Worship Music and Cultural Politics in the Chinese-American Church

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Since the 1960s, Contemporary Worship Music (CWM) has attained increasing prevalence among Christian denominations throughout the United States. Juxtaposing rock, pop, and recently hip-hop styles with implicit or explicit Christian themes, CWM has grown into a prolific industry, becoming for many congregations the leading means of worship in both church services and smaller fellowship groups (Abelman 2006; Gormly 2003; Howard and Streck 1999; Romanowski 1992).[1] From its genesis, the function of CWM has been explicitly clear: to introduce Christian ideology to a demographic with more contemporary musical tastes, and to maintain relevance within Christian communities by drawing upon popular performance practices. However, the development of CWM within churches has not been without its critics, who question the appropriateness of placing what they consider secular or even profane musical styles within the sacred space of Christian ideology (Howard and Streck 1996, 1999; Romanowski 1992; York 2003). For other critics, it is more a matter of aesthetics: rock and pop music is often considered less sophisticated than more traditional hymnody (Jones and Webster 2006; Webster and Jones 2007). In many cases, the critics and supporters of CWM are separated clearly along generational lines, with younger church members (and the leaders that serve younger demographics) much more willing to embrace CWM than older congregants (Hartje 2009).

Controversy surrounding the performance of CWM becomes more multi-layered within churches that serve diasporic communities. In these cases, not only does traditional and modern worship music take on certain generational significations, but also cultural significations as well. Members of the Church leadership who plan the musical programs for Sunday services are thus not only responsible for making Christianity relevant to different generations, but also for presenting Christian ideology in a way that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for the particular diaspora being served. Such a negotiation proves more difficult as the diasporic community grows increasingly complex politically and culturally.

In this article, I examine the role worship music plays in both creating chasms and building bridges between generational and cultural groups within a specific Chinese-American Christian community. In Arizona's Phoenix Chinese Evangelical Church (PCEC),[2] attendees are generally split into two services: one in Mandarin and one in English. After language, the most apparent difference between the two services is the performance of worship music, with the English service primarily utilizing CWM and the Mandarin an older form of Chinese hymnody. While in many ways the discourse about worship music at these two services is similar to that in churches serving non-diasporic communities, the demographic makeup of PCEC's congregation gives such discussions and disagreements significance unique to the church's Chinese-American demographic. At PCEC, perspectives on musical performance within worship services expand beyond matters of generation, also incorporating aspects of Chinese and American cultural politics as determined by a particular person or group's migratory experience. Furthermore, recognizing the complex and potentially disruptive atmosphere surrounding musical production, church leadership has developed very particular musical mechanisms through which they mediate possible cultural or political contentions among the congregation.

Methodology

The material for this article derives from my experience as a participant-observer at PCEC between the winter of 2008 and the fall of 2009. During this time, I visited Sunday services, special church events, and various fellowship meetings. In most of these settings I participated as a member of the congregation (singing, praying), though at times during special events and festivals I performed in a professional capacity as a musician. The quotes below come from interviews and questionnaires administered to members of both the English and Mandarin services, as well as from church leadership.

In addition to conducting research within PCEC, I worked as a professional church musician in a wide variety of denominations throughout the Phoenix area. As a percussionist, the vast majority of my work involved playing CWM tunes at "youth" or "contemporary" services, performing a repertoire almost identical to that of PCEC's English service. While obviously my research at PCEC resulted in much more detailed observations of church dynamics than my work as a professional musician, playing CWM in churches serving a variety of denominations and communities has allowed me to experience first-hand some of the common discourses surrounding CWM in general. Such a foundation, I hope, has helped me better see the dynamics particular to PCEC in comparison to

the greater issues that surround this music in church politics. The following discussion, then, may be best characterized as neither entirely case-specific to Chinese Christians nor general enough to be applied to multiple churches. Rather, it is an ethnographic examination of how a specific church is approaching an increasingly prevalent and divisive issue affecting Christian communities throughout the country.

The Chinese Christian Church in the U.S.

Of the many institutions that operate within diasporic populations, sites of worship are unique in the sense that in order to survive they must not only account for cultural and social needs of the communities they represent, but also spiritual needs. In the cases of institutions which introduce new religious ideologies and practices to recent immigrant converts, leaders are confronted with the added difficulty of determining the cultural milieu of the community and adapting their religious ideologies to appropriately fit within it. In larger communities, such adaptation is further complicated by the various perspectives and values within separate generational or cultural cliques.

