimacy of being compatriots:

As mentioned in earlier texts, group members show intimacy of being compatriots with the newcomers in several ways. This method is most frequently used and is prominent in the whole process since the very beginning because it greatly helps the building of rapport. In that way, the group members can easily find things in common with the students (scholars) and build rapport easier. Most importantly, they can relieve the contradiction between Chinese traditional culture and Christianity with this method.

4.5.7.3 Distinct peers’ influences:

As mentioned previously, the peers’ influences work as a kind of social pressure to change peoples’ attitudes. In this Christian group, peers’ influences are very strong. Chinese students and scholars are mostly living in several compact communities and share rent with compatriots. So, it’s easy for them to influence each other by geographical closeness. In that way, more outsiders can be continuously introduced in the group and the peers’ influences can be enlarged continuously. The peers’ influences are larger in this group than in other communities where people don’t normally have such closeness. For instance, Xin, who converted recently, influenced her roommate Pan, who is baptized soon after Xin.

4.5.7.4 Religious comparisons and easy religious admissions:

Religious comparisons are mostly within Christianity, Communism and Buddhism. Communism and Buddhism are most popular in China. The Party of Communism is politically controlling the
country and it has more than 50 million members. Generations are educated with Communism and Marxism since middle school. Buddhism has been spread in China for more than a thousand years and has become part of the traditional Chinese culture. Many people attend Buddhist activities even if they are not Buddhists. Usually, the group members question Communism by indicating that many communists are not really atheists and just join the Party for political reasons. They also introduce their own earlier experience of being quasi Buddhists to explain why they changed their beliefs into Christianity at last. By these comparisons, the “superiority” of Christianity can be explained by the group members. This method concerns sensitive issues and is not very commonly used, appearing only in the Converter phase.

Also, compared to China, getting baptized admissions of being Christians are much easier in the U.S. In China, for the historical reasons and political policy concerns, people are much more conservative in conversion processes. One has to take Christian courses and be tested before he can be baptized. However, the studied Christian group uses a total different way in recruiting as many believers as possible in the U.S. As long as one confirms that he believes in God, he can be baptized right away and there is no need to learn much about the religion in advance.

4.6 Conclusion of Qualitative studies:

4.6.1 Why people need Christianity and what do the proselytizers do

On one hand, Chinese students and scholars need Christianity because and the Chinese Christian group because they fit their cultural and social necessities by helping them assimilate and ethnical identify in the new environment. The Christian group can satisfy the social and material
need of students and scholars. Christianity provides them with an easy way to deal with life difficulties, and becoming Christians can help these new immigrants to fulfill their American Dream. Being loved by compatriots in this group helps students and scholars to get racial identifications.

On the other hand, the behaviors of the studied proselytizing organization greatly accelerate the conversion processes. The studied group members show their Christian identities clearly when offering help to the newcomers. They show their care to the new students and scholars, they regard their conversion as giving help, they build intimate relationships with newcomers and Chinese students and scholars admire their authority and superiority.

These facts explain why students and scholars have higher tendencies in converting into Christians when they are in the U.S. than when they were in China.

4.6.2 Model of the cyclical conversion process

To sum up, the Chinese Christian group’s proselytizing works in a cyclical process to convert the new Chinese students and scholars. In this process, the roles of the converters are always changing. They are helpers at first, then they become friends of the newcomers, then they work as mentors to help the new immigrants to deal with difficulties, and they become converters eventually.
During the development of the process, the students and scholars attend church activities for different purposes: getting material and religious help, making friends, and attaining spiritual relief. The converted ones may attend future proselytizing processes.

The circular process is not always so stable, and it can be easily halted. For example, the processes are mostly halted by the newcomers who stop attending religious activities. When people come back to church, the processes may resume from different phases.

Special methods are used in the process to influence the immigrants who are mostly atheists. All the methods aim at retaining the newcomers in the group so that they can move to the next phase.

Newly-converted students and scholars get involved in the process and play key roles in influencing peers. Then, the new conversion process can start all over again.
CHAPTER 5: A REFLECTION: A STUDY OF CHINESE STUDENTS’ AND SCHOLARS’ MENTAL STATUS

As discussed in the last chapter, Christianity and the studied Christian group satisfy the daily necessities of Chinese students and scholars. The studied group members’ proselytism accelerates the conversions, which is the model for the overall conversion process. These findings are discovered through qualitative studies. Can they also be supported by quantitative studies? To support these findings, the following chapter will study the mental status of Chinese students or scholars in the DC area through statistical analysis of an original survey.

