

Asian American Pan-Ethnic Formation and Congregational Cultures

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(Chapter Draft)

Paul would say, “To the Jews I’ll be a Jew and to the Greeks I’ll be a Greek.” So maybe, in order to share the gospel among Asians, you must first understand what does it mean to be Asian. Why is it that you can do outreach to Asian Americans while another Anglo congregation can’t? What is it that attracts people to each other?”

--Chinese American minister of an Asian American congregation

When China and Japan were at war, Chinese and Japanese churches in the United States organized their members to support homeland movements.¹ During World War II, Chinese Americans wore buttons declaring “I am Chinese” to distinguish themselves from Japanese Americans who were being rounded up for internment camps. As the primary social institutions in the community, these congregations served to maintain ethnic ties and to reinforce a specific linguistic/cultural identity.

Two generations later, Chinese and Japanese American congregations are undergoing a significant transformation into pan-ethnic congregations. Groups who were once at war now pray and worship together with common songs, liturgies and religious understandings. Those who distanced themselves from the other now unite under a single group identity and new subculture. In fact, half of this study’s churches in the San Francisco Bay Area now target *Asian* Americans instead of focusing on a single ethnic group. As congregational entrepreneurs, Christian leaders have chose a newly constituted racial group as their spiritual market niche.

Given the traditional enmity between Chinese and Japanese and the historic American congregational pattern of assimilation, an Asian American pan-ethnic church seems an unlikely new form of religious congregation.² The minister in the opening quotation asks, “What is it that attracts people to each other?” Similarly, this chapter explores why Asian Americans have formed new pan-ethnic congregations instead of remaining ethnic-specific or assimilating into the American mainstream denominational landscape. *What are the factors that have led*

Chinese and Japanese American congregations to claim new identities as pan-ethnic Asian American ones? Furthermore, this minister suggests that we “understand what does it mean to be Asian.” If these pan-ethnic congregations are no longer based on a common cultural or linguistic solidarity, *what do ministers mean when they identify their congregations as pan-Asian? What are the congregational cultures that emerge?* This study of forty-four Chinese and Japanese American congregations in the San Francisco Bay Area tells the story of the emergence and expressions of Asian American congregations.

I argue that today, Chinese and Japanese American churches mobilize around racial identities that are not fixed, but fluid. Because the racial experiences of Asian Americans vary by ethnicity, generation, class and gender, Asian American pan-ethnic identity tends to be more symbolic in nature than grounded in a particular common cultural or linguistic background.³ Similar to the notion of symbolic ethnicity, a symbolic racial identity deals more with the expressive feeling of connection to a group than actual ethnic cultural commonalties.⁴ Yet this subjective connection to pan-ethnic group symbols might be very salient and meaningful so that one’s identity does affect both individual and group behavior and patterns.⁵ Building solidarity and mobilizing a congregation around this pan-ethnic identity is thus significantly different from organizing around common roots, as previous ethnic congregations have.

First, this chapter will review theories about the development of ethnic congregations. The formation of Asian American pan-ethnic congregations challenges theories in the Sociology of Race and Religion that expect the assimilation of Chinese and Japanese American churches. Second, it will discuss the political economy of the San Francisco Bay Area that categorizes groups by race and structures pan-ethnic formation. Third, it will detail the demographic trends and generational transitions that necessitate organizational changes to ensure the survival and growth of congregations that were originally Chinese or Japanese American. Fourth, it examines the broader institutional contexts that inform ministers of racial discourse and models for church development. Because evangelical and mainline ministers differ in how they define the group, Asian American, their respective congregational cultures differ in worship style, ministry focus, and activities. By comparing mainline Christian with evangelical congregational cultures, this chapter shows how pan-ethnicity remains a fluid, socially constructed grouping.

Theories of Ethnic Church Development

Churches of previous white immigrant groups to America have tended to evolve from ethnic institutions to non-ethnic, denominational churches.⁶ As members acculturated to such an extent that their ethnicity no longer distinguished them much from other Americans, ethnic churches no longer had to meet particular group needs and could not sustain themselves by serving only one ethnic constituency. Immigrant congregations either died out or moved to the suburbs without retaining ethnic specificity. The building that remained would house a new congregation meeting the needs of the local population.⁷ As American-born generations of Chinese and Japanese Americans also become acculturated, move away from ethnic neighborhoods, and out-marry in high percentages we would expect these groups to assimilate into local congregations.⁸

Not only do individuals acculturate, but ethnic institutions assimilate into the American religious landscape as well. Following a trajectory suggested by H. Richard Niebuhr,⁹ Mark Mullins argues that over time, ethnic churches de-ethnicize as they adapt to generational differences.¹⁰ Immigrant congregations, preserving the culture for newcomers, maintain language and ethnic traditions. Second generation congregations are bilingual to serve the linguistic needs of both the older and younger generations. As the older generation dies out, congregations must broaden their target group and create an environment that would be attractive to others. The process of accommodating English-speaking members and incorporating families of mixed marriages leads to the transition from ethnic congregations to multi-ethnic congregations.

Similarly, R. Stephen Warner and Judith Wittner emphasize the role of the American cultural context in shaping the generational transition of ethnic churches.¹¹ In the introduction to the anthology, *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, Warner stresses “the continuity of the immigrant religious experience between the nineteenth century and the present.”¹² Although regional, national, and linguistic cultural identities may decline, religious identities eventually win out and survive.

Warner also writes that racial dynamics, although currently operative, are not permanent factors affecting the life cycle of ethnic churches. He believes “the irreducibility of “race” applies primarily to the African American experience.”¹³ Furthermore, he suggests that

assimilation is a protracted process so that “there is no consensus among us whether descendants of the groups we focus on will maintain in the middle of the next century the same racial status that they occupy today.”¹⁴

Contrary to expectations, however, Chinese and Japanese American churches are not dying out or becoming open to all but adapting by becoming Asian American. Of the forty-four congregations in the San Francisco Bay Area that were surveyed in this study, half now claim a pan-ethnic identity (See Appendix).¹⁵ These findings require new understandings of the relationships between race and religion beyond the straight-line assimilation paradigm that accounts for the acculturation of Asian Americans but not the structural assimilation of this group.

The Racialization of Asian Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area

Possessing the oldest and one of the largest concentrations of Asians in the United States, the San Francisco Bay Area structures pan-ethnic formation through its politics and its economy. Within the Bay Area, Asians make up 29% of San Francisco County, 15% of Alameda County and 18% of Santa Clara County according to the 1990 U.S. Census. This presence of Asian Americans has clearly affected the public education system, the regional economy, and increasingly, local politics. In turn, these institutions have shaped the character and contours of the ethnic and racial identities of Asian Americans.

As Asians receive their education in the San Francisco Bay Area, they become socialized into a system that acknowledges students’ ethnic backgrounds and multiculturalism to a limited degree.¹⁶ Almost every school district in the area now has a policy regarding multicultural education and developing ethnic pride. As an example, Santa Clara Unified School District, with minority students making up 57% of the population, approved a set of “Community Values and Beliefs” that included fostering a “respect for diversity.”¹⁷

Institutions of higher education in the area also recognize ethnic and racial groupings. At the University of California at Berkeley, where the undergraduate student body in 1998 was 41% Asian and 62% minority, students must take an “American Cultures” course in which three of five racial groups must be covered in a comparative manner.¹⁸ Not only do students learn about different racial groups, but also they divide into these groups socially.¹⁹ A report on the students’ experiences of racial diversity at U.C. Berkeley suggests that on campus, students

“learn what it means to be Asian American.”²⁰ This racialization, in which race becomes a significant factor in interpreting social patterns, exemplifies how social structures such as the school system legitimate certain groupings.