It follows then that appealing to the diversity of the diasporic community is one of the foremost areas of concern for churches serving Chinese-Americans. Indeed, by catering to the cultural, ethnic, and political backgrounds of its pre-existing constituents while also forming a church culture that is appealing to new immigrants is vital for the institution's survival. But negotiation proves difficult when one considers the long history of Chinese immigration into the United States—one which, due to political changes in Taiwan, China, and the United States, has created a Chinese-American diaspora of incredible cultural, generational, and economic diversity.[3]

In the United States, Chinese Christian churches began to appear in the 1950s, mostly started by Taiwanese immigrants. These institutions developed from small fellowship groups, oftentimes near university campuses. Eventually, the fellowship groups grew into churches, often with original members becoming temporary or permanent leaders (Yang 2000:95; Yang 2001:273–274; Yang 2002:86). Perhaps owing to their humble beginnings, the majority of U.S. churches catering to the Chinese diaspora today declare themselves non-denominational and evangelical. They rely on the conversion of recent (oftentimes non-Christian) immigrants to increase their numbers, rather than seeking new members among those with pre-existing denominational membership. As emigration became increasingly possible in China, church membership in the U.S. grew because it offered new immigrants an immediate social circle while they adapted to American society (Jeung 2002:236–237; Yang 2002:205). Realizing that many immigrants came to America due to their dissatisfaction with the political regime in China, church evangelicals also presented Christianity as a return to the Confucian or otherwise "traditional" Chinese ethics that were perceived as being slowly eradicated in the home country (Hall 2006:136; Ng 2002:204; Yang 1998a:253). Interestingly, then, converting to Christianity was seen in many ways as a means to retain traditional Chinese values rather than abandoning them for perceived Western ideology (Wang & Yang 2006:185–186). These conversion methods, however, should not carry the implication that all Chinese immigrants arrive in the United States as non-Christians[4]—in fact, Chinese and Taiwanese immigrants are increasingly coming to the United State from established churches in their home countries. Nonetheless, the strategies that Chinese Christian churches deploy for recruitment remain effective regardless of the past religious affiliations of new members.

Today, drawing upon the pool of incoming immigrants—particularly students—continues to be a prominent strategy for church growth (Hall 2006:143-144; Yang 2000:91-92; Yang 2002:91; Zhang 2006:152). Many churches have developed special groups to assist incoming students from China. These groups provide assistance in securing certain material needs for the incoming student (help with finding and furnishing an apartment, rides to schools and grocery stores, employment, etc.), and perhaps more vitally, by providing incoming students with an immediate set of friends, mentors, and activity partners (Abel 2006:164; Yang 2000:95; Zhang 2006:152). Outreach to students from China and Taiwan has become so embedded in Chinese Christian churches that special local and national camps, retreats, and media products (CD's, DVD's, books, etc.) are being produced to address this demographic (Zhang 2006:156, 158). These groups are also increasingly traveling to China and, against the policies of the Chinese government, holding camps for university students there (Chen 2002:223; Yang 1998a:246; Yang 2000:94–95).

The most recognized issue among many Chinese Christian churches regards the diversity of the congregations (Jeung 2002; Yang 1998b). As an evangelical-based church, a continually growing congregation is the primary goal for church leadership. However, a large congregation inevitably encompasses a level of diversity that challenges the solidarity and cohesion of the institution. The demographics within most Chinese-American churches include mainland Chinese speakers of Mandarin and Cantonese, Taiwanese, and American-Born Chinese of various

generations, in addition to members from throughout East Asia and the United States who, for various reasons and motivations, attend the church. Not surprisingly then, in a study specifically surveying the most prevalent issues within a number of Chinese-American churches, sociologist Albert Pua found that “culture”—defined by “the aspect of different backgrounds [including] age range, belief systems, educational backgrounds, languages and ministry mentality”—was one of the biggest issues for church leaders in adequately addressing the needs of their congregation (2006:105).

During the period of my fieldwork I found that the issue of diversity was one of the most common topics of discourse within PCEC, both among the congregation and the leadership. Many of the sermons, announcements, and speeches at the church spoke directly to the diversity of the community. For instance, members of the congregation would often give public “testaments of faith,” which spoke to the value and comfort a diverse congregation offered the individual. But while diversity is a point of pride at PCEC, it does not exist without its problems. In conducting my own survey among PCEC congregants and leadership, I found that, while the majority of respondents considered the church to be “open,” the question of whether the church was “unified” generated mixed results. It seems that because of the church's openness, the community may be too diverse to be unified, at least in the eyes of many congregants. According to them, the diversity inherent in the church creates separate congregations, fellowship groups, and cliques, which rarely communicate with one another and create an environment of gossip, ostracism, and peer pressure. The fact that that a number of respondents mentioned that the church “on the surface” was unified, but “deeper down” less so, speaks to the separation between the official church rhetoric and the on-the-ground social reality.