5.1 Data Resources:

The data for this part of the study was originally collected from the Chinese students and scholars in the DC area. I designed and disseminated an online survey questionnaire named “Survey for New Chinese Immigrants’ Religious Condition” for student and scholar newcomers in the DC area who have possibly contacted the studied group. Through this study, I wanted to know Chinese students’ and scholars’ mental status regarding social relationships, economic conditions, moods, and cultural shock. I also wanted to investigate their receptions about Chinese Christian groups, Christianity, and the converters. I used qualtrics.com as my questionnaire platform. The survey was disseminated by snowball sampling to get a larger number of respondents. For dissemination, I posted the link of the survey on the DC Chinese Students’ Facebook page, DC Chinese students listserv email, and encouraged my respondents to re-disseminate the survey. The survey was completely voluntary and confidential. Also, the questionnaire was written both in Chinese and English to make it accessible to a broader
spectrum of respondents. Though no material compensation was provided, as a Chinese student myself, people participated due to fellow friendship.

The “Survey for New Chinese Immigrants’ Religious Condition” has 34 variables and received 221 replies, but only 198 Chinese students’ or scholars’ responses will be analyzed.

5.2 Descriptive analysis:

5.2.1 About the respondents:
Since students and scholars are the main subjects of this thesis, only students’ and scholars’ cases will be analyzed. The respondents are all Chinese students and scholars who are living or used to live in the U.S. 87% of them are currently living in the U.S.; and 13% of them have left the country (as shown in Table 5_1). If new immigrants are defined as people who have being living in the U.S. for less than 3 years, most respondents are newly-immigrated. 26.1% of them have been in the U.S. for less than 1 year. 61.4% of them have been in this country for 1-3 years. 9.2% of them have lived for 3-5 years. Only 3.2% of the respondents have been in the U.S for more than 5 years (see Table 5_2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are you a Chinese in the U.S.?</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5_1 Demographic characteristics: Currently in the U.S.
Most respondents are immigrated students or scholars. 92.9% of them answered “Yes” when being asked “are you a student or a scholar”. 93.5% of them are at the age of 18-26 and have high educational levels. 72.8% of them have master degrees, 13.6% of them have college degrees and 12% of them have Doctoral degrees or professional degrees. It is very obvious that these Chinese students and scholars are uniquely highly educated. I received a few more female respondents than male: 59.8% of them are female; 39.7% are male.

These demographic skews may be caused by two reasons. First, the skews may be caused by the respondents’ composition. With limited accessibility to the students and scholars in the DC area, this survey is done by snow ball sampling which may aggregate the respondents into one or several categories. As a female graduate student and a Chinese student myself, the respondents are very likely to have similar immigration characteristics. Second, the skew is actually very close to the natural composition of new Chinese immigrants. According to the McCarran Walter Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (19), visas are most likely given to immigrants with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Less than 1 year</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5 years</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5_2 Demographic characteristics: length of stay*
high educational levels. People that are “highly skilled immigrants whose services are urgently
needed in the United States” (Charles B. Keely, 1974: 588) have the first preference in obtaining
U.S. visas, because students and scholars who are pursuing high education levels can
theoretically serve the U.S. society better than other groups. Also, young people are more likely
to be new immigrants than older people. Since they are under the first preference benefits for
going visas, it is natural that most new immigrants are young students or scholars.

5.2.2 Chinese students’ and scholars’ social need:
According to the survey, most Chinese students and scholars are not satisfied with their current
social lives in the U.S. and are looking forward to having more social interaction with
compatriots. Only 15.2% of the respondents replied that they are “satisfied or almost satisfied:
better than the social life I had in my own country.” Almost one-third (39.1%) of the
respondents think they are living a neutral social life that is “similar to the social life I had in my
own country.” Unfortunately, almost half (45.7%) of the immigrants are unsatisfied with their
social lives since immigrating (as shown in Table 5_3). It is very obvious that these immigrants
have low satisfaction levels regarding their social conditions. It’s understandable that they are
looking forward to having more social interaction. Churches, as very important social platforms,
can provide these students and scholars chances to socialize with compatriots, which fits the
desires of the immigrants. When being asked “would you like to have more interaction with
compatriots,” 72.3% of the respondents replied “yes” (as shown in Table 5_4). Chinese Christian
groups noticed this desire of newly-immigrated students and scholars and made their groups
places to enrich the students’ and scholars’ social lives.
How satisfied are you with your social life in the U.S.?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfied or almost satisfied: better than the social life I had in my own country</th>
<th>15.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neutral: similar to the social life I had in my own country</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied: not as good as the social life I had in my own country</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5_3 Satisfaction level of social life

Would you like to have more interaction with compatriots?

| Yes | 72.3 |
| No | 27.7 |
| Total | 100.0 |

Table 5_4 The degree of compatriots social expectation

5.2.3 Difficulties in assimilation:

Integrating into mainstream American life can never be an easy thing for new immigrants. The process of assimilation meets difficulties from many aspects.
Economic pressure is one of the most obvious obstacles in assimilation. 59.2% of the respondents feel economically stressed; 35.9% of them don’t think they encountered economic problems (see Table 5_5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you feel economically stressed?</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5_5 Economic condition*