Upon entering the labor force in the Bay Area, Asian Americans find themselves within a globalized economy where transnational Pacific Rim ties are valued. For example, Cupertino, a suburb on the San Francisco peninsula, the Chamber of Commerce targeted a membership drive specifically towards Asian Americans who make up 22% of the businesses in the city.²¹ Local media accounts report the presence of new ethnic malls, ethnic markets, and booming immigrant entrepreneurship.²² As industries and businesses increasingly view Asians and Asian Americans as a viable market, a side result is a growing group consciousness among Asians of their common market identity.

Political activities also structure how Asians view themselves and group together. The increased number of Asian Americans elected to office in the 1990s, especially in the Bay Area, signals an emergence of a possible ethnic voting bloc pursuing their own material interests. Whereas San Francisco had only one elected Asian American supervisor in 1990, Asians may hold six of the eleven county supervisorial seats in the year 2000.²³ With the increased attention on immigrant issues recently, large voter registration drives aimed at Asian Americans have been successful.²⁴

The San Francisco Bay Area, in sum, acknowledges the ethnic and racial presence of Asian Americans even though they may be an invisible minority throughout the rest of the country or caught between either black or white. Through the educational system, business affairs, local politics, and the media, the Bay Area embraces a form of multiculturalism that accentuates and superficially celebrates ethnic and racial differences while still promoting a common culture based on market forces.²⁵

Although churches operate independently from much state intervention, these racial categories also influence religious world. Ministers are cognizant of the racial categories imposed by government policies and understand that mainstream society views Asian Americans as a monolithic group. An evangelical minister who works with a pan-ethnic network of churches expressed why Asian Americans need to organize across ethnic lines:

Our vision is that we see when you get to 2nd, 3rd generations, the ethnic lines are very blurred. I think a large part of it is because the way the school system categorizes people. The census categorizes people. That kind of gives Asian ethnic groups a sense of being

lumped together. And the Asian American movement grew out of a political agenda, basically for funding and resources are so limited and the struggle for identity and recognition. Since we're lumped together anyway, when we get together, we get more attention.

Within this multi-ethnic, multi-racial context in which almost everyone is a minority and seeks a group identity, ministers of Chinese and Japanese American congregations build their churches along pan-ethnic lines legitimated by identity politics and consumer marketing.

As Asian Americans have become networked within the Bay Area, pan-ethnic congregations have emerged. The number of pan-ethnic Asian Americans congregations in the region has risen dramatically over the past decade, from one in 1989 to five in 1993 and twenty-two in 1998. Eight are new pan-ethnic start-up congregations or networks and fourteen were originally Chinese-specific or Japanese-specific but now have a broader mission focus. Why does this institutional change towards pan-ethnicity occur? The next sections, identifying demographic trends and generational transitions, analyze factors initiating change.

Demographic Trends: The Need for Japanese American Congregations to Expand Their Market

Both Chinese and Japanese American churches have existed in the United States for over one hundred years and for five generations.²⁶ However, they differ in that Japanese American churches now face a shrinking pool of families from which to draw but Chinese American churches have a growing population base. Within the San Francisco Bay Area, the Japanese American population has grown 41.8% in the last two decades. The Chinese American population, on the other hand, has seen much more dramatic growth, 193.4% in the same time period. Demographers predict that the Chinese American population in California will continue to grow by 38% while the Japanese American population will increase only by 7% into the next decade.²⁷

The age distribution of these two ethnic communities indicates varying potentials for future growth. The Japanese American community is markedly older and has smaller household sizes. Within California, 34.6% of the population is under 25 years of age but only 26.7% of the Japanese American population are this young. While the mean number of children per household in California is .72, Japanese Americans only average .42 children per household. Chinese American households roughly match the general population's profile. With fewer

families and young adults, the Japanese American church community cannot grow through biological growth as much as the Chinese American church.

Outmarriage rates also portend the market potential for ethnic and pan-ethnic congregations. A recent study of outmarriage rates nationally indicates that 25.6% of Japanese Americans marry outside of their ethnicity and 12.1% of Chinese Americans marry outside of their ethnicity.²⁸ However, these outmarriage rates also indicate a greater number of inter-ethnic marriages between Asian ethnic groups. For example, the percent of Japanese Americans marrying other Asians increased from 11.9% of all outmarriages in 1980 to 20.3% in 1990. The number of Chinese Americans marrying other Asian groups grew from 22.2% in 1980 to 32.7% in 1990. Increased Asian intermarriage provides a larger pool for pan-ethnic congregations.

Ministers also noted that Japanese Americans no longer reside in ethnic concentrations and have moved out of urban centers. As a result, these churches have less potential members in their neighborhoods. In contrast, Chinese congregations will continue to have large spatial concentrations of Chinese Americans to serve.²⁹ A Japanese American minister observed the impact of these shifts in outmarriage and residency on his church:

Our congregation is 85-90% Japanese American but the direction is Asian American. Two couples in our church who are members have married Caucasians. The majority by far have been with Chinese Americans. Most of them live outside [San Francisco]. That's another difference between the Japanese American community and the Chinese American community. A greater percentage of the third generation have left the City, haven't had the same kind of family unit, family support and reason to stay in the City as the Chinese Americans have. Because of the professions, they've moved out.

These demographic changes have spurred the transition of Japanese American congregations into pan-ethnic ones.

Generational Issues: Causes for Schisms within Chinese American Congregations

As the Japanese American church faces a shrinking target population in the Bay Area, the Chinese American church now welcomes more immigrants joining their congregations. Unfortunately, great numbers of newcomers exacerbate a tension already present between the first generation and the 1.5 and second generations in these congregations. To service the heterogeneous Chinese population, Chinese American churches have to minister to different subgroups of language, age, and culture. This tension between the immigrant and American-born generations has long been the central organizational issue for the Chinese American

church.³⁰ Cultural differences and unequal power relations can lead to sectarian splits that spawn new pan-ethnic congregations.

Cultural differences between generations make up one tension. Just as Niebuhr observed that previous immigrant churches were primarily cultural institutions, the Chinese and Japanese American congregations today play a strong role in preserving cultural traditions and values. One Chinese American minister described the desire of immigrant parents to maintain ethnic customs and practices through the church:

There's a second agenda to say that we also want to maintain Chinese culture. We want the church to reflect the Chinese culture so that it maintains it for the young people and it maintains it for those Chinese that have grown up here that have lost touch with their culture.

The culture which immigrants wish to preserve and transmit contrasts with the upbringing and values of those born here. According to those pastors who are developing Asian American congregations, the Confucian ethic of "saving face" and maintaining formal respect for those with status is a significant cultural orientation that distinguishes the generations. As Asians grow up in the United States, these concerns for keeping quiet, controlling emotions, and avoiding embarrassment lessen. One minister explained the difference between Asian Americans and Chinese immigrants:

I think I'm realizing that Asian Americans--like a lot of the boomers--value authenticity over formality. In fact I think the older generation, they almost have a reaction if you are too open with them. Or they don't want you to show weakness. In fact they may even have a problem with weakness or problem with emotions. And so they want and expect and desire a leader to be strong, to be impregnable. They don't expect you necessarily to be real close.

According to these ministers, differences in cultural orientation discourage younger Asian Americans from staying in church or joining a church.

Power relations within the church is another issue facing ethnic congregations. As the younger members come of age in the Chinese American church, they conflict with the older members about unequal relations of power. Younger, English-speaking ministers complained of lacking status and resources within bilingual congregations. Furthermore, they felt relegated to doing "youth ministry," which was considered less important by the Chinese-speaking. One minister complained that by controlling church functions, the Chinese-speaking congregation effectively disenfranchised the English-speaking congregation and as a result, individuals

abandoned the church. Not even the strongest ethnic sentiment, one's connection to the community through ethnic food, could keep these Chinese Americans coming:

There's a luncheon. But it's hardly a joint lunch because it's catered Chinese food and the whole thing has this sense of flavor and environment of being really Taiwanese. They make announcements without translating, they make Taiwanese jokes without translating. And whenever there's special occasions like a birthday, it's in Chinese and it's not translated. And so basically they're expecting the English to kind of fit in and, 'Oh yeah, this is wonderful time of community!'