According to most of literature on the subject, the greatest division between members of Chinese churches is that between the American Born Chinese (ABC) community and the Overseas-born Chinese (OBC) community (Jeung 2000:294,300–301; Jeung 2002: 222-223; Yang 2000:91,104–106; Yang 2004:205). This division, having both temporal and geographical foundations, creates large differences between the two groups in both practical and ideological outlooks. As mentioned, the majority of Chinese churches in the United States were created by small fellowship groups of immigrants. As the churches developed and grew, the children of these immigrants, American-born and acculturated, became members of the same church. In many cases, this has created a feeling of filial association within the ABC congregation, who feel they are attending their “parents’ church.” Such feelings can be seen in a communication I received from an ABC pastor:

> We [Chinese-Americans] are raised by immigrant parents that teach us Chinese cultural practices, yet we are more influenced by the American culture in which we live. As a result, we can be very confused about our identity and, as for me, [I] hated the fact that I was Chinese . . . I didn’t know what to believe and how I was to live. The world told me so many different things. Needless to say, I was a very confused and unhappy kid.

While the pastor later goes on to say he is growing more comfortable with his Chinese-American identity, the comment nonetheless encapsulates what many ABC congregants feel: that they are caught between two worlds and two sets of values. Such feelings of alienation and confusion are intensified when attending a church primarily run by Chinese immigrants. As one ABC congregation member told me: “if you want to feel like a foreigner in your own country, go to a Chinese church.” These sentiments of alienation among the ABC population are also realized within the Mandarin-speaking (mostly OBC) congregation: when asked about the issues within the church, one OBC congregant immediately informed me, “[the] English pastors always feel dismissed,” and “there is always a possibility of ABC pastors separating.”

The most observable point of contention among the ABC and OBC congregation regards the language spoken at the weekly services. The majority of ABC congregants I spoke with said that, while a Chinese language (Mandarin, Cantonese, etc.) was the first language they learned, they have largely lost it and have become almost completely English speakers—a common phenomenon among second generation immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:188-191). For this reason, the ABC services at PCEC are conducted in English while the OBC services are conducted in Mandarin.[5] It follows then that the primary factor motivating congregants to attend either the English or Mandarin service is based upon the language spoken at that service. When I asked why PCEC congregants attend a certain service, the overwhelming response I received was that they frequented the service that was presented in the language with which they were most comfortable. But this phenomenon is not without its unique exceptions. For instance, during fieldwork I noticed a fair amount of Chinese immigrants of the “1.5 generation” (those born in China or Taiwan, but immigrating to America at an early age) at the English service. It seems they

were attracted to its perceived contemporaneity despite the linguistic difficulty many had within that service. One young 1.5 congregant I spoke to told me that he almost always attended the English service because, “I can understand the sermon better and relate to people better”—despite the fact that he arrived in the U.S. less than 10 years ago, and primarily spoke Mandarin. A similar example comes from a first-generation Chinese immigrant who told me that, while she considers the ABC service more “open,” and “connected to real life,” (as opposed to the Mandarin service which is “out of touch with reality”), she continues to attend Mandarin service for linguistic reasons. In such a way we see an interesting separation between language and the “softer” cultural associations of the two services, at least for a few congregants. Perhaps most significantly, the language divide creates increasing tension at the leadership levels: one pastor I spoke to mentioned that one of the ABC leadership’s biggest accomplishments was a mandate that church-wide council meetings be conducted in English rather than Mandarin.

Beyond language, the Mandarin and English congregations differ in capital and organizational structure. Following a similar trend throughout Chinese diasporic Christian churches, the ABC congregation at PCEC, being an off-shoot of the original OBC congregation, is smaller and less wealthy. This situation is likely to continue, in that the OBC congregation has a captive audience with incoming Mandarin-speaking students, whereas the ABC congregation must attempt to convert Americans who most likely have strong pre-existing social ties (religious or otherwise). Furthermore, the very presence of Chinese cultural expression may be seen as off-putting to more Americanized members of the Chinese diaspora. As one ABC leader expressed to me:

> ABC's can't relate to church because it is laced with cultural symbology that ABC's don't understand. Thus, the gospel doesn't reach ABCs and many leave. Because of this, and continued immigration, OBC's [are] always in the majority.

Perhaps because of the differences in congregational numbers, the ABC services are perceived to be organized much differently than the OBC congregation, with Mandarin services being viewed as more formal and traditional and the ABC services as more contemporary and casual.