As I have mentioned, culture shock happens to most students/scholars and makes it hard to assimilate to the new cultural environment. When being asked “Have you experienced culture shock?”, 80.8% of the respondents admitted to experiencing culture shock upon arrival to the U.S. (as shown in Table 5_6). With difficulties such as economic stress and culture shock, it is understandable that these students and scholars feel it is not easy to get adapted to U.S life. As shown in Table 5_7, only 16.4% of them think “it is easy to get adapted to U.S life”; One-third of them think it is hard to get assimilated; 52.5% of them think assimilation is neither difficult nor easy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you experienced culture shock?</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5_6 Experience of culture shock

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>System</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5_7 U.S. adaptation ability

5.2.4 Low identification level:

Being identified by ethnicity is the natural desire of immigrants. However, the studied group thinks it is hard to find a sense of belonging in this new environment. 45.6% of the respondents think they probably don’t have a strong sense of belonging in the U.S., 15.2% of them think they definitely don’t have a sense of belonging. Only 2.2% of them said “definitely yes” to the question “Do you have a strong sense of belonging here in the U.S.” 11.5% of them said “probably yes” (as shown in Table 5_8). These immigrants are living a life with low identification levels and don’t have a strong sense of belonging in their new cultural context. The desire to be culturally identified can hardly be satisfied for these immigrants.
Table 5_8 Sense of belonging level

5.2.5 Overall life condition

Based on all the difficulties including economic stress, social need, low identification level and assimilation difficulties, it is natural that these students and scholars are unsatisfied with their lives in the U.S. When being asked “basically, how satisfied are you with your current life in the U.S.”, only 27.7% of the respondents said they are satisfied. Most people (more than half, 59.2%) think they are living a neutral life (as shown in Table 12). Because less than one-third of the respondents are satisfied with their current lives, the overall life condition of these students and scholars are not very optimistic.
5.2.6 Religious condition

The question “do you have a religion or a belief? You can choose more than one answer” serves to investigate the religious condition of the immigrants. It can be seen that the religious condition of the studied immigrants is very close to the religious condition in mainland China. As mentioned in an earlier part of this thesis, most students and scholars have no specific religion. Results of this questionnaire further support that point. The proportion of Atheists is very high that 63% of the respondents describe themselves as atheists. Buddhism still is one of the most influential religion to Chinese people that 16% of the studied people claims to believe in Buddhism. 8.2% of the respondents have Chinese traditional beliefs including Confucianism and Taoism. Though most local Chinese are educated with Communism, only 7.6% of the studied people believe in this theory. Christianity, compared to other western religions, has a higher percentage of believers. 7% of the respondents believe in Christianity (as shown in Table 5_10). Most of the respondents who have other beliefs indicate themselves as agnostics. Interestingly, some atheists also indicate themselves as “Christians” or “Buddhists”. As mentioned in earlier texts, the religious conditions of Chinese people are very unstable and unclear. People may be atheists or agnostics just because they don’t know what exactly they believe in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity/Protestant</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religions</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Communism</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Confucianism, Taoism</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other (please indicate)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5_10 Religious and spiritual condition*

5.2.7 Interaction with Christian groups

The Christian groups in the DC area are really doing a good job in recruiting students and scholars. The studied Chinese students and scholars have mostly contacted with Christian groups; many of them received help from the groups and attended their activities; most people have a moderate attitude to proselytizing behaviors.

Most respondents (83.7%) have been contacted by Christian missionaries. This percentage indicates that the Christian groups did a very good job in contacting new Chinese students and scholars. If the first contact with new-coming students and scholars is considered as a step of the groups’ conversion phase, getting contacted with 83.7% of the newcomers is a great first move.

Many people have received help from Christian groups or attended groups’ activities. More than half of the respondents have enjoyed the food provided by Christian groups. 40.2% of them have received the transportation help from the group. 29.8% of them were picked up at airports by
Christian group members. 17.9% of them used to live in temporary residence provided by Christian groups (as shown in Table 5_11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever received any help from Christian groups?</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Airport pick up</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Temporary Residence</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>82.1%</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mental help</td>
<td>25.3.0%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5_11 Christian Interaction: receiving help

Also, a lot of students and scholars have attended Christian groups’ activities. 40.9% of them attended Friday gatherings; 33.7% of them attended Sunday gatherings; 34.8% of them attended special days’ activities. Social activities are more attractive to the immigrants as more people have attended the groups’ social activities. (44.6% of them) Overall, more than one third of the respondents have attended more than one kind of Christian groups’ activities (as shown in Table 5_12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever attended Christian groups' activities?</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Friday gatherings</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sunday gatherings</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Special days activities</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social Activities</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though these numbers are not impressively high, I still think the Christian groups’ behaviors are enormously influential. It may be a normal percentage for Christians that 1/3 of them have received help from their churches and attended religious activities, but for these survey respondents who are mostly atheists and only 6% Christians, this number is obviously impressive. If people were still in China, it could never happen that such a great percentage of them would be involved in Christian groups. Overall, I think the Christian groups did a fantastic job in getting people recruited into their groups.