Due to their lack of autonomy, resources, and status, Chinese American ministers seeking to introduce major changes to worship or ministry focus had to establish new churches. Chinese Americans have started seven of the eight pan-ethnic congregations that were new church-starts. One justified his rationale to create a new church by claiming that a pan-ethnic start-up would not face competing agendas and thus be more effective in accomplishing the spiritual mission of the gospel.

In summary, numerous Chinese and Japanese American congregations now identify as Asian American. Demographic shifts require a change for the institutional survival of Japanese American congregations. With a smaller market niche, these congregations have gradually shifted focus and target. Immigration and generational differences have prompted Chinese Americans ministers to start new pan-ethnic congregations. Lacking opportunity, resources, and freedom of ministry, they have seceded to begin new congregations.

Mainline Construction of Asian American Pan-Ethnicity: The Institutional Context

Given these congregational issues, where do churches find models for change? Their broader religious worlds, also known as institutional fields, furnish innovative and alternative models for organizing congregations and developing ministries.³¹ American Christians fall into two basic groups with mainline, liberal and progressive Christians within one institutional field and conservatives, evangelicals, charismatics and fundamentalists within another.³² This two-party thesis is helpful in understanding the divergent expressions of Asian American pan-ethnic congregations. Not only do the ministers align as either evangelical or mainline in theological orientation, but also they remain organizationally distinct from one another with different institutional fields. From their theological discourse that circulates with their institutional circles, mainline ministers construct a broad definition for Asian Americans.

The Mainline Institutional Field

Mainline church leaders look to their denominations, seminaries, and non-profit organizations as sources of pan-ethnic understanding. Mainline denominations recognized and established pan-ethnic Asian American professional caucuses and youth camps as early as 1971. Acknowledging a need for Asian American leadership development, representation on boards, and resources for Asian American ministries, these caucuses advocated official recognition within their respective denominations (National Conference on the Concerns of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United Church of Christ 1974; Joint Strategy and Action Committee 1972).³³

When a group in the South Bay wanted to develop a pan-ethnic congregation, they contacted the former Associate Executive of the regional presbytery who had also come from the same home church. The institutional work of the caucus to increase awareness of minority needs as well as the presence of minorities in presbytery leadership opened up opportunities to establish new pan-ethnic church developments. This minister recounted why that his denomination recognized the legitimate need for minorities to have their own congregations because they were not being served:

If you look at Santa Clara, there's easily half a dozen [Presbyterian churches]. Some of those churches might have ten percent ethnic. I would say that's true for all denominations. You can probably pick those churches that are genuinely multicultural. They would be the exception to the rule. So the Presbytery said "Fine, go with our blessings. We'll even help with some funding and help secure leadership."

These official denominational activities establish the institutional space need for the development of pan-ethnic church models and the diffusion of its elements to other churches.

Mainline seminaries promote pan-ethnicity as well. The mainline Graduate Theological Seminary (GTU) also has trained several Asian American ministers in the Bay Area. As early as 1972, the GTU has provided institutional space for the Asian Center for Theologies and Strategies, now called the Pacific Asian Center for Theologies and Strategies (PACTS). PACTS and other schools of the GTU sponsor courses on "Asian American Religions," and employ texts such as *Out of Silence: Emerging Themes in Asian American Churches*.³⁴ Formal education thus establishes normative pressures to organize along pan-ethnic lines.

The community non-profit world also furnishes models to the church. Mainline liberal congregations, who tend to be more involved in community issues of race and social justice, work more closely with these non-profits and view them as peer organizations. Within the San Francisco Bay Area, the Asian American non-profit sector is especially well-established with long-standing organizations such as the Asian Law Caucus, Asian Neighborhood Design, and Asian Health Services. Because these agencies address the same kinds of concerns and work with the same constituencies as their congregations, mainline ministers conceive of their congregations as peers to these organizations.

Institutional structures within denominations, educational curriculum that recognizes Asian American pan-ethnicity, and non-profit organizational models shape how ministers think about congregational identity. They establish pan-ethnic congregations with understandings from these institutional bases that circulate a broad definition of the group, Asian Americans.

The Mainline Definition of Pan-Ethnicity

What is this understanding of Asian Americans that mainline ministers hold? Following a politics of identity model, ministers acknowledge the historical, racialized experiences of this group as the primary bond of pan-ethnic identity and solidarity. Two characteristics of mainline liberalism that structure racial understandings are its prophetic morality and its belief in tolerance. In their religious role as being a prophetic voice to the community, mainline churches address concerns of peace and social justice. When examining the Asian American situation through these lenses, ministers identify issues of racial discrimination and community development as major arenas of struggle.³⁵ In their belief in tolerance, mainline Christians reject the orthodox teaching that Christianity is the only true religion. This relativism allows Asian American ministers to more easily accept and embrace Asian traditions and religious beliefs as part of their identity, faith experience and congregational practice. Mainline liberals thus see Asian Americans as a marginalized group in need of empowerment, as well as a group that must reconstruct their ethnic identity in order to be whole, children of God.

In analyzing the issues of injustice that Asians face in the United States, mainline ministers in this study often named racism, both institutional and individual, as the major cause for the social inequities and marginalization that they and their members experienced.³⁶ On a broad level, racism creates barriers for Asian Americans in gaining acceptance and power within

American corporations and institutions. On an individual level, mainline ministers express that racism affects members' self-esteem and interpersonal relationships. One minister describes the Asian American experience of being categorized and treated as a foreigner or newcomer to this country:

The Church does a disservice when we don't accept people as they fully are. [Unfortunately, we] first try to put them in some category. For my experience and for many Asians when they come in contact with wider society, when [others] can't tell what your ethnicity is, they try to find out. But they're not always good about coming out and asking what your ethnic background is.

It's more like, "Where are you from?" And you say, "I'm from San Francisco." "No, no, where are you *really* from?!?" they ask.

The mainline ministers interpret this everyday assignation as foreigner is a symbol of the marginalization of Asian Americans. Even though this group has been here for generations, they remain perpetual outsiders to American society who still face discrimination. While Asian Americans are marginalized as a group, they are also pressured to assimilate into Western values, religious traditions, and culture that is deemed superior.

However, the ministers believe that Asian Americans do have vibrant ethnic heritages that their members should embrace and practice. The tolerance of mainline and liberal churches toward other religions and traditions opens up space for the exploration of Asian traditions by Asian American congregations. By embracing both their religious and ethnic/racial identities, mainline churches help Asian Americans be "accepted as they fully are," as the minister quoted previously recommended. Another minister expresses why he places emphasis on Asian cultural practices:

There's so many things within the Japanese, Chinese, Asian culture that can be affirmed within Christianity if a person studies it in depth. The Euro-Western approach is to say those things are maybe pagan or heathen or primordial or primitive...Not so! There are ancient cultures which are longer than what we have in the West and there are a lot of richness. If we find the contribution we can make towards reality or Christianity that comes out of culture, that'd be great.

These two theological orientations framing Asian American mainline churches result in an understanding of Asian Americans as a racialized grouping who need to reclaim their ethnic heritage and claim rights as a disenfranchised minority.

Mainline Asian American Congregational Culture

With this definition of Asian American identity, mainline ministers utilize religious resources both from their faith traditions and their ethnic cultures to establish practices regarding what Matsuoka terms “the Asian American faith quest for identity.” He suggests

Asian Americans are caught in a web of assimilation that will not easily let us go... To compound the problem, we Asian Americans find ourselves in a liminal world that is cultural and linguistic, as well as cross-generational in character. A liminal world is the “place of in-betweenness.”³⁷

The liminality of Asian Americans as culturally and linguistically marginal to Asia and racially marginal to America becomes a dominant spiritual issue for mainline congregations. To address this issue, ministers create Asian American mainline religious practices through the re-interpretation of Christian symbols, the re-articulation of Asian practices, and outreach to communities in a multiracial American setting.

