The Impact of Religion on Acculturation of Chinese International Students

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ABSTRACT

The importance of religion to life and how it affects people of all ages and across cultures has been the focus of research. As the Chinese student population in Europe and America continues to be on the rise, this paper reviews the literature on how Chinese and as a whole, Asian international students find help in religion to cope with the inherent stress associated with acculturation. Observations highlighted in the review include:1) new exposure to religious practices; 2) development of relationships with the religious community; 3) social and cultural factors of religious practice and acculturation; 4) the Church as a surrogate family; 5) positive effect of meaning in life. The above observations are projected for the understanding of the struggles, aspirations and relative positive effect of religious practice on the acculturation of Chinese international students.

Keywords: Religion; Acculturation; Chinese; International; Students; Review

INTRODUCTION

Religion serves as a social framework for transnational immigrants as they move between countries and cultures. Religion has always played a significant role in both ancient and modern immigrants' lives and, despite the technological advancement of communication, many still rely on prayer and local congregations as a source of comfort (Gordon, 2005). Religious faith gives meaning and direction to the structure of society. In the 17th century, faith was propagated by the Catholic and Protestant and Jewish thinkers in the establishment of 'godly rule' and 'godly' concept of the society (Rushdoony, 2014). Issues of life concerning religion permeated the dialectics of early thinkers in both the West and the East. Mou Tsung-San, a 20th-century philosopher and writer who lived in China, Taiwan, and later in Hong Kong, asserted that the fundamental motivation in the life of a culture resides in religion; a view acknowledged for the understanding of the Eastern and Western orientations of Confucianism and Christianity (Lancashire, 1981). In both the East and the West, the issue of religious faith and its relationship to humanity was the subject of several schools of thought. Tsai Yuan-P'ei (1868-1940) a philosopher from China, claimed that all religions exist to inflame people's emotions and opined that the love for aesthetics should be seen as a replacement for religious faith because the former unify rather than divide humanity (Lancashire, 1981).

Contrary to the view of Tsai Yuan-p'ei, Ch'en Tu-hsiu (1879-1942), another Chinese philosopher, argued for the combination of aesthetic feeling for the beauty of nature with religion. "The feelings for beauty and religion must, in all their purity, penetrate deeply into the foundation-head of all our lives" (Lancashire, 1981, p.218). Another philosopher, Ch'en Tu-hsiu (1879-1942) on the topic of Christianity and the Chinese people, argued that with the presence of Christianity in several centuries in China, many had accepted Christianity based on the grounds of faith. Ch'en reiterated the influence of Christianity on the daily lives of the people and urged youths to be more open-minded to the faith. "I believe that the question of Christianity is a serious question in Chinese society which ought to be investigated" (Lancashire, 1981, p.212). Wallace and Williams (1997) suggested that religion is substantially indirect in its influence. On the contrary, Smith (2002) focused on the positive, constructive influence of religion. Smith identifies nine components of religion that affect adolescents, namely: moral order, spiritual experiences, role models, community and leadership skills, coping skills, cultural capital, social capital, network closure and extra-community skills.

In recent times, significant numbers of groups, including the young generation, have shown more interest in debating the interplay of religion and culture on globalization and liberalization of movements across borders (Articlesbase, 2011). Religion helps young people in to process philosophical thoughts and questions about life's existence and goals (Saroglou 2002). However, Saroglou warned that the negative aspects of religiousness that lead to involvement in cults, authoritarian religious groups, and terrorism based on extrinsic religious orientation should not be neglected (Saroglou, (2002). Allport and colleagues in the 1960s (Allport and Rossi, 1967) first described religion using two distinct orientations of internal commitment (intrinsic) and external gains (extrinsic). Their findings revealed that religion is positively related to the measures of religiosity as in mature (intrinsic) and measures of prejudice (as in extrinsic).

This paper will not delve into the components and significance of religions. It aims to provide information on research findings on the influence of the Christian religion on the acculturation of Chinese international students in Europe and America. Research shows that the mobility of international students in Europe rose to about 61% growth in enrollment between 2000 and 2005 (OECD, 2007). About 22% of Asian international students are Chinese. Chinese

students enrolled in US schools are about 158,000, thereby making China the leading international school sending country in two consecutive years (Liao (2007, quoting IIE, 2011).