The studied Chinese immigrants in the DC area have tolerant attitudes toward proselytizing behaviors. According to the result of the survey, only 7.6% of the respondents dislike the Christian groups’ proselytizing behaviors. Most people (74.5%) have neutral attitudes toward conversions. 17.4% of them welcome the Christian conversions (see Table 5_13). As mentioned before, 63% of the respondents claimed themselves as atheists, and only 7% of them believe in Christianity or Protestantism. However, different from what we normally think about atheists who resist to religious conversions, these atheists are actually very tolerant to Christian conversions. This fact contradicts with their atheism and agnosticism beliefs, but may indicate the students’ and scholars’ wishes and necessities of depending on the spiritual. There are significantly more people interested in Christianity than there are believers. I cannot deny the
contributions of Christian groups in the DC area. It is highly possible that they do a good job in religious persuasion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What's your attitude toward Christian proselytizing behaviors?</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike Very Much</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Like nor Dislike</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5_13 Attitudes to proselytizing

Other evidence can further support that Christian groups’ missionary jobs successfully work for these Chinese students and scholars. When being asked “how effective do you think the Christian proselytizing behaviors are for the new Chinese immigrants”, almost one-third of the respondents (33.5%) think the conversions are effective; 53.8% of them think the conversions have neutral effectiveness; only 12.6% of them think the groups’ conversion is ineffective. These numbers are impressive and interesting when compared with the fact that 65% of the respondents are atheists. Proselytizing behaviors are considered to have neutral or higher effectiveness (as shown in Table 5_14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How effective do you think the Christian proselytizing behaviors are for the new Chinese immigrants?</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Effective nor Ineffective</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.14 The effectiveness of proselytizing

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, there is one interesting but confusing fact that even though only 6% of the respondents are Christians, 33.5% of them think proselytizing behaviors are effective. Maybe we can regard this difference as a sign of future conversions, or a sign of people’s confidence and trust in converters? These questions need further studies.

5.3 Hypotheses:

H3: Students and scholars who are more likely to be involved with Christian groups (more likely to receive help from the Christian groups and attend the groups’ activities) are more likely to be satisfied with their current lives in the U.S.

H4: Students and scholars who reject the Christian groups’ proselytizing behaviors and who think the proselytizing behaviors less effective are atheists.

H5: Students and scholars who think it is easy to adapt to society, receive more help from Christian groups, and attend Christian activities are more likely to think the religious group successful.
5.4 Brief description of the project:

For all the hypotheses, I only used cases who are students or scholars. By selecting cases from Q16, only replies from respondents who are students and scholars were analyzed.

For the third hypothesis, I used ANOVA to test it. Dependent Variable is an ordinal level index combined with Q11 “Have you ever received any help from Christian groups?” and Q12 “Have you ever attended Christian groups’ activities”. Factor is Q8: “basically, how satisfied are you with your current life in the U.S?”.

For the fourth hypothesis, I used binary logistic analysis. Dependent variable will be “Atheists” from Q11-8 “Do you have a religion or a belief? You can choose more than one answer. - Atheist.” 1 “Yes” is regarded as the correct answer. 0 “No” is regarded as incorrect answer. Independents will be q14 “What's your attitude toward Christian proselytizing behaviors?” (1=Dislike Very Much, 2=Neither Like nor Dislike, 3= Welcome) and q15 “How effective do you think the Christian proselytizing behaviors are for the new Chinese immigrants”. (1=Ineffective, 2=Neither Effective nor Ineffective, 3= Effective).

For the fifth hypothesis, I used OLS Regression. My dependent variable is “success” which is the combination of two variables: “What's your attitude toward Christian proselytizing behaviors” and “How effective do you think the Christian proselytizing behaviors are for the new Chinese immigrants.” The scores of variables are from 2-6. The higher the score, the more successful the students and scholars think about the proselytizing behaviors. My independent variables are: Q7
“Do you think it is easy/hard to get adapted to the U.S. life”; index “help” (combined with q12_1 to q12_5) and index “activities” (combined with q13_1 to q13_4).

5.5 Conceptual and operational definitions:
Survey data from “Survey for New Chinese Immigrants’ Religious Condition” will be used to examine the hypotheses.

H3: Students and scholars who are more likely to be involved with Christian groups (more likely to receive help from the Christian groups and attend the groups’ activities) are more likely to be satisfied with their current lives in the U.S.