Worship Style

In mainline Asian American congregations, the worship style is more traditional and liturgical than evangelical congregations. Very few Asian or Asian American songs or hymns are sung, but the liturgical rites are the worship practices that ministers have more easily contextualized for the Asian American experience.³⁸ Festivals, communion and prayers symbolize and commemorate Asian American group boundaries.

Celebrations of festivals and memorials are the primary symbolic occasions that reinforce the congregation’s Asian American group identity. Though the mainline churches usually followed the Christian calendar and employed denominational liturgies, church services would often recognize Asian holidays and particularly held ceremonies to remember ancestors, a Confucian ethic. These ministers did not consider Asian festivals and rituals as pagan, especially since Asian Americans do not celebrate them as ancestor worship. One pastor noted:

I haven’t found the difference and true distinction between when Asian culture says we remember, honor our ancestors and a Christian understanding of we celebrate the saints and we celebrate when we gather around the Lord’s Table.

For Asian Americans who grow up here, who are as far from the Christian experience as they are from their traditional ancestral experience, the ones in America are not calling on their ancestors.

Instead, honoring one's ancestors is an Asian value that the congregations attempt to instill. A priest commented:

Even though the English service is in English, we respect Chinese traditions. For example, at Chinese New Year's, we had a big liturgy. At Chinese New Year's we have a very beautiful bilingual liturgy in Cantonese and English with Chinese and American music. At the end, we do the traditional tribute, ceremonial tribute to the ancestors. We build a shrine and at the conclusion of mass, we pay tribute to the ancestors. That's one way we keep ties to the culture.

Rites that remember one's ancestors, then, are Asian family practices that are legitimated by the church both to reinforce Asian group identity and to introduce Asian rituals into a Christian service.

Along with re-articulating Asian practices, mainline congregations infuse Christian rituals with new meanings. Ministers often alter the form of Christian rituals to refresh the meaning behind the practice and to make them resonate more closely with Asian Americans. One Asian American congregation served Chinese moon cakes and tea for communion. Round moon cakes (*yuebing*), filled with red bean paste or some other filling, symbolize unity and family. Eaten especially during the Mid-Autumn Festival by Chinese, the roundness of the cakes and the moon represents a family reuniting.³⁹ When combined with the Christian communion of the saints, this ritual is a poignant act for members who grew up eating moon cakes. For those who did not know about the moon cakes, the ritual is both a reminder of Christian unity and a lesson about Chinese heritage. The pastor summarizes:

For the people, family is very important. To me, that's a chance for people trying to stay connected to that story, to the family story...Asian Americans typically feel, on a gut level, more strongly connected to family than [American] culture in general.

Other churches also modify the form of communion. One employed *bao* (Chinese steamed buns) and tea to illustrate how integral Jesus was to their daily lives. Another used *mochi* (Japanese pastry) and *sake* (rice wine), and yet another pastor called Jesus the "Rice of Life" instead of the "Bread of Life."

These new rituals are distinctly hybridized elements of Asian American Christianity, an emergent subculture with its own symbols and practices that invent and borrow from Asia and America. A minister describes how he tries to integrate the varied ethnic and generational backgrounds of his members in this new expression of faith:

[One member] writes a song about an Asian American journey, her Asian American

journey. It's all about being raised biculturally and how the messages she got caused her considerable personal anguish. She brings that to Jesus and it's now in our songbook. While such a conflicted upbringing is such a big part of her journey, for me it isn't. We're both Asian Americans, she's a second generation, I'm third, but our stories are quite different. Part of the journey is figuring out what do we have in common as Asian Americans.

Programs: Social/Cultural Activities and Community Engagement

Because these churches see their role is to affirm ethnic heritage and to claim rights as minorities, their programs and activities reflect these emphases. Mainline congregations have small groups, Bible Studies and conferences like the evangelical ones, but they do not are not as popular as the ethnic and social programming of the church. More central to pan-ethnic congregational identity are the efforts to celebrate ethnicity, to build Asian American community and to minister programs to the neighborhood.

Like ethnic specific congregations, mainline congregations observe ethnic festivals, bazaars and holidays in their programming. These events draw the most involvement of the members and attract the most non-members. Often, non-active members return to their congregation with their families to participate in annual bazaars, see old friends, play carnival games, and eat chicken teriyaki or chow mein. Because these events are so popular, one priest said that one of their primary functions was to raise money as well as to introduce their ethnic heritage to Asian Americans:

The bazaar is a major fundraising effort and also a method of bringing all the members together in a project. To promote fellowship as well as to generate some income. It's a way of introducing the culture to [Asian] Americans and the [white] Americans, too. A lot of them come.

Pan-ethnic congregations also host programs to meet the social needs of the community. They primarily seek to provide an environment where Asian Americans can socialize or gain leadership skills. Social programs that are common are summer daycamps, basketball leagues, boy scout troupes, and social dance classes for seniors. The large congregational commitment to sponsoring basketball teams, for example, is for the youth to learn teamwork and sportsmanship and to make Asian American friendships.

Church ministries to the traditional ethnic community and the new pan-ethnic community often develop as ecumenical projects and become modern non-profit organizations. Why they take the form they do--ecumenical and formally organized as service programs--stems from their

mainline orientations of public engagement. They seek to be Christ's presence in a community primarily by their acts of love, compassion and justice. As one Chinese American priest explained

Today, our understanding of evangelization is not so much that converts are made, but more that we profess and teach Christian values and to expose people who are coming from a culture where Christianity is not a major religion, to expose them, to teach them, to preach Christian values and see how they complement Chinese traditional values.

With this focus on ministering God's love and with less emphasis on conversion, the mainline churches are willing to work with other institutions, the government and non-profit agencies, in serving their neighborhoods.⁴⁰

Individual church programs for the community range from direct service to advocacy and organizing. Popular ministries that meet direct needs include English-as-a-Second Language and Citizenship classes, tutoring to low-income and immigrant youth, and activities for the elderly. Participation through denominational caucuses involves congregations in activities and stances geared towards broader social change, such as advocacy around affirmative action or organizing against anti-Asian violence. However, a few individual congregations do spearhead such efforts. For example, this minister explained that his congregation expected him to become engaged in politics:

The [church members] know that I'm involved with politics. To some extent, it is an almost unwritten rule that their pastor is involved with community politics. I got arrested last year. The congregation thought it was a kick. Well, that's not quite why I did it. For the most part, they have understood that part of my calling is to be involved with the community and the politics.

The church activities and programs thus reflect the theological orientation of the mainline in seeking to be an institutional voice within the community.

These ministers' understanding of Asian American pan-ethnicity influence how they develop their church's ministries in serving them. Mainline theology is liberal and tolerant so that Asian cultural and religious practices are accepted and even promoted in Asian American mainline churches. And because the mainline has historically been concerned with social issues of the day, ministers in this study tend to address concerns regarding racial injustice and community development.

Evangelical Construction of Asian American Pan-Ethnicity: The Institutional Context

Evangelical ministers work together and learn from each other in an institutional field separate from the mainline and thus have a very different understanding of Asian Americans. Just as mainline ministers receive formal training from certain seminaries, evangelicals learn about church growth methodology within their educational institutions. But instead of looking to denominations and the public non-profit sector for insights on serving Asian Americans, evangelical ministers look more to leading evangelical publications and their professional networks to target and minister to this group. Employing a different theological orientation that gets promoted through these circles, evangelicals construct an understanding of Asian Americans that is quite distinct from the mainline one.