Congregational perspectives of modernity and tradition undoubtedly derive in large part from the music performed within the English and Mandarin services. As mentioned above, PCEC utilizes both Chinese hymnody and CWM—the former for the Mandarin service and the latter for the English. In the case of PCEC, the performance of these two genres plays a large role in creating division between OBC and ABC members of the church—a division second only, perhaps, to the choice of language. Before examining how the performance of music serves to separate and at times unite the entire population at PCEC, it is first appropriate to discuss the development and characteristics of the music itself.[6]

Chinese Hymnody

The musical genre most consistently performed within the Mandarin service is what I term here Chinese Hymnody, a style that can be described as being musically related to the hymns of the Protestant tradition. Interestingly, despite the genre’s over 200-year history, remarkably little literature exists in English on the musical style. Luckily, the sources that do exist provide a great amount of historical detail on the subject—specifically Fang-Lan Hsieh’s fairly recently published *A History of Chinese Christian Hymnody* (2009), which traces the genre with great historical detail from its initial development to the contemporary era.

While Christian missionaries started travelling to China in the seventh century, the sort of hymnody utilized by OBC congregation at PCEC initially developed in the early 19th century via British Presbyterian missionaries (Hsieh 2009:5; Wong 2006:209). The hymnals from this early period were compiled usually by a single missionary, and contained mostly translations of Western European hymns (Hsieh 2009:5-15). Soon after that, missionaries started working with skilled members of the population to translate religious texts and set them in either newly composed hymns or to traditional Chinese melodies (ibid.:22-23).[7] Many of these Chinese-authored hymns first became published in the *Chinese Recorder,* a monthly Methodist journal in English created in 1867 that, in addition to music, published news, history pieces, and general interest articles on missionary life in China (Charter and Debernardi 1998:83). By the early 20th century, hymnals in various regional dialects began to proliferate throughout China, each containing to a greater or lesser degree various regional melodies and tunes adapted for worship. At this time hymnals also started to contain an increasing number of hymns written by Chinese composers (ibid.:89).

Due to the proliferation of hymnals of varying quality throughout China, many church leaders began seeking the development of a single canon that would comprise the highest quality hymns in the country. It was not until the mid 20th century, however that such a canon developed (Micic 2009:98-99). Organized by the Church of Christ in China and developed by six denominations representing three quarters of China's Christian population, the canonization of Chinese hymns was a massive undertaking, coming to fruition with the 1937 publication of *Hymns of Universal Praise,* a containing 512 hymn texts and 548 hymn tunes (Hsieh 2009:119-121).[8] In addition to collecting hymns, the project also called for the composition of new pieces, which resulted in the inclusion 62 original Chinese compositions, many of which were written by well-known Chinese composers and musicologists at the time (Charter and Debernardi 1998:86; Micic 2009:98-100). The hymnbook became incredibly popular, selling, according to one statistic, over 44.2 million copies by 1949 (Hsieh 2009:121).

Starting in the 1950s, hymnbooks began to be developed specifically for the diaspora, incorporating various tunes and hymn lyrics from around the globe. Hymnals published in the United States also began publishing work from modern hymn composers, and even select songs from Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) artists. As of the early 2000s, the most popular hymnals used among Chinese churches in America include *Hymns of Life* (1986), *Hymnody* (1972), and *Hymns of God's People* (1985) (Chow 2005:292-293).

As might be suspected given the fairly long history of Chinese hymnody, these hymnals contain a spatially and temporally expansive collection, incorporating melodies and texts from throughout East Asia, Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and the United States written from the 18th century to today. This being the case, it is difficult to speak of the melodic, harmonic, or formal similarities contained within the hymns. Such generalizations are further complicated by the fact that many churches create custom repertoires of hymns from multiple hymnbooks (Chow 2009:300). The most apparent generalization one can make regarding Chinese hymnody, then, may pertain to orchestration and language. For most performances of hymnody, the piano provides the primary chordal accompaniment for the singers (ibid.:293). But it seems the majority of discourse that has taken place historically regarding the composition or translation of hymns regards language. Of course, translating Western hymns into Chinese is no easy task, as the composer must be able to not only translate the oftentimes dense allegorical and poetic text in such a way to be understandable by the Chinese layperson and take into account the natural cadences and tonal structure of the Chinese language as well as a formal elements of Chinese poetry. Oftentimes, this alone is what separated the "good" hymns from the bad when it came time to compile hymnbooks (Hsieh 2009; Micic 2009).

