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Using the ethnographic data collected in a Chinese Christian church in New York City's Chinatown, this study explores the continuity and change of local tradition in the context of migration and globalization. My findings show that the Chinese youth in the church are adapting to the chaotic new socioeconomic environment through their belief and practice that are neither completely Chinese nor totally American in cultural terms, and they participate in making as well as learning the local ethnic tradition. Finally, this study presents an analysis of a dynamic relationship between ethnic legacy, lived experience and institutional structure in the ethnic church.

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An identity and a sense of community are hard to find for the culturally and geographically transplanted, but that has not

day. It was crowded and noisy there. I 've heard that there were gangs in the arcade. It was a bit scary but the arcade was always very exciting. I could find myself there. The feeling of winning a game was exhilarating."

Being with gangs gave them an identity, a sense of belonging, and a sense of power as well as further distancing themselves from the school, the family, and the mainstream culture. As Ricky said, “I felt down after being caught several times by the police. My family didn’t accept me. My teacher thought I was bad. My classmates didn’t like me. I was only accepted in the arcade. The arcade was like my home where I could show off. With only a quarter, I could play for several hours. I liked the feeling of being superior. I hoped to be superior in school, too. I wanted to be better than other students. Then I could tell my mom that I had good grades, and I was not wasting your money on video games. But this was only a dream that I didn’t know how to make it come true.”

The family is the primary way for the Chinese to deal with a new and hostile environment through providing protection and certainty. As Freedman (1966) has found, the Chinese in South China adapted to an environment characterized by political

ate and encourage personal sharing by saying, "In Jesus Christ, we are one big family. We share all the happiness and unhappiness with others in our family, and in doing so we can give support to each other." For the youths, the topic of their sharing is usually about their relations with their parents and friends. For the elderly, they like to talk about their relations with their kids. After each sharing, prayers would follow under the pastor's guidance. A strong sense of being in a big family permeates the service. In fact, it has been found that the parent-child relationship is placed at a more important place in the speeches and lectures of the Chinatown churches than the non-Chinese churches and the non-Chinatown Chinese churches.[8] Chinese food is served each time soon after Sunday service. CLL is a church family. It is also a Chinese family where the notions of Chineseness are celebrated.

There seems to be a dual effect for the family organization of the Chinese church. On the one hand, the Chinese family metaphor facilitates the members' acceptance of Christianity that is foreign to Chinese culture and helps to maintain the unity among them. This shows the efforts of incorporating Christian religion to their indigenous culture and social order. On the other hand, the family metaphor relieves the uncertainty and the anxiety of the Chinese immigrants who have lost the protection and the sense of security within the traditional family in the processes of immigration and assimilation.

As reflected in the analogy between the church and the family, the Chinese Christian church also engages itself to restore the family and strengthen the family bond by integrating sacred elements from Christian religion. As the Bible says: "honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12)."[9] God's will seems to match the Chinese emphasis on

those church youth Christmas and Easter are just as important as the Chinese Lunar New Year. The pastor's success in stabilizing the church and reaching out to the youth actually depends on his ability to communicate with both the socio-cultural elements of Chinatown and the Protestant ethic.

Sung (1987) points out that the residential and psychological segregation will consequently make the Chinese feel ill at ease in any mixed social setting, which is a psychological as well as an economic barrier to one's well being later in life. Due to language barrier and other disadvantages, the inner-city youth have few opportunities to exercise civic skills and gain self-confidence in the larger society. However, CLL, an ethnic community church, provides an alternative way for their empowerment in the local. Civic opportunities for youths are available in various church activities. Furthermore, the church family offers a caring environment, a safe place, for their self- development.

In the Chinese cultural context, it is not encouraged and even stigmatised to disclose personal emotion and experience to outsiders and non-family members. Lin and Lin (1978, p. 455) make clear this Chinese cultural pattern by indicating:

> "For many thousands of years the trust and sense of security rarely extended beyond the family circle. . . . Financial, educational, marital, health, or family discord affecting any of the individuals is seen as the responsibility of the family. The exposure of such information to outsiders is regarded as loss of face and a disgrace to the family."

The Chinese way of life tends to underplay all matters of the heart (Hsu 1972). However, weekly worship service, cell group activities and other church gatherings strongly encourage church members to open their hearts through public speaking in front of other members. In the church I have heard many different types of life experiences told by the church members themselves, involving teenage pregnancy, devoice, personal financial crisis, gambling problem and so on. In CLLers' words, sharing is to "open ourselves to God" and "let others enter our lives." However, these occasions are provided not only for people to voice their concerns, but also for them to exercise presentation ability and develop confidence in their own competence. Delivering a testimony, giving a sharing, initiating a prayer in front of the church, and even making a visitation are all occasions culturally empowering the disadvantaged youths.

Ricky saw his lack of confidence as a direct result of what he had been through in the first few years in America as a immigrant child. "I was so shy, because I had my past experience dragging me. I didn't have any confidence at all in the past. I failed everything. I failed the school, I failed the family, and I didn't have friends. The experience of being hurt when a person was young made what he is like now," said him with emotion. However, since he became a youth group leader in CLL, he has gained a lot of confidence by delivering speeches in public. He was always invited to give testimonies in different churches, sometimes even in the church of other state. "Of course, I

experiences and feelings to outsiders. However, even within the immediate family circle it is not uncommon for them to have difficulty in expressing themselves. As Zhou (1997) indicates, there is an immediate bicultural conflict among the Chinese American families in the perception of affection. Self-control and indirect communication are valued in Chinese American families while self-disclosure of emotions may be viewed as immaturity and are not culturally accepted. Although in some cases the family ties and kinship system may satisfy the individuals' need for affection, provide a sense of continuity and belonging, and promote stability and security (Hsu 1973), there are significant costs associated with the traditional family roles if we take acculturation into account. Like other Asian American families, the power structure of Chinese American families is vertical and hierarchical (Kim 1985). Due to the parental authority within the family, more Americanized Chinese youths may feel it difficult to express to their less acculturated parents problems that they have never met before. When asked what the

overcame the “non-touching taboo” in the traditional Chinese emotional structure.

Chinese traditional authority tended to hide emotions. However, the ethnic church provides a public space where the disadvantaged immigrant youth who feel so emotionally detached in the

structure has historically shaped the institutional form of the ethnic church. And the young church members serve as the agents of

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