The Evangelical Institutional Field

Since the 1980's, campus ministries have recognized the growing presence of Asian Americans on campuses and have sought to evangelize students along these groupings.⁴¹ Throughout California and on many elite university campuses in the United States, Asian American Christian Fellowships (AACFs) have been established by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) and the Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society (JEMS). Once graduated, these students seek similar fellowship and church settings. They leave their ethnic congregations and Asian American churches have received many of these alumni.

Theological seminaries also promote and legitimate pan-ethnicity by offering courses tailored toward this grouping. The largest seminary in North America, the evangelical Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, CA offers the course, "Multiculturalism Today: Reflections and Response," and the instructors use the text, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian American Theological Perspective*.⁴² These courses, texts, and Asian American instructors are official, professional recognition that pan-ethnicity is a valid grouping, field of theological study, and ministerial concern.⁴³

Most importantly, the evangelical pastors have professional and ministerial networks that introduce pan-ethnic models of congregational development. On-line, Chinese American pastors keep connected on a mailing list called "Chinese American Christians" (CAC). In the San Francisco Bay Area, these official networks include the Bay Area Asian American Youth Fellowship, the Promise Keepers, and the Asian American Bay Area Fellowship.

For example, the Asian American Bay Area Fellowship is made up of about fifty Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean American evangelical pastors that meets irregularly. Since 1991, they have addressed similar issues as those posted on CAC, including the role of ethnic culture in the church and Asian American racial reconciliation between individual ethnic groups. These professional networks are the “interorganizational contexts” within which the discourse of pan-ethnicity and race become circulated, appropriated, and infused with meaning. Whether pan-ethnic congregations become the premier model for Chinese and Japanese American churches remains a debated conversation between ministers within these networks. These forums, along with seminary training and books on church growth, create the menu of options from which ministers can choose in building their congregations.

With limited options of strategies and rules about church growth circulating within the evangelical field, ministers often follow leaders in the field.⁴⁴ Within the local Bay Area Asian American church networks, ministers perceive pan-ethnic congregations as being successful in attracting members and growing them. For example, this pastor felt called to establish a ministry similar to other pan-Asian ones:

Most of the successful churches, either in Southern California or here, they're mostly pan-Asian. They have been very successful, not only in terms of numbers but also spiritual growth. So I thought that this church, that's why God place me here.

Pan-ethnic churches emerge as new congregations copy other successful pan-ethnic ones. Even if the innovations do not prove to be effective in increasing church growth, they are still adopted to demonstrate that the ministers are trying to effect some kind of reform and to meet the demands of what potential members expect. Pan-ethnicity, as a new model for organizing a congregation, enabled ministers to start afresh and rethink every aspect of church. As a sectarian movement, its novelty encouraged a re-envisioning of what church could be. This minister explained how people seek change and want to build something new:

I think a lot of ministries have a tremendous desire to do something great and different. There's a lot of churches that I know that have great aspirations when they start, finally start up their English ministry. And it's funny because when they start it from their perspective, they always think that they're doing something radical like, “Wow! Let's do an English ministry!” And from their perspective, I'm beginning to see, yeah, that it is.

Another aspect of the perceived success of pan-ethnic churches is that they are new and cutting edge. These churches attract members who want to avoid the cultural baggage of ethnic

churches. A minister explained that his new congregation was tailored for those who had left the church:

The original purpose was to be ministry designed for those who had given up on traditional churches, what we call the “Silent Exodus” where a lot of Asian Americans are leaving their ethnic churches, seeking more of a contemporary worship environment.

Asian American evangelical congregations, therefore, become established in order to mimic successful church growth models and to initiate reforms of outdated elements with the ethnic church.

The Evangelical Definition of Pan-Ethnicity

While mainline ministers see Asian Americans mostly as a politically marginalized grouping, evangelicals employ a “church growth” perspective that views Asian Americans as a spiritual target group with a distinctive family upbringing and a professional class status. If they can meet the needs of this target group, then they have a means of attracting unchurched Asian Americans and growing their church. Two theological tenets of American evangelicalism particularly shape this understanding of Asian Americans.⁴⁵ First, in their belief that Jesus is one’s personal savior, evangelicalism now focuses on the personal, that is an individual’s concerns for self-fulfillment and therapeutic health. Second, in their practice of sharing the faith, evangelicals have developed church growth strategies that involve target marketing and church specialization. By targeting Asian Americans and developing church community around their individual needs and professional backgrounds, ministers help create a group identity as they try to outreach a particular subpopulation.

Given their focus on the private individual, American evangelical congregations and ministries have responded to Americans’ need for expressive individualism by promoting positive new religious experiences and becoming therapeutic.⁴⁶ Asian American evangelicals view Asian Americans in this way, as a people with common family dynamics and psychological issues. Despite the range and diversity in Asian American family experience, from low-income refugee in inner cities to fifth generation professionals growing up in affluent suburbs, Asian American ministers highlight certain family histories as being characteristically definitive. They note that since Asian American parents raise their children with high expectations, their offspring

often must deal with issues of self-worth and perfectionism. One explained that “typical” Asians share a family pressure to succeed with little emotional support:

You look at the typical childhood experience for many of us growing up. I share this at different camps, retreats and it strikes an instant nerve. What was it like when you were a kid? You come home, you got a test and you got a score of 98%. You parents shower you with positive affirmation that you did so well? Hardly ever. If anything, they might yell at you for missing the 2%!

Seeing Asian Americans as a group with specific identity, psychological and emotional issues, ministers believe that these distinctions make Asian Americans a viable grouping to serve. Although they teach and stress spiritual development and one’s relationship with God, they find that these markers bond Asian Americans together:

[God’s calling us to] building an Asian American church where people of Asian American descent feel comfortable coming. We don’t exclude non-Asian Americans, but there are definitely needs, concerns, family issues, relational issues that a lot of Asian Americans face that people from other ethnic cultures or races don’t. We want a ministry designed for those Asian Americans.

With their emphasis on evangelism, Asian American pastors regard Asian Americans as target group and design their churches according to their professional tastes. They follow “biblical principles” for church growth promoted by evangelical mega-church leaders such as Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. One principle is the “homogeneous principle” that suggests that church grow fastest when members bring friends who are like themselves.⁴⁷ When looking at who were the friends and personal networks of their church members, ministers saw that they were primarily Asian American. The Asian American pan-ethnic congregation, then, developed out of a focus of growing churches around the personal networks and friendship circles of existing members. One pastor explained

We draw more towards relationships, relationships that we build. That is what we’re focusing on right now. Not trying to minister to all these strangers, but to say, “Who are our natural contacts?” You may find that for Asian Americans, still a lot of our natural contacts still may be Asian. With those personal contacts, we draw them in.

Also, Warren states that a target group such as Asians should be defined culturally, by their “lifestyle and mindset“ and by their ”values, interests, hurts and fears.”⁴⁸ In analyzing at their target group, ministers have examined the culture of Asian Americans and saw a group of young, urban professionals. They believe that Asians’ work ethic and stress on education have

led Asian Americans to share common class backgrounds and class interests. For example, this pastor suggests that this ethic is the common bond of Asian Americans:

There is a shared experience in terms of being second generation, immigrant drive to success, focus on education. Again I also understand that's also some of the Asian American ethos. What draws the Chinese American or Japanese American together oftentimes is the fact that they come out of this environment which has stressed education, which has stressed success, family and that kind of ties them together in a way that I'm not sure is in Caucasian churches.

Congregations are remarkably similar in their professional status, their upwardly mobile families, and spare time activities. Indeed, lifestyle affinities characterize these Asian American networks. Evangelicals therefore see Asian Americans as bound by their common upbringing, their individual therapeutic needs, their friendship networks, and their professional lifestyles.