Contemporary Worship Music

CWM, the genre most associated with the ABC congregation, developed in the 1960's in the context of the U.S-based Jesus Revival Movement. Among other projects, this movement sought to contemporize Christian worship in order to make the religion more appealing to a younger demographic.[9] One of the primary strategies deployed to do so was the mediation of Christian ideology through popular performance styles. Musically, this meant combining rock and R&B music with Christian texts in the creating of a genre of music labeled Contemporary Christian Music, or CCM (Howard 1992:123; 1999:9, 28). While original CCM achieved little commercial success, by the late 90s it became a billion-dollar enterprise and the sixth most popular category of music (Gormly 2003:254). With the success of CCM within Christian communities, the songs gradually moved out of personal libraries and into church services, becoming Contemporary Worship Music (CWM),[10] or CCM that has been adapted to facilitate performance by vocally untrained church congregations. In this sense, CWM is generally simpler than CCM: it has fewer modulations, more repetition, and a more narrow melodic range. Furthermore, because three to five CWM songs are often used consecutively in services, composers seek to minimize the harmonic, rhythmic, and tempo differences between songs, a concept known within certain music ministry circles as "song flow" (Wong 2006:114).

CWM today has grown to be prevalent in churches and youth ministries not only in America, but also throughout the world. Today, for instance, the CWM movement has reached a level of popularity in Taiwan and Hong Kong almost equal to that in the U.S, and has become an industry of equal economic power (Chou 2006). The increasing prevalence of this music in these locations leads to interesting issues for the churches in the U.S. serving the diaspora. For many incoming church members who have been exposed to CWM (or rock music in general) in China and Taiwan, the older hymns performed within OBC congregations are increasingly being seen as passé. This is a contributing factor to the aforementioned phenomenon among 1.5 members of the diaspora who often identify more with English services than Mandarin.

The most striking difference between CWM music and hymnody again lies in orchestration and text. Rooted in rock

and pop styles, the chordal accompaniment in CWM is most often shared between the guitar, bass guitar, and at times electric keyboard. In addition, the presence of a drum set creates a much stronger rhythmic feel, as the drum part usually involves a strict rock beat feel (with the bass drum on beats 1 and 3, the snare on beats 2 and 4). Furthermore, compared to Hymnody the cadence and lexical content of CWM lyrics are generally much simpler, usually following a verse-chorus form, rather than a strophic form found in many (but not all) hymnody pieces (Chou 2006:39). Lastly, for English speakers, the allusions and metaphors within CWM songs are much less obscure than those in hymnody, which often incorporate idioms specific to Chinese culture.

Music Dividing and Uniting

In discussing religious ritual cross-culturally, Mary Douglas argues "the drawing of symbolic lines and boundaries is a way of bringing order into experience. Such non-verbal symbols are capable of creating a structure of meanings in which individuals can relate to one another and realize their own ultimate purposes" (2003:53). Using Douglas's thoughts, we can argue that both the OBC and ABC congregations employ musical (i.e. "non-verbal") performance as a means to bind and structure their social, cultural, and historical position. By choosing to perform CWM, members of the ABC congregation are symbolically tying themselves to a more contemporary American Christian tradition, whereas the use of Chinese hymnody by the OBC congregation ties that community to a practice more rooted in China (if only in the sense that the genre first developed in China, whereas CWM began in the U.S.).

Such associations connecting CWM with contemporaneity and the U.S. and hymnody with tradition and China are pervasive within PCEC discourse. In an interview I had with a 1.5 generation congregant, for instance, I asked about her preference in worship music. She responded that "[while] I am okay with [hymnody] because I grew up in Taiwan and am used to the more conservative style of worship music . . . I prefer the English side worship style because I enjoy the more contemporary worship more." In another interview, a young Chinese-American congregant stated that traditional hymnody seemed "like music from a different generation," and later, when asked why he preferred CWM music over Chinese hymnody, he simply stated that it was "probably just a generational thing." When asked what he meant by "generation," he responded:

> Generation reflects a combination of the Chinese/American thing and the parent/child thing. I think the divide between overseas parents and American born Chinese children is wider than other parental gaps because we are growing up in an entirely different culture. Thus, they not only grew up in a different time but also in a different environment, which makes that generational gap so much more significant. It is just a combination of the two aspects of separation.