A “student” is “a person who is learning at a college or university, or sometimes at a school”; A “scholar” is “a person who studies a subject in great detail, especially at a university.” All the student and scholar cases have been selected through Question16 “Are you a student or a scholar.” Only respondents who replied “1=Yes” are selected. “2=No” answers are regarded as missing values.

_________________
14 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/student?q=student
15 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/scholar?q=scholar+
A “Christian” is “one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ”. A Christian group is the organizational combination of Christians; Involvement means “the state of being included in an activity.”

“Involvement with Christian groups” means the interaction with Christian organizations. In this hypothesis, the created variable “involvement” is an index built by the combination of these following highly correlated questions:

Q12-1 “Have you ever received any help from Christian groups?-Airport pick up”
Q12-2 “Have you ever received any help from Christian groups?-Temporary Residence”
Q12-3 “Have you ever received any help from Christian groups?-Food”
Q12-4 “Have you ever received any help from Christian groups?-Transportation”
Q12-5 “Have you ever received any help from Christian groups?-Mental help”
Q13-1 “Have you ever attended Christian groups' activities?-Friday gatherings”
Q13-2 “Have you ever attended Christian groups' activities?-Sunday gatherings”
Q13-3 “Have you ever attended Christian groups' activities?-Special days activities”
Q13-4 “Have you ever attended Christian groups' activities?-Social Activities”

Question 12-1 to 12-5 and Q13-1 to Q13-4 are all coded as “1=Yes” “2=No”.

“Satisfied” is defined as “pleased because you have got what you wanted, or because something has happened in the way that you wanted.” “Life satisfaction” means “the way a person

16 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/american-english/involvement?q=involvement
17 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/satisfied_1?q=satisfied
perceives how his or her life has been and how they feel about where it is going in the future. It is a measure of well being. Life satisfaction has been measured in relation to economic standing, amount of education, experiences, and the people's residence as well as many other topics. Respondents’ life satisfaction levels are measured with Q8 “Basically, how satisfied are you with your current life in the U.S.?” Variables ask respondents to choose from the following choices: “1=Dissatisfied” “2=Neutral” “3=Satisfied”.

H4: Students and scholars who reject the Christian groups’ proselytizing behaviors and who think the proselytizing behaviors less effective are atheists.

An “atheist” refers to the person “who believes that there is no deity” Reject means “to refuse to accept, use or believe something or someone.” Q10-8: “Do you have a religion or a belief? You can choose more than one answer. -Atheist” is used to measure whether a respondent is an atheist. Variables are coded as: “1=Yes” “0 or sysmis=No”.

“Conversion” means “someone who is converted to something is persuaded to accept new preferences or beliefs.” “Conversion behavior” refers to the endeavors and actions to make conversions possible. “Effective” means “successful or achieving the results” that a person

---

18 [http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Satisfaction_with_Life_Index](http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Satisfaction_with_Life_Index)
20 [http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/reject_1?q=reject](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/reject_1?q=reject)
21 [http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/american-english/convert_1?q=conversion](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/american-english/convert_1?q=conversion)
22 [http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/effective_1?q=effective](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/effective_1?q=effective)
want. Q15 “How effective do you think the Christian proselytizing behaviors are for the new Chinese immigrants?” will be the independent variables to test H4. They are coded as following: “1=Ineffective, 2=Neither Effective nor Ineffective, 3= Effective.”

H5: Students and scholars who think it is easy to get adapted into the society, who received more help from Christian groups and who attend more Christian activities are more likely to think the religious group successful.

“Adapt” means “to change something to suit different conditions or uses.” To test whether respondents think adaptation is easy, Q7 “Do you think it is easy/hard to get adapted to the U.S. life” will be analyzed. Variables are coded as: “1=Hard” “2=Neutral” “3=Easy”.

“Help” means “to make it possible or easier for someone to do something, by doing part of the work yourself or by providing advice, money, support, etc.” In this database, “help” is an index combined with “q12_1” “q12_2” “q12_3” “q12_4” and “q12_5”. The lower the score, the more help students and scholars have received from Christian groups.

“Activity” means “the work of a group or organization to achieve an aim.” Christian activities: activities hold by Christian groups. In this study, “Christian activities” is an index combined with

23 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/adapt_1?q=adapt
24 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/help_1?q=help
25 http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/activity_2?q=activities#activity_2__3
“q13_1” “q13_2” “q13_3” and “q13_4”. The lower the score, the more activities of Christian groups students and scholars have attended.

“Successful” means “achieving desired results.” In this study, “Successful” is an index combined with Q14 “What's your attitude toward Christian proselytizing behaviors?” (“1=Dislike Very Much” “2=Neither Like nor Dislike” “3=Welcome”) and Q15 “How effective do you think the Christian proselytizing behaviors are for the new Chinese immigrants?” (“1=Ineffective” “2=Neither Effective nor Ineffective” “3=Effective”). The index “successful” is valued 2-6. The lower the score, the less successful the proselytizing behaviors to students and scholars.