Evangelical Asian American Congregational Culture

From their evangelical viewpoint, ministers strategize about the target group of their congregation and how to best serve them. When planning for their churches they focus more on the tastes and social needs that arise from the lifestyle choices of Asian Americans. To attract this target group ministers recommend certain strategies regarding worship style, small group formats, and practical seminars. The implementation of such strategies targeting a spiritual market group and the weekly work of the church serve to reinforce the group boundaries of Asian Americans as individuals with professional lifestyle expectations.

Worship Style

Despite their sensitivity to a need for identity and their call to affirm differences, Asian American evangelical congregations have not developed their own distinctive worship style. Instead, they have borrowed from the broader contemporary evangelical style stemming from Calvary Church and the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.⁴⁹ The songs, projected on large screens through overheads, come from large Christian music publishing houses and other liturgical elements, such as responsive prayers, weekly communion or Scripture readings that can be found in mainline churches, have largely been abandoned.

Worship as “a positive experience” and “celebrative encounter with God” corresponds to the therapeutic orientation of contemporary evangelicals who want intimacy with God. To help

Asian Americans worship in a more meaningful and heart-felt way, evangelical congregations seek to create a worship experience where an individual could enter and feel God's presence and respond joyfully to God. On pastor elaborates on employing a worship style that would attract Asian Americans:

I think basically what we were saying was that we could reach people that were like us. Which is primarily American-born, English-speaking Asian Americans who liked contemporary music and weren't interested in a very liturgical, high church kind of experience. We were very influenced by movements like the Vineyard, Calvary Chapel, Hope Chapel. We were doing their music.

Part of it was using their songs, getting their training. A lot of it was their values--the value that worship should foster intimacy with God. That we don't sing about God but we sing to God.

To establish a meaningful worship experience, simple songs are sung repeatedly for twenty to thirty minutes so that people could memorize the words and focus on singing to God. In this adoration of God, people hopefully enter a different mood or disposition that enables them to transcend their immediate circumstances. Likewise, this pastor explains his congregation's shift to a contemporary worship style:

We do a lot of singing because again, we really feel like we want somebody to come to church and have a real positive experience that we're worshipping together. Maybe a little bit more experiential. We want to say that when we've come to church, we've actually met with God. He's there in our presence and we feel His joy worshipping Him. We're really focused on that.

Because ministers have seen that a contemporary worship style have drawn in more Asian Americans, they have included it an integral component of a new, pan-ethnic congregation.

The worship style that works in mediating Asian American evangelicals' experiences with God is clearly a Southern California cultural sensibility that is being exported around the world.⁵⁰ The fact that Asian Americans seem to respond to it and shy from more traditional forms found in ethnic churches indicates that this cohort has indeed acculturated. Feeling comfortable with contemporary forms of worship with few theological or cultural references, they identify with the broader American evangelical subculture and hence, the universal church.

Small Groups

Another major aspect of pan-ethnic congregations is the establishment of small groups to meet the fellowship needs of Asian American evangelicals and to promote social belonging. A pastor noted:

I think that the pressing need is definitely in the area of community. And maybe this is part of the Asian American identity--being a part of a community of like-minded people with similar values. And they want that kind of connection. People are willing to drive a distance to come. So it seems to sit well in my mind because they want that kind of connection and they have that need.

To provide this need for belonging, all of the pan-ethnic evangelical congregations have some sort of small group format where people can get to know others, develop intimate relationships, and develop community. Another pastor explained another principle for cell group development:

Our young adults, that group is constantly growing because of people coming into the area. They're looking for a place to belong. A cell group reaches out to them. BAM! They've got seven, eight friends. You need seven to ten significant relationships to feel like you belong.

This community of friends and personal networks, based on both racial, professional and religious commonalties, becomes what Asian American evangelicals see as the source of group solidarity among Asian Americans.

Most small groups orient themselves around Bible Study, prayer, and sharing personal struggles at work or home. Ministers believe that newcomers would be drawn in by the loving welcome, acceptance and sense of belonging that Christians should offer. Others also offer social activities or "fellowship opportunities" to promote this sense of belonging:

All the small groups focus around an affinity. Affinity is the key point on how the group is established and founded. There are membership groups that are basically the first step in bringing somebody into the church. So they include our investors group, our Monday Night Football group, stuff like that. There are women now who've been talking about they want to do some weekday workout group.

These affinity groups are much like what Bellah et al coin "lifestyle enclaves." Linked most closely to leisure and consumption, "it brings together those who are socially, economically, or culturally similar and one of its chief aims is the enjoyment of being with those who "share one's lifestyle.""⁵¹ Perhaps the most distinguishing aspect of lifestyle enclaves is that they deal only with the individual's private life, their life of personal faith, networks of

friends, and lifestyle affinities. As described before, this focus on the private is also a distinguishing characteristic of American evangelicals.

Asian American churches sanction these lifestyle enclaves because they see as an opportunity to infiltrate a target group and reach out to the unchurched. Ministers do not promote these lifestyles and aspirations but they do mobilize around the lifestyle affinities that Asian Americans share. A pastor explained why he organized fishing trips and Christmas craft fairs:

I think the Asian Americans are very, what's the right word? Utilitarian. They will do things that they think will enhance their child, their education, their socialization. They're very alert to that and so you have to put on a fine product which ends up being utilitarian for them to be attracted to it.

By creating regularly meeting small groups made up of primarily Asian Americans, these pan-ethnic congregations create institutional space for the personal networks of their members. By concentrating on members' individual and social needs, these groups reinforce the notion of Asian Americans as a group with lifestyle affinities rather than as a racial minority dealing with broader, structural issues or a ethnic group with traditional cultural commonalties.

Seminars and Conferences

Besides small groups, these churches often sponsor seminars and conferences that tend to promote evangelical understandings of discipleship and spiritual growth. Biblical principles that are taught are seen to be applicable to all and they are not particularly affirming of specific, ethnic cultural practices. One church encouraged its members to attend two weekend conferences that were only two weeks apart from each other. At the first, six hundred Asian American men joined together for a conference modeled after Promise Keepers Conferences. The use of the Promise Keepers format illustrates how pan-ethnic congregations utilize and accept teachings and trends from the broader, American evangelical subculture.

So what made an Asian American men's conference distinct, and for that matter, pan-ethnic congregations uniquely tailored to serve Asian Americans? The conference's workshop topics provide insight on this matter. Again, this conference was highly therapeutic and oriented towards meeting the emotional and psychological needs of individuals. The workshops, led by Christian psychologists, counselors and pastors, included "Perfectionism," "How To Keep Your

Cool,” and “When West Meets East: Connecting with our Fathers.” The coordinator of the men’s conference explains:

There are whole cultural nuances for Asian American men that are different than men in general in the United States. Stuff like self-esteem, how to be a godly husband in an Asian cultural setting where there are more family issues that Asian men have to face. Issues of work—a lot of Asian men feel like they’re in a glass ceiling and how do you deal with those kinds of issues—how do you deal with perfectionism, being a workaholic, those kinds of things. Obviously there’s a lot of common ground.

The second conference was entitled “Living Free in Christ: A Life Impact Workshop on Resolving Personal and Spiritual Conflicts.” A new identity in Christ, according to the speaker, can provide us a sense of significance, acceptance and security that the audience felt they lacked. To experience the freedom that God provides, Christians need to renounce old lies and claim the truths of the gospel. The first step is to “renounce your previous or current involvement with satanically-inspired occult practices and false religions.” Experiences to renounce include fortune telling, magic eight ball, New Age activities, spirit worship, Buddhism and the religion of martial arts. The latter three “false religions” are traditional Asian beliefs that the families of CLC Christians hold. Embracing a Christian identity, in this case, entails a renunciation of one’s ancestral heritage and perhaps, the practices of one’s immediate family.