In these discussions, we see clearly the congregant's associations with CWM as a more contemporary style, both in its form—it is more "rhythmic" and utilizes more "band instruments," as one respondent told me—and in its message. Furthermore, as the second example reveals, it represents to many younger congregants not only a generational divide, but also a cultural one, insofar as oftentimes in diasporic communities the earlier generations are more tied to the traditional homeland than to their children. In this context, CWM takes on added significations within the Chinese diaspora than it does in churches serving non-diasporic communities: not only is its reception perceived as a result of generational difference (as it is in many non-diasporic churches who employ CWM), but it is also seen as a geographically-based cultural difference.

One of the major factors that characterize CCM as more "contemporary" for the ABC population regards the lyrics. As mentioned, the textual content within hymnody often relies on idioms very specific to Chinese culture. Such idioms often are incomprehensible even to ABCs who speak fluent Mandarin. Furthermore, the text may have special meaning unique to the particular congregations as it becomes embedded in that group's discursive practices—as Chow explains:

> Every translated Chinese hymn text is a union of some tradition of Chirstian expression and the cultural experiences embedded in the Chinese language . . . understanding of the Chinese hymn texts is constantly shaped by the ways in which these hymns are used and sung as well as by the multifarious discourses carried on in the life of the Chinese churches. As a result, in order to appreciate the values and meanings of the hymns for a particular Chinese congregation, one needs not only to know the necessary Chinese language and dialects, but also to understand their congregational life. (2005:301)

The indecipherability of hymnody at the Mandarin congregation was discussed often at PCEC, both by the OBC and ABC groups. One congregant I interviewed mentioned, for instance, that she preferred CWM to hymnody because she felt she better understood the music's textual meaning—despite the fact that English was very much a second language to her:

> The lyrics in modern worship songs are easy to understand, they use everyday language. Compared to Chinese conservative worship songs use more idioms, deeper meaning words which are harder to understand unless you know the bible more sometimes.

Regardless of personal preference, the performances of CWM and hymnody fundamentally act as communal practices which mediate and validate particular Chinese-American experiences as Christians. Group religious practices (e.g. singing, the taking of communion, praying, etc.) tie the congregation together by initiating acts of self-subjectification. Musically, we may say that in the act of singing a style of music with a specific historical trajectory, the performers are vocally declaring to themselves and to each other that they are part of that trajectory—regardless of their taste or appreciation for it. Such is the influencing power of such processes that bind performers and audience members together, oftentimes regardless of individual members' familiarity with or acceptance of the conventions of the performance. As Shieffelin notes:

> Ritual language and ritual modes of communication are not effective mainly because they convey information, reveal important cultural truths, or transform anything on the semantic level. Rather, they are compelling because they establish an order of actions and relationships between the participants through restricting and prescribing the forms of speaking in which they can engage so that they have no alternative way to act. The situation itself is coercive. (1985:709)

Through the repetition of ritual action, the congregants in both services are then physically enacting—and thus perpetuating—two unique versions of the Chinese-American Christian protestant tradition.

In examining the performative/ritual process in this context, there inevitably arises a sense of exclusion. By performing American CWM, the ABC congregants, while solidifying their own tradition of worship, are separating themselves from the older worship traditions of the OBC congregation. Meanwhile the OBC congregants, by performing hymnody, are proclaiming themselves as part of a very specific Chinese-based (rather than U.S.-based) musical tradition. In this way, each congregation is consolidating its own communal subjectivities while gradually separating themselves from the other. Such separation is particularly dangerous for PCEC, as it has the potential of eventually splitting the church in two. This threat of separation necessitates some sort of strategy in which both congregations can, at times, communicate with each other. At PCEC, such a uniting process is accomplished using specific performative processes. Musically, church leadership attempts to maintain a sense of coherence between the ABC and OBC congregations in two ways: (1) by juxtaposing elements of one congregation's performance practice with the other’s; and (2) by creating special performances universal enough for both congregations to identify with. The first method was employed often during both the ABC and OBC services. For instance, approximately once a month the worship band at the English service (which occurred earlier in the morning) stayed to perform a few songs for the Mandarin service. Likewise, when guest performers from China visited the church semi-annually, they often performed for both the English and Mandarin services. Similar juxtaposing practices occurred on a smaller scale, as well: the choirs performing at the Mandarin service almost always incorporated the drum set, and solo Chinese hymns were at times performed at the English service. Most recently, the Mandarin service has been incorporating more contemporary worship music as well. By mixing these cultural elements, church leadership is injecting one congregation's cultural symbols into the other in an attempt to have the two congregations recognize, if not identify, with one another. And the practice seems to be effective, at least to some level: I remember participating in a particular college fellowship meeting where ABC students enthusiastically made plans to attend the Mandarin service the following week to watch a visiting choir group from China.