5.7 Analysis:

H3:

By constructing the index of “involvement”, which is the combinations of questions of asking students and scholars whether they have received help or attended activities of Christian groups, it can be seen that all nine questions are highly correlated and constructed a perfect index: the more likely students and scholars receive help from Christian groups, the more likely they attend the groups’ activities. This point supported the theory of “exchange” mentioned in earlier texts: the more help the students and scholars receive from the groups, for exchange, the more obligated they feel to attend the groups’ activities.
Since the overall anova model fits, there are differences between Christian group involvement levels for students and scholars with different life satisfaction levels, and the differences are statistically significant (see Table 5_15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>68.485</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34.243</td>
<td>4.816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>1123.465</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>7.111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1191.950</td>
<td>160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5_15 Model fit for H3

Students and scholars with lower or medium level of life satisfaction are more likely to receive help from Christian groups and attend their activities. However, to people who have high life satisfaction levels, they are less likely to get involved into Christian groups. The differences of involvement between neutral satisfaction group and high satisfaction group are pretty big and statistically significant. However, the differences between other groups are not that significant. Interestingly, neutral satisfaction group is more highly involved into Christian groups than others (as shown in 5_16). Since 59.2% of the respondents define their life satisfaction level neutral (as mentioned in earlier texts), it can be seen that most people are possibly getting involved into the Christian groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Basically, how satisfied are you with your current life in the U.S.?</th>
<th>(J) Basically, how satisfied are you with your current life in the U.S.?</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>-1.00263</td>
<td>.280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tukey HSD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>.42826</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00263</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.43089</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.42826</td>
<td>.821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.43089</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.16 Relationship between Christian involvement levels and life satisfaction levels*

The hypothesis that “Students and scholars who are more involved with Christian groups (who received help from the Christian groups and who attend the groups’ activities) are less likely to be satisfied with their current lives in the U.S.” is partly supported by this statistical study.

H4:

It seems to be natural that atheists are more likely to repel conversion actions and doubt the effectiveness of conversion. However, based on the complicated Chinese people mental status that most people are actually agnostics rather than real atheists, I think this hypothesis need further supports to reject the null hypothesis: “Students and scholars who don’t repel the Christian groups’ proselytizing behaviors and who don’t think the proselytizing behaviors less effective are not atheists”.

The results of model Chi-square is slightly not statically significant. That is to say: not all atheist students and scholars dislike conversions and think conversions ineffective.
Though only at least 2.5% and at most 3.5% of the responded students’ and scholars’ religious condition (whether atheists) can be predicted. But in fact, adding the independents do help us in predicting whether a student/scholar is atheist. (The possibility increased from 63% to 65.7%.)

Q14 “What's your attitude toward Christian proselytizing behaviors” does a better job in predicting than Q15 “How effective do you think the Christian proselytizing behaviors are for the new Chinese immigrants” (see Table 5_17). But overall, these independent variables together slightly improve our ability to predict whether a person is atheist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables in the Equation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Q15, Q14.

Table 5_17 Variables for Equation H4

Though I cannot reject the null hypothesis, this result further supported the opinion in earlier texts that Chinese people have complicated religious and cultural backgrounds and that there is a high possibility to covert atheists into Christians.

H5:
According to the results of Pearson’s R, we don’t have to worry about the problem of multicollinearity for the studied model (see Table 5_18). The overall model fits. 19.9% of the variance can be explained by the model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How long have you being in the U.S.?</th>
<th>Do you think it is easy/hard to get adapted to the U.S. life?</th>
<th>success</th>
<th>activities</th>
<th>help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think it is easy/hard to get adapted to the U.S. life?</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>success</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>.155*</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.373**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.273**</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>-.373**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.186*</td>
<td>-.073</td>
<td>-.365**</td>
<td>.660**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5_18 Multicolinearity text for H5 model
According to the coefficient results, “Do you think it is easy/hard to adapted to the U.S. life,” “activities” and “help” are all significant variable for whether students and scholars think the Christian groups do conversion jobs successfully.

The variable “whether people think it is easy to adapt to the U.S. life” has the biggest explaining power in predicting whether Christian groups work successfully on a student or a scholar (as shown in Table 5_19).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficientsa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5_19 OLS Regression coefficients for H5

The hypothesis, “Students and scholars who think it is easy to get adapted into the society, who received more help from Christian groups and who attend Christian activities are more likely to think the religious group successful,” is supported.

These findings also support the opinion in earlier texts that by giving newly-immigrated students and scholars help and inviting them to religious activities, Chinese Christian converters raise the possibilities of successfully converting the newcomers.
5.8 Conclusion for self-conducted survey

From the analysis of this self-conducted survey, some conclusions can be determined:

Chinese Students and scholars need social opportunities; they are not satisfied with their current social lives and look forward to having more interaction with their Chinese peers. This finding supported last chapter’s assertion that Chinese students and scholars are in social need.