- The People's Republic of China is considered the largest source country for international students in the world and the Chinese student population in Europe continues to be on the rise (Yao, 2004).

- The number of Chinese students at US private high schools soared to 6,725 in 2010-11 from 65 in 2005, and about 57,000 Chinese undergraduates, attended US colleges in 2010-2011, a figure that is estimated to be six times more than what it was in about five years from now (Golden, 2012).

- Chinese students are the main group of immigrants with about 200,000 in population out of about 80,000 studies in the U.K.The U.K. has the largest Chinese immigrant number in Europe with about 630,000 most from Cantonese speaking Hong Kong, but gradually the population is getting diverse with immigrants from Zhejiang, Shanghai and Beijing provinces(Latham and Wu, 2013).

- . Chinese international students in Germany reached about 26, 000 in population in 2009 (Yu and Wang, 2011).

- About 75% of Chinese immigrants in recent years in Canada reported that religion plays a significant role in their lives(Liao, 2007)

Chinese International students in Europe, like their counterparts around the world, encounter an environment in which the language, norms, and laws are different from those in their native lands. Hence, the need for a socio-cultural support network; a type of a close-knit community that is capable of providing immigrant support and security during a difficult period of transition (IIlich and Fitzpatrick, 1980). "Acculturation generally refers to the cognitive and behavioral changes that occur as a result of close contact between different cultures, specifically the adoption of the language and values of the dominant group" (Rhee, Chang, and Rhee, 2003). The underpinning principles of acculturation are embedded in the person-environment transactional theory of stress-coping adaptation (Gu, 2008). Gu explained that contemporary research on acculturation is geared towards the understanding of the adaptation mechanisms through affective measures rather than the conventional psychological distress symptoms (e.g., depression or anxiety) associated with acculturation. The author's assertion was based on the need for research on acculturation to have a wholesome picture of what acculturation entails regarding the psychological struggles and the related coping skills. The view for a holistic approach to research on acculturation was echoed by Pan (2008) on the study of *"Acculturation*

and resilience of mainland Chinese postgraduate students in Hong Kong." Pan argued for the shift from acculturative stress and negative consequences on mental health to a psychological perspective of a resilience framework of positive adaptation outcomes (Pan, 2008).

Acculturation deals with both cognitive and behavioral changes that ensue from close contact between different cultures, and stress is identified as an inherent factor in the acculturation process (Rhee et al., 2003). Some researchers opined that more acculturated Asian international students would more likely use counselors and psychologists as sources for help in personal problems than less acculturated students (Leong and Glidden, 1986). The authors' study on relationships between acculturation and attitudes toward psychological help-seeking with 170 Asian international students in the United States showed a significant relationship between levels of acculturation and attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help. In a related study, significant correlations were found between students' levels of acculturation and stigma tolerance and confidence in mental health practitioners (*Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 2003).

On the contrary, Heggins Ph.D.- Assistant Professor Washington State University, in a joint research article with Jackson, Assistant Professor University of Wisconsin-Madison, on: *"Understanding the Collegiate Experience for Asian International Students at a Midwestern Research University"* (2003), asserted that Asian international students sought for familial and social sources of support when coping with problems and challenges. The researchers applied the student's development and transition theories to understand the collegiate experience for the Asian international students at the Midwestern Research University (MRU). Individual interviews and focused group discussions were employed. Findings showed that factors that help students in coping with transition include participation, traditional values and external pressure (Heggins and Jackson, 2003). The idea was stated in earlier research findings showing a preference for social support rather than professional counseling by Atkinson, Whitely, and Gim, (1990). They contended that Asian international students sought help for psychological problems from people within their social network, including family members, religious leaders, and friends. Although there are significant differences in the various Asian groups, many of them share relatively common values and customs and parenting styles (Kitano and Daniels, 1995; Rhee et al., 2003). These values based on Confucianism include respect for one's elders, a sense

of family obligation, deferred gratification, hard work, discipline and reverence for learning (Fong, 1993).