Through these kinds of conferences and retreats, Asian American evangelicals adopt the identities and practices that assimilate them into the broader evangelical world and discourage them from maintaining certain traditional ways. One’s Asian American background is more of a negative past from which one has to be healed and a culture that needs to be transformed. By categorizing ethnic traditions and values as at worst, “satanically-inspired” and at best, “unhealthy patterns,” Asian American pan-ethnic congregations discard cultural resources and experiences that might make them distinct from other evangelical Christians. How to build an Asian American expression of faith, then, becomes problematic when Asian Americans have become acculturated into a very American evangelical subculture.

Conclusion

In contrast to ethnic-specific Asian congregations, pan-ethnic Asian American congregations mobilize around racial boundaries. Within the San Francisco Bay Area, these congregations organize around pan-ethnic networks that are constructed and legitimated by state

and market forces.⁵² However, what it means to be Asian American must be understood given the theological and institutional discourses utilized by the ministers themselves. The institutional fields within the Christian church circulate these discourses that frame racial understandings.

Evangelical and mainline ministers hold divergent understandings of Asian American pan-ethnicity because this group identity is permeable and fluid. What it means to be Asian American depends on the symbolic boundaries used to identify who belongs to this population. The former group of ministers draws symbolic boundaries around family upbringing and professional status. On the other hand, the latter group focuses on the racialized experiences of the people and their ethnic heritages. As a result of these different symbolic boundaries, the congregational cultures of these two groups also differ. Evangelicals establish new pan-ethnic congregations that appeal to the sensibilities of young professionals and serve them by meeting their psychological and spiritual needs. Mainline ministers create pan-ethnic churches that integrate Asian cultural resources with Christian rituals and address racial justice issues.

Asian American pan-ethnicity does have its limitations. These Asian American congregations tend to be dominated by one group, either Chinese American or Japanese American. None of these congregations have music or songs that express Asian American themes or cultural styles. And while many ministers claim this identity for this congregation, Asian American church start-ups have not attracted large numbers yet.

Nonetheless, the emergence of pan-ethnic congregations does refute theories that assert that Asian ethnic congregations will assimilate after the first generation. Their presence indicates that race continues to play a significant role in the lives of Asian Americans and their faith development. Ministers note that given the multiplicity of identities that Asian Americans have simultaneously--as ethnic Americans, as racialized Americans, and as religious Americans—a diversity of congregations will emerge to serve them.

NOTES

¹ Japanese immigrants raised funds for the Russo-Japanese War in 1909 and the Sino-Japanese Conflict beginning in Manchuria in 1937. Chinese immigrants supported Sun-Yat Sen's Nationalist independence movement of 1911 as well as nationalist efforts during the Sino-Japanese Conflict. Hayashi, Brian. *For the Sake of Our Brethren: Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995); Woo, Westley, "Protestant Work among the Chinese in the San

Francisco Bay Area, 1850-1920.” (Berkeley, CA: Graduate Theological Union, 1983); Mark, Diane, *Seasons of Light: the History of Chinese Christian Churches in Hawaii* (Honolulu, HI: Chinese Christian Association of Hawaii, 1989).

- ² Even today, Chinese and Japanese Americans conflict over the Japanese invasion of China in the 1930s. See Annie Nakao, “Bitterness Over Nanking Massacre Dies Hard,” *San Francisco Examiner*, Sept. 13, 1998.
- ³ Several Asian American scholars have described the heterogeneity of Asian Americans and their experiences here in the United States. Lowe, Lisa, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences,” *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 24-44; Espiritu, Yen Le, *Asian American Panethnicity*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992).
- ⁴ Gans, Herbert, “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2.1 (1979); Steinberg, Stephen, *The Ethnic Myth*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1981); Waters, Mary, *Ethnic Options*, (Berkeley, CA: UC Press, 1990).; Alba, Richard, *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America*, (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1990).
- ⁵ (Rubin 1994).
- ⁶ Herberg, Will, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Press, 1955); Dolan, Jay, *The American Catholic Experience*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1985); Wind, James and James Lewis, ed., *American Congregations*, (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- ⁷ Douglass, H. Paul, *The Church in the Changing City*, (New York NY: Doran, 1927); Davis, James and Robert Wilson, *The Church in the Radically Changing Community*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1966).; Ammerman, Nancy et al, *Congregation and Community*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).
- ⁸ Fugita, Stephen and David O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community*, (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1991); Yung, Judy, *Unbound Feet: A Social History of Chinese Women in San Francisco*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); Alba, Richard and Victor Nee, “Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration,” *International Migration Review* 31.4(120), winter (1997): 826-874.
- ⁹ Niebuhr wrote about how generational differences in linguistic, cultural and spiritual needs create crises for congregations in life-cycle transition. Niebuhr, H. Richard, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Co., 1929).
- ¹⁰ Mullins, Mark, “The Life Cycle of Ethnic Churches in Sociological Perspective,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14.4 (1987): 321-334.
- ¹¹ Warner, R. Stephen and Judith Wittner, ed., *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998).
- ¹² Warner, p.14
- ¹³ Warner, p.14
- ¹⁴ Warner, p.15
- ¹⁵ This study is part of my larger dissertation project. It includes in-depth interviews of forty-four ministers who pastor Chinese, Japanese, or Asian American Christian congregations in the San Francisco Bay Area. I interviewed the ministers about the nature of racial and ethnic groups, their theology, and the role of the church within the community. Of these ministers, twenty-seven were Chinese American, eight were Japanese Americans, five were European Americans, two Filipino/Chinese American and two Korean Americans. The churches were similar in generation, income level, and educational attainment.
- ¹⁶ Teresa Moore, “Kids and Color: In the Multicultural Bay Area, Young People Learn Early that Differences Are A Way of Life,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9/20/98
- ¹⁷ (Santa Clara Unified School District Website, <http://www.scu.k12.ca.us/purpose/purpose3.html>)