When I asked a pastor from the English congregation about these practices of juxtaposing musical elements between services, he responded that, while they exist, they are not necessarily enacted through a concerted church-wide effort, but through the individual policies of the Mandarin and English leadership:

> As far as choosing music for the English and Chinese ministry there is not a leadership discussion. For the English it is solely decided by the person in charge unless something is specifically requested . . . The Mandarin service does it differently as they don't have one particular coordinator, but rather, have a pool of leaders that change weekly . . .

Furthermore, the Pastor implied that the conscious motivations are less to maintain a sense of solidarity throughout the church and more to serve the perceived needs of the congregations:

> I also believe that the Chinese congregation is becoming more contemporary as there are more contemporary worship music being translated into Chinese and has become more mainstream in other Chinese speaking churches. Plus the congregation is getting younger people and families joining. We do, however, try not to be too cutting edge as there is a large contingency of senior citizens that don't identify with anything too hard and fast. So we do our best to accommodate all styles to meet the people's individual preferences.

In this sense, we see an interesting dynamic: while congregational diversity *between* the English and Mandarin services may act divisively, diversity *within* a service acts to bring the congregations closer together. This convergence is most likely due, I would argue, to the fact that the linguistic needs and the cultural needs of church members are not always mutually exclusive: as I mentioned discussing the 1.5 generation (and in the above quote regarding "younger people and families") there seems to be an increasing amount of congregants that are linguistically comfortable with Mandarin while culturally comfortable with more contemporary worship music.

The second method deployed by church leadership to unite the congregations is through special church-wide performances occurring on religious and cultural holidays (Christmas, Easter, the Chinese New Year, the Spring Festival, etc.). These events most often entail a staged variety show followed by a large dinner.[11] Performances most typical of these variety shows include martial arts displays, dance showcases, choir performances, and to a lesser extent, traditional instrumental music. In addition, the programs include more Western performance practices, such as solo presentations of Western Art Music (usually by children, and performed on the piano or violin) in addition to comedy routines and skits with Christian messages. To further the universality of these occasions, concert programs are printed in both English and Mandarin, and between acts both English- and Mandarin-speaking emcees present the next performer(s).

If communal performances between the Mandarin and English services inevitably lead to a degree of exclusivity as discussed above, these festivals serve most readily as a strategy for developing institutional cohesion. One way this is accomplished is by mixing elements of both musical traditions, and such mixing occurs much more often in these festivals than on any given Sunday. In fact, according to a pastor I spoke with, planning these festivals is the only occasion in which both the English and Mandarin leadership mutually construct a musical program:

> The only time we [the English and the Mandarin service leadership] intentionally mix styles is when there is a big event like the Christmas cantata. Since the Chinese traditionally do a formal cantata the English worship team is asked to lead a time of worship. Since many of the Chinese don't know many CWS [contemporary worship songs] we have a cache of worship songs that both English and Chinese will know. Sometimes the English worship coordinator will inject an unfamiliar song but we will have to translate it into Chinese for the PowerPoint.

As occurs in certain Sunday services, these festivals incorporate the two primary musical traditions of the church. But what separates these events from a normal Sunday service is the fact that the audience is made up of the church in its entirety, rather than a single congregation, and that the music is chosen by both the English and Mandarin service leadership. Thus the festivals serve as a communal ritual for the entire church, invoking a sense of inclusive community which serves to foster church solidarity.

These festivals mediate the differences between the ABC and OBC communities not only by allowing one congregation to experience the other's chosen form of worship music, but also through the non-religious "cultural" performances the stage show offers. The vast majority of these performances might be described as conventional

or stereotypical, even to people with little exposure to Chinese culture. That is, the majority of these cultural showcases include kung-fu displays, lion dances, and other such acts that have, it can be argued, historically been associated with China or

"Chinese-ness" in the United States. I witnessed some performances at these events, in fact, that could be considered "Chinese" only through a single signifier. For example, one festival included a hip-hop dance troupe which, but for a back-up track sampling Chinese folk music, would have no ties to China whatsoever. But the value of performing such general significations of Chinese culture, I argue, is that it allows church members in the audience the opportunity to relate to a shared sense of vague "Chinese-ness," and thus feel a part of a community regardless of generational or cultural difference.