PROBLEM

Globalization forces are taxing youth, families, and education systems worldwide, thereby reiterating the need for all social systems to impart values, morals, skills, and competencies to the next generation (Suárez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard 2004). 21st-century research findings attest to the fact that Chinese international students have the highest anxiety levels, are less positive and have less tension-reduction coping skills, according to Chataway and Berry (1989). The authors' findings on the acculturation experiences in coping and adaptation among Hong Kong Chinese, French, and English international students in Canada showed that all the students examined reported an uncertain future, academic difficulties, and loneliness as the three most serious stressors (Chataway & Berry, 1989.)

Acculturation deals with both cognitive and behavioral changes that ensue from close contact between different cultures, and stress is identified as an inherent factor in the acculturation process (Rhee, Chang, and Rhee, 2003). A study on acculturation, communication patterns, and self-esteem among Asian and Caucasian -American adolescents revealed that most Asian minority adolescents living in America face the challenge of coping with stress symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and psychometric disorders which are frequently identified mental health consequences, among acculturating individuals (Rhee et al., 2003). A study examining the association between acculturation stress and depression symptoms in a regional probability sample (n=407) of six groups of Asian immigrant elders (Chinese, Korean, Indian, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Japanese) living in America showed that about 40 percent of the sample were depressed; indicating higher depression rates than found in other studies of older Americans (Mui and Kang, 2006). Multiple regression analyses of the study confirmed a strong relationship between the high depression system of the Asian adults and their perception of the acculturation gap between themselves and their adolescent children. Although there are significant differences in the various Asian groups, many of them share relatively common values, customs, and parenting styles (Kitano and Daniels, 1995; Rhee et al., 2003).

While there are studies on acculturation among the Chinese and Asian international students, research on the practice of religion amongst Chinese international students has received

little attention and reviews on research conducted in regards to Christian religion and acculturation of Chinese international students scant. The practice of religion amongst Chinese international students is an elusive area in research amidst numerous studies on the acculturation of international students. It is pertinent to explore this seemingly hidden area of life being one of the key societal and family cultural values. Hence, this paper deals with factors affecting the acculturation of Chinese international students and the effect of the Christian religious practices on their transition time of integration into the host country, with emphasis on the leading destination countries.

ACCULTURATION PROCESS

The process of acculturation enables immigrants of various categories, including international students, to adjust to the new cultures; through the experience of intercultural interactions (Du, 2012). In what ways has the practice of Christianity and other religions impacted the Chinese international students in their new learning environments in Europe and America? What impact does religion play on the acculturation of Chinese international students who are from different religious orientations and ideologies? Yang and Ebaugh (2001), in their research on the impact of religious status in home and host countries of new immigrants in America, observed that immigrants differ in their integration of religious and ethnicity identities based on their religious ideology and upbringing. Irrespective of religious backgrounds, issues of acculturation that the Chinese international students encounter as new arrivals to host countries encompass all aspects of life.

The new religious environment exacerbates the compounding psychosocial issues confronting the Chinese international students from a non-religious background from mainland China as seen in cases of those enrolled in some Christian religious-affiliated schools in America. Research on private religious schools indicates that wealthy Chinese parents reportedly choose overseas secondary education in places like America in order to prepare children overseas colleges, escape the heavy-test educational policy at home, and for safety and supervision. However, according to the American New York Times (Spencer, 2014), most parents do not pay particular attention to the distinction between parochial and secular private schools.

Struggle to Fit In

Most Chinese international students in parochial schools do not have an understanding of denominations as to one being a Catholic or Protestant. "Why can't one be both?" may be a genuine question a Chinese religion and culture-oriented student may ask since for Chinese Orientals, the relationship to religion is fluid depicting the traditional religion of polytheism (Spencer, 2014). Most of the students had little preparation for the religious environment they entered, being new to the Christian monotheistic religion. Consequently, many convert to please the school administrators or save face. Although teachers, classmates, and host parents of Chinese students are sometimes overly zealous in proselytizing, some schools do not require students to convert. However, they have to participate in the school's mandatory theological courses and or fulfill the required Christian service hours engaged in some Catholic schools such as tutoring low-income students or serving the hungry at a Catholic soup Kitchen (Golden, 2012).