Chinese students and scholars have difficulty assimilating into mainstream American life: culture shock is one of the biggest concerns, making them feel it is hard to adapt to U.S. society. Furthermore, they do not have a strong sense of belonging, which makes racial identification hard to realize. As mentioned earlier, immigrants want to fulfill their American Dreams by assimilating into U.S. society.

Students and scholars have neutral satisfaction levels with their current lives (which supports the theory that people are looking for answers for life’s challenges). Most Chinese students and scholars are atheists, but their beliefs are not strong due to China’s current religious situation (which makes it possible to convert them). The interaction between Christian groups and the new immigrants are frequent and students and scholars have positive receptions toward the Christian groups’ proselytizing behavior. It is highly possible that an intimate relationship between newcomers and the studied group is built.
Providing more help to new immigrants is highly correlated with getting more students and scholars to attend Christian activities. The more help people receive, the more likely they will attend the group’s activities in order to compensate the helpers. This finding is supported by the observation that by providing help to students and scholars, the studied group recruits more attendees for their activities. “Exchange” makes the helped ones feel obligated to attend the helpers’ religious group.

More involvement with religious groups is consistent with higher levels of life satisfaction. Students and scholars with medium levels of life satisfaction have the least involvement with Christian groups. It can be hypothesized that Christianity makes people feel more satisfied with their lives and attracts people who are looking to increase their life satisfaction levels. This point further supports the discussion that Christianity provides its believers with an easy and quick answer to life’s challenges.

Atheist students and scholars do not necessarily reject Christian groups’ proselytizing behaviors, but they do think these behaviors are effective. On the contrary, some atheists have very welcome and positive attitudes toward Christian conversion. This point supports that Chinese spiritual beliefs are not stable and strong and that Chinese people can be converted easier than people from other cultures.

The more help students and scholars receive from Christian groups, the more likely they are to attend Christian activities and confirm the success of proselytizing behaviors. Also, since people
who feel it is easy to adapt to U.S life are more likely to confirm the success of Christian proselytizing, it worth hypothesizing that Christianity and Christian groups make them feel more adaptive.

In addition to all these facts, there are two factors driving Chinese students and scholars to Christianity: the strong desire to assimilate into mainstream American culture and the drive to establish ethnic identities as minority members.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 Research findings:

Through literature reviews, grounded theory studies, textual analysis, and statistical research, I discussed the growing numbers of atheistic Chinese students and scholars in the U.S. becoming Christians through proselytizing from a Chinese Christian group.

After the study, I found that “race” is a very important factor in differentiating people from their religious behaviors (worship services and religious education). The studied Chinese Christian group, as a group that consists of Chinese immigrants, can better share the students and scholars’ religious habits. Also, it’s been supported that devout believers are more likely to be official members of their religious congregations. This means being an official member of a Christian group may give its believers a more devout and better religious experience. These facts give the studied Chinese Christian group an advantage in recruiting Chinese believers.

For Chinese students and scholars, the process of becoming Christians (or getting close to Christianity and the Christian group) is a process of assimilation and identification. Christianity and the studied group not only fit their cultural and social necessities of being abroad, but also provide them with an easy way to solve difficulties, assimilate into the U.S. environment, and get ethnical identifications. The behaviors of the Christian group members greatly accelerate the conversion process. They provide help and activities to build rapport with Chinese students and scholars; they set themselves as life models for the newcomers to imitate.
There is a model of proselytizing process from both the converters’ and the students/scholars’ perspectives. The roles of converters are always changing to fulfill the needs of the students and scholars in different phases of conversion.

The results from my original survey supported these findings: Chinese students and scholars are eager to assimilate into American life; they also want to gain a sense of belonging through racial identification. The converters’ assistance motivates students and scholars to attend their religious activities; Christianity and the Christian group may increase people’s life satisfaction levels. Students and scholars hold positive attitudes toward proselytizing.

6.2 Other facts:
However, the processes of conversion is always not as easy for the studied Christian group. After the first wave of new students and scholars, the attendance of their religious activities gradually declines. At the beginning of last semester, their church, which can accommodate around 200 people was fully packed; however, by the end of last semester, only around 50 people attended their Friday gatherings.

Moreover, their behaviors are not always noble and respectable. For instance, their strong loathing of homosexual people is not acceptable to the public. One group member even used to use the word “monsters” to describe gays. Their discrimination towards sensitive religious issues and these marginalized groups is unfair and intolerable to many Chinese students and scholars.
With these attitudes, the proselytizers may lose a big amount of believers who have more open minds. However, this point may need further study in the future.