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- ¹⁸ According to the University of California, Berkeley Office of Student Research, only 31.2% of its undergraduate is European American.(<http://osr.berkeley.edu>)
- ¹⁹ Asian/Pacific American organizations make up 23% of the student organizations registered with the U.C. Berkeley Student Activities and Services office. The school's Student Activities and Services Office lists seventy-four different types of Asian student organizations, ranging from Cal Asian Lesbian Bisexual Gay Alliance Yo-united to Pilipino Association of Scientists, Architects, and Engineers (<http://www.uga.berkeley.edu/sas/stdgrplst.htm>)
- ²⁰ "When these students came to Berkeley, they report feeling a bit strange or awkward about being in an environment with so many Asians. Given that the label Asian American is not a category with which these students readily identify, several talked about having to *learn what it means to be Asian American*. Regardless of their previous attitude towards their racial-cultural identity, Berkeley forced [Asian American students] to come to terms with their own racial identity in very new ways."
- See also Julie Chao, "Teaching the Asian American Experience: More College Students Are Reclaiming a Heritage Many Did Not Know They Had," *San Francisco Examiner*, May 3, 1998.
- ²¹ "Cupertino Business Group Formed: New Council Will Try To Expand Involvement of Asian American Community," *San Jose Mercury*, July 30, 1998.
- ²² Laura Casteneda, "Tapping Into Ethnic Markets," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 8, 1998; De Tran, "Strip Malls Emerging as Ethnic Crossroads," *San Jose Mercury*, April 5, 1998; Victoria Collier, "Ethnic Malls Zero In On Niches," *Oakland Tribune*, July 7, 1996
- ²³ Julie Chao, Annie Nakao, Carol Ness, "San Francisco is a City Being Recast--Demographically, Economically, Culturally" *San Francisco Examiner*, April 26, 1998.
- ²⁴ Julie Chao, "San Francisco's Sleeping Giant: The City's Significant Asian Population is Joining the Electoral Process," *San Francisco Examiner*, May 3, 1998; Sarah Lubman, "Latinos, Asians Gain Influence in Elections," *San Jose Mercury*, April 27, 1998; Annie Nakao, "Asian Americans Vote in Big Numbers," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 15, 1996.
- ²⁵ Glazer, Nathan, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).; Bellah, Robert, "Is There a Common American Culture?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, June 1998).
- ²⁶ Chinese and Japanese congregations have served their communities in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1852 and 1879 respectively. The Presbyterian Church in Chinatown was founded in 1852 by Dr. William Speer and Pine United Methodist Church was founded in 1879 by Kanichi Miyama. Both churches, originally located in Chinatown, continue to meet in San Francisco. In fact, the first pan-ethnic congregation of Chinese and Japanese converts met within the Methodist Chinese mission in San Francisco Chinatown from 1877 to 1885. Suzuki, Lester, "Persecution, Alienation, Recognition: History of Japanese Methodist Churches," *Churches Aflame: Asian Americans and United Methodism*, ed. Artemio Guillermo, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991): 113-134; Pang, Wing Ning, "The Chinese American Ministry," *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, 1995*, ed. Kenneth Bedell, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995): 10-16.
- ²⁷ (Lee 1998).
- ²⁸ Lee, Sharon and Fernandez, Marilyn, "Trends in Asian American Racial/Ethnic Intermarriage: A Comparison of 1980 and 1990 Census Data 1998," *Sociological Perspectives*, 1998, 41, 2, summer, 323-342.
- ²⁹ Landberg and Farley 1985; Farley 1993).
- ³⁰ The Japanese American church also faced conflicts between the Issei and Nisei generations over language used in service, control of church programs and nationalist politics. Brian Hayashi cites one Nisei woman who complains, "The young people don't care for the minister and he doesn't take much interest in them." Hayashi, Brian, *For the Sake of Our Brethren: Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995 p. 111.
- ³¹ The broader religious world of evangelicals and mainline churches are known as "institutional fields" in sociological literature. They are "groups or organizations producing similar products or services include as well

their critical exchange partners, sources of funding, regulatory groups, professional or trade associations, and other sources of normative and cognitive influence.” (Scott 1998:173)

- ³² Marty, Martin, *The Public Church: Mainline-Evangelical-Catholic*, (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981): 91-108; Marty, Martin, “The Shape of American Protestantism: Are There Two Parties Today?,” *Re-Forming the Center*, ed. Douglas and William Vance Trollinger Jacobsen, Jr., (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998): 91-108; Warner, R. Stephen, *New Wine in Old Wineskins: Evangelicals and Liberals in a Small-Town Church*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988); Wuthnow, Robert, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); Hunter, James, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, (New York, NY: Basic, 1991); Roof, Wade Clark, *A Generation of Seekers*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1993).
- ³³ By 1977, the following denominations had officially recognized national caucuses, offices or staffpersons to deal with Asian American ministries: American Baptist (Asian American Baptist Caucus), Presbyterian U.S.A. (Asian Presbyterian Caucus), United Methodists (National Federation of Asian American United Methodists), United Church of Christ (Pacific American and Asian American Ministries of the UCC), Episcopal Church (Episcopal Asian American Strategies Task Force), Reformed Churches of America (Asian Office), Disciples of Christ (North American Pacific Asian Disciples), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (Asian Ministries).
- ³⁴ Matsuoka, Fumitaka, *Out of Silence: Emerging Themes in Asian American Churches*, (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1995).
- ³⁵ Hoge, Dean, Benton Johnson, and Donal Luidens, *Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994).
- ³⁶ Asian American mainline theology takes as its starting point the grounded experiences of Asian Americans. This process may involve “the uncovering of painful stories,” such as relating the pain of the Japanese American internment experience to one’s relationship with God. See Ng, David, *People on the Way: Asian North Americans Discovering Christ, Culture and Community*, (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996). The oppression and exploitation of Asian American women is another issue that mainline ministers and theologians discussed. See Kim, Jung Ha, *Bridge-makers and Cross-Bearers: Korean American Women and the Church*, (Scholars Press, 1997.; Nakashima Brock 1992; Ng 1996).
- ³⁷ Matsuoka, p. 54.
- ³⁸ The number of Asian American, pan-ethnic mainline congregations is not yet large enough to describe a definite type of worship style or church setting. Only two of the mainline congregations were new church developments; one of these claimed a multi-ethnic identity in which an Asian American congregation merged with an existing white one. In effect, only one mainline church had the freedom to create new pan-ethnic religious practices on its own and the three others developed into pan-ethnic congregations from existing ethnic churches. However, emerging trends about “racial/ethnic/cultural affirmation” in church setting and worship style can be detected both in ethnic-specific and pan-ethnic congregations. See (Ng 1996).
- ³⁹ Yang, Fenggang, *Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities*, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 1999).
- ⁴⁰ In Oakland, ministers cited the Asian Health Services, the Oakland Asian Cultural Center, and Asian Community Mental Health Services as some of the non-profit agencies that were founded by their churches or church members. In San Francisco, the Chinese and Japanese mainline congregations helped to create Career Resources Development Center, the Chinese Hospital and the Tenderloin Women’s Center, each now independent organizations operating secularly. Ecumenical efforts such as the Chinese Christian Union and the Northern California Japanese Christian Federation also have undertaken neighborhood programs, notably services and housing for the elderly.
- ⁴¹ (Busto 1996)
- ⁴² Park, Andrew, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian American Theological Perspective*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996).

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- ⁴³ Other new texts that articulate a pan-ethnic theology and church organizational model include Peter Phan and Jung Young Lee (eds), *Journeys at the Margin: Toward and Autobiographical Theology in American-Asian Perspective*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999) and Kenneth Uyeda Fong, *Finding the Pearl*,
- ⁴⁴ The tendency of organizations to mimic those other organizations perceived to be successful is called “mimetic isomorphism.” DiMaggio, Paul and Walter Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields,” *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 147-160.
- ⁴⁵ A “subcultural identity of contemporary American evangelicalism” has developed within the last two decades. See Hunter, James, *American Evangelicalism*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983); Shibley, Mark, *Resurgent Evangelicalism in the United States: Mapping Cultural Change since 1970*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Miller, Donald E., *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Smith, Christian, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
- ⁴⁶ Bellah, Robert, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, Ann Swidler and Steve Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).
- ⁴⁷ Hybels recommends,
- If we’re going to impact our world for Christ, the most effective approach will be through friendships with those who need to be reached. We’ll have to get close to them so they can see that we genuinely care about them individually and that we have their best interests in mind. Over time, that will earn their trust and respect. Hybels, Bill, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1994), p. 97.
- ⁴⁸ Warren, Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1995) p. 165.
- ⁴⁹ Miller, 1997.
- ⁵⁰ Shibley, 1996; Miller, 1997.
- ⁵¹ Bellah, p. 72.
- ⁵² For an examination of state-constructed racial formation, see Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant, Racial Formation in the United States, Second ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994).

Asian-Americans have been among the most vocal and visible opponents of race-based affirmative action policies, creating a popular perception that they are at odds with black and Latino people, who remain underrepresented in many elite educational institutions. But that framing obscures the reality of national surveys that show that most Asian-Americans favor affirmative action in education. Many find solidarity with other minorities. Still, the various generational, geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds of Asian-Americans have contributed to rifts in how they approach their most pressing i 2002. Asian American Pan-Ethnic Formation and Congregational Culture. In Religions in Asian America: Building Faith Communities, ed. Pyong G. Min, and Jung H. Kim.Â 2004. The Religious Demography and Asian American Boundary Crossing. In Asian American Religions: The Making and Remaking of Borders and Boundaries, ed. Tony Carnes and Fenggang Yang, 38â€“54. New York: New York University Press.Google Scholar.