There is a need to understand the different religious backgrounds of the ethnic Chinese immigrants from different locations such as mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and Chinese communities in South East Asia (Liao, 2007). In qualitative research on the influence of the Christian faith on young Chinese immigrants in Canada, Liao (2007) explained how the newcomers from mainland China could be skeptical about religious matters at the initial entry. Liao observed that those not raised from Christian background recalled their struggles in the lack of understanding of the Christian religious norms, especially for those from mainland China. Those new to faith issues wondered how to take someone that is not known to one as one's personal 'Lord and Savior' as in the Christian faith. Others felt that having the Chinese Bible helped a lot. For most, going to church is more of a social outing to make friends and socialize at the initial stage, but the curiosity for learning and knowing more about the faith kept growing. The challenge of lovers of communism, haters of Church vice-versa, constitute a hurdle that every mainland immigrant faces with the embrace of Christianity synonymies to democracy and the American/Western identity (Liao, 2007).

Given the challenging experience of the interplay of two cultures in the context of acculturation, it is necessary to understand the cultural background of the Chinese international students. Notably, Christianity is a minor religion in Chinese society, unlike Buddhism, which

has a history of about 2,000 years though it originated from India. The population of Christians is less than that of Buddhist adherents and Buddhism is considered as one of the mainstream Chinese traditions such as Confucianism and Taoism (Yang and Ebaugh, 2001). Lancashire (1981), in the translation edition of "*Chinese essays on religion and faith,*" reported on the advent of Confucian teaching in the education system in 1903's official guiding principles of education (Xuewu gangyao) which was intended as a replacement of the civil service examination. At that point, Lancashire asserted that China forbade foreign teachers to preach their religious (Zongjiao) in class with strong support for Confucius classics to be taught at the elementary and high school levels.

The declaration of the Great Federation of Anti-Religionists in Peking March 21, 1922, vowed to clear the poison of religion from human society with the view that religion is incompatible with science and cannot co-exist with mankind (Lancashire, 1981). A campaign for the supremacy of science over religious faith which was later replaced by the discourse on finding a form of philosophy of life that should govern the minds of the Chinese people (Lancashire, 1981). The knowledge of the past orientation of the Chinese traditional value and norms of living are valuable in understanding the Chinese international students' struggles between two cultures of home and host countries. Some of the Chinese traditions identified include; Anthropocentrism, (the believe that man, God, and nature are interrelated) as contained in Confucius and Tao's teachings; Respect for laws and authority in society while they expect protection and care in return; Family oriented-Filial piety; Relationship oriented and the family-based relationship stems into other relationships-friends; and maintaining harmony in a relationship by avoiding direct confrontation and extreme behaviors to keep a balance as in the 'yin-yang' (Chung, 2006).

The psychosocial dimension of struggles that Asian and, in particular, Chinese international students encounter in host countries cannot be overemphasized. Gu (2008) in the development and validation of an acculturation scale for Asian international students, highlighted some aspects of struggles: (i)The author maintained that health hazards owing to poor nutrition in terms of scarcity of affordable home country food staples and account for the students' struggle to adjust to the host country cuisines. (ii) Political nervousness; resultant of trying to grapple with the loss of autonomy enjoyed in the home country and the realization of civil

responsibilities required for holders of student permit in the host country. (iii) Fear of losing funding due to change in the economic power adjustment to daily living within the 'means' of scholarships, grants, or family remittance. (iv) Cultural adjustment in learning and usage of a new language as well as relinquishing the 'acclaimed' educational status in the home country through cultural maintenance and adaptation. (v) Loss of previous social contacts and the social hurdles of building new relationships in the host country as well as maintaining the old ones in home country (Gu, 2008).