Conclusion

The social, cultural, and political landscape at PCEC can perhaps best be visualized as an amalgam of various overlapping, interconnecting fields of cultural production and subjectification. Most immediately we find the largest of such fields being the English and Chinese services. While this clear division among congregants at PCEC is most directly tied to linguistic preference (the ABCs being more comfortable with the English, and the OBCs Mandarin), there additionally exists a myriad of cultural and political differences between the two congregations, of which worship music is perhaps the most apparent. The English service, generally constituted and led by second-plus generation Chinese Americans, congregates under CWM—a music instantly signifying the American form of rock and pop. The Mandarin service, made up by older and more recent first generation migrants, strengthens communal ties through Chinese hymnody. Yet, between these two fields exists certain strands of cultural commonality resulting both from the diversity within a given congregation (the congregants in the Mandarin service that prefer CWM, or those in the English service that are more comfortable with the Mandarin language, for example) as well as from the church leadership's attempts to insert one congregation's cultural symbols into the others. Such interconnectedness between the two services is further strengthened by festivals and special events, which act as conscious attempts to unite the two congregations under a shared sense of Chinese culture, vague or universalized as they may be. Without such cultural threads between the two congregations, or the construction of a larger cultural model, the OBC and ABC congregations run the risk of complete separation.

I would like to conclude, then, by considering the efficacy of such practices of church unification. When talking to leadership within PCEC, there was an overwhelming feeling that, though the church has its cultural divisions, it is remarkably stable. Such a perspective seemed to be supported in a variety of ways by my own observations. During interviews, for instance, I found that the vast majority of the congregants I interviewed had at one time or another attended a Sunday service or special event organized by the opposite congregation. However, the continued efficacy of such strategies of unification remains to be seen. Rapidly changing demographics brought about by larger cultural changes occurring within the United States, Taiwan, and the PRC may with time become a substantial threat to the church's congregational solidarity. For example, as CWM spreads throughout the globe, younger Chinese immigrants within the Mandarin service may find hymnody increasingly passé, creating perceptions that the service is generally less "in touch with reality." In contrast, as further generations of Chinese-Americans attend PCEC, there may be a growing desire to re-discover cultural or ethnic roots via Chinese hymnody. Regardless, such possible cultural developments will be assuredly met by evolving church strategies to create an inclusive atmosphere, whether that means pursuing different directions in Christian and Chinese musical practice or developing new musical hybrids as sources of identification for the church community.

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Notes

1 Fellowship groups at PCEC are worship services catered to a specific community (young adults, college students, parents, newlyweds, etc.). They are much smaller, and often held during weekday nights at church member's homes. Such fellowship meetings allow church leadership to better understand and address issues effecting specific church demographics.

2 PCEC is a pseudonym.

3 A description of the developmental history of the diaspora, while important, is beyond the scope of this article. See Hatch 1980, Keane 1992, Luckingham 1994, and Rogge 1992 for a historical Arizona-specific account of Chinese immigration.

4 While connected to Chinese Christian Churches in America, the development and issues surrounding the Christian Church in China is beyond the scope of this article. For a good introduction to the political and social atmosphere surrounding the church in contemporary China, see Faries 2010 and Xi 2010.

5 Interestingly, the Mandarin service at PCEC does have translation services available, while the English service does not. Based on what I observed in the field, my initial explanation for this phenomenon is that the translation service is not primarily utilized by ABC congregants at the Mandarin service, but by American spouses (usually husbands) of Chinese immigrants.

6 Many of the dynamics within the Chinese churches in America are also prevalent in Korean-Amerian churches, and there is a fairly vast literature on the subject. See Chai 1998, Chong 2005, Hurh 1990, Kim, et. al 2001, Kim 2004a, Kim 2004b, Kwon 2000, Min 1992, Min and Kim 2005, Park 2004.

7 As both music and religious practice tend spread geographically, in this section I use the term "China" or

"Chinese" loosely to refer to the PRC and Taiwan.

8 This project was largely made possible by the results of the May 4th Movement, a seminal event that led to the development of the vernacular-based *bai hua* system, which became the official system throughout China. See Hsieh 2009: 99-102.

9 See DiSabatino 1999 for a clear overview of the Jesus People movement, which entailed more than musical production.

10 CWM is also frequently referred to as "Praise and Worship Music."

11 The dinner itself serves an important role in developing congregational solidarity, in that members of both congregations sit and eat together (though in my experience the tables are often segregated between the congregants who attend the English service and those that attend the Mandarin service). Such communal eating occurs not only during festivals, but also every Sunday after the Mandarin service. These lunches and dinners were often mentioned by my informants as times of intercommunication between the congregations, with common comments such as "all Chinese like to eat," or even, "most people come to the church for the food." Nonetheless, many of the ABC informants I spoke to noted division during these meals via a perceived hierarchy of labor, where the OBC, ABC, and older Cantonese communities each have specific tasks (food preparation, dishwashing, greeting, etc.).

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