6.3 Contributions:

My research can fill the blank in current immigrant studies. Although religious conversions are popular subjects of studies, the mental status of Chinese immigrants, especially Chinese students and scholars, are rarely studied. On the contrary, my thesis focuses on this very specific field and further enriches the proselytizing spectrum.

As a native Chinese, I have a better understanding of Chinese history and culture; as a graduate student in the U.S. myself, I strongly sympathize with the desires of other Chinese students and scholars to assimilate and discover identification. I think I have successfully incorporated Chinese cultural background and Chinese students’ and scholars’ immigration expectations in this thesis, which may hardly be possible for cultural outsiders.

More importantly, since Chinese students and scholars, as a unique minority group, are not always noticed by the U.S. majority, I hope my study can draw the attention to a broader audience to understand and assist this minor immigrant group.

6.4 Shortcomings and future improvements:

First of all, English is not my mother language. Writing a thesis in English is a hard task. The thesis is not at desirable language level, which may cause difficulties in reading.
Second, as an atheist myself, even though I did some research on Christianity and American culture beforehand, I still think I have a lot to learn. Some points of views in this thesis regarding Christianity and American culture may be unsophisticated or even incorrect. I am open to critiques and suggestions.

Third, due to objective limitations, this thesis only studies a specific Chinese Christian population and a portion of Chinese students/scholars in the DC area. I hope these limitations can be eliminated in future studies. I hope scholars can study the mental status of Chinese students and scholars nationwide with more scientific sampling methods. I also hope more Christian groups who work on Chinese students and scholars can be studied for further understandings and comparisons.

6.5 My next step:
In future research, I will devote more attention to how organizational communication works in small networks like the studied religious group. Small group communication is a very important sect in communication theories, which can promote the self development of small groups. However, this theory is more frequently used in business fields, but very few are studied under Chinese contexts and religious contexts. I think it will be very interesting to study how Chinese students and scholars fix psychological and physical maladjustment through assimilation and identification within their small Christian groups, and how they communicate with each other and solve conflicts.
APPENDIX : QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey for New Chinese Immigrants’ Religious Condition

Dear compatriots, I am a master candidate in Georgetown University majored in Communication. I’m writing my thesis regarding to the religious situation of new immigrated Chinese. No matter whether you have a religion or not, you are capable of answering this questionnaire. Thank you for taking time to participate. Your response is very important to me. Thanks again for your support.

1. Are you a Chinese in the U.S.?
   1. Yes
   2. No

2. How long have you being in the U.S.?
   1. 1-3 years
   2. 3-5 years
   3. 5-10 years
   4. More than 10 years

3. How satisfied are you with your social life in the U.S.?
   1. Satisfied or almost satisfied: better than the social life I had in my own country
   2. Neutral: similar to the social life I had in my own country
   3. Unsatisfied: not as good as the social life I had in my own country

4. Would you like to have more interaction with compatriots?
   1. Yes
2. No
3. Don’t Know

5. Do you feel economically stressed?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Don’t Know

6. Have you experienced Culture Shock?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Don't know

7. Do you think it is easy/hard to become adapted to the U.S. life?
   1. Hard
   2. Neutral
   3. Easy

8. Basically, how satisfied are you with your current life in the U.S.?
   1. Dissatisfied
   2. Neutral
   3. Satisfied

9. Do you have a strong sense of belonging here in the U.S.?
   1. Definitely yes
   2. Probably yes
3. Maybe
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not

10. Do you have a religion or a belief? You can choose more than one answer.
   1. Christianity
   2. Catholic
   3. Buddhism
   4. Communism
   5. Confucianism, Taoism
   6. Islam
   7. Other (please indicate)
   8. Atheist

11. Have you ever contacted by Christian Missionaries?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Don't know

12. Have you ever received any help from Christian groups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Airport pick up</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Residence</td>
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<td>Food</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Mental help

13. Have you ever attended their activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friday gatherings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday gatherings</td>
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<td>Special days activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Activities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

14. What's your attitude toward Christian proselytizing behaviors?
   1. Dislike Very Much
   2. Neither Like nor Dislike
   3. Welcome

15. How effective do you think the Christian proselytizing behaviors are for the new Chinese immigrants?
   1. Ineffective
   2. Neither Effective nor Ineffective
   3. Effective

16. Are you a student or a scholar?
   1. Yes
   2. No
17. Your age
1. Under 18
2. 18-26
3. 27-35
4. 36-55
5. 56 or more

18. Your gender
1. Male
2. Female

19. What is your highest level of education?
1. Less than high school
2. High School/ GED
3. College Degree
4. Master Degree
5. Doctoral Degree or Professional Degree (JD, MD)

Thanks again for your support
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Charles Hirschman, The role of religion in the origins and adaptation of immigrant groups in the United States, IMR Volume 38 Number 3 (Fall 2004): 1206-1233.