Development of Relationships with Religious Community

Due to the lack of presence of family members and friends, immigrants can rely on religious bodies to fill the void; help from community members comes handy in the absence of long personal relationships (Hirschman, 2003). "Immigrants are drawn to the fellowship of ethnic churches and temples, where primary relationships among congregants are reinforced with traditional foods and customs" (Hirschman, 2003, p.3). Both Christianity and Buddhism are world religions that engage in proselytizing religion and can recruit members of any nationality. In the case study of the Hsi Na Temple and the Chinese Gospel Church in Huston, Texas, Yang and Ebaugh (2001), Chinese immigrants were able to establish interpersonal relationships from the onset of their arrivals in the American host community. Unlike the situation in home countries, immigrants who adhere to faiths, especially from non-Judeo Christianity backgrounds readily volunteered in service through lay involvement in congregations. Immigrants' congregations provide extended social services as those congregations assume a variety of functions that enable them to run secular and religious social services (ESL and citizenship educational programs). For the Christian faith congregations, major worship is held on Sunday and the celebrations of major holidays are moved to the weekend to involve all (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000).

Coping

Research on the acculturation and resilience of Chinese international students (Pan, 2008) showed ways that students' coping skills of turning a seemingly adverse situation into positive, constructive means through making sense of their environment by finding positive meaning in a stressful event by paying more attention; relate meaning on personal-environment stance, and change of actual term through cognitive coping activities and benefit-finding. One of the ways

Chinese international students in parochial schools in America are making meaning out of their new Christian environment despite the struggles is through the gains of spiritual richness and serenity of the atmosphere of prayers that enable some to enjoy the beauty of nature around them (Spencer, 2014). However, not all Chinese students enjoy the overwhelming religious rituals that are new to them. A study on how Chinese students discovered the Christian faith while studying abroad in the United States revealed the risk of proselytizing, which resulted in some finding faith and others having superficial conversion (Golden, 2012). Golden reported that some of the students to their delight and others in dismay participated in religious activities such as Bible clubs, class, and Chapel attendance.

Social and Cultural Factors of Religious Practice and Acculturation

Although the Eastern religions (non-theistic) are dominant in the Chinese culture, Christianity (Catholics and Protestants) and Islam are recognized for having significant followers among the Chinese at home and abroad (Liu, 2009). Most American churches, synagogues, and mosques responded to the socio-economic needs of immigrants in diverse ways (Hirschman, 2003). Immigrants in a multi-cultural society are confronted with multiplicities of identities and spirituality (Chung, 2006). Three types of transnational religious networks ensued among Asian Catholic and Buddhist religious networks catering for the welfare of immigrants: Micro-personal (interpersonal relationship) that give the sense of belongingness owing to support received for making sense of one's environment. Meso - local Social connectedness: an interpersonal relationship that gives the sense of belongingness owing to support received for making sense of one's environment. Macro -international organizational: Festivals such as the Chinese New Year were celebrated in groups, e.g., Mandarin and Cantonese parties as means for educating young ones and non-Chinese about the culture. They were sponsoring college students to China for short-term mission trips or to Chinese government-run programs that provide language and cultural education in summer (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000). A body of literature indicates that the path to acculturation was smoother for the early Chinese Christians due to: English language/host country language classes implemented by the Church as a pre-evangelical program for new arrivals to attend; creating harmony between secular and spiritual dimension, a human experience that featured the distinctive Chinese mind (Fan, 2010).

Research on Chinese cultural beliefs and adversity revealed that Chinese adolescents' adherence to cultural beliefs about adversity is associated with psychological well-being (Shek,

2004). In a scale developed to measure the acculturative experiences of Asian international students in – America, Gu, (2008) examined factors of communication in a host language; retention of home culture; friendship across-cultures; upholding values of both host and home countries; academic success; the level of comfort within both cultures. Those who are on the road towards acculturation showed a high level of integration into the host society by cultivating social relationships with people in the host country as well as maintaining a positive relationship with the home country. Research on the acculturation of Chinese international students in Germany showed that female Chinese international students are more likely to become integrated into the host country than their male counterparts (Yu and Wang (2011). Yu and Wang's research aimed at finding the preferences in acculturation strategies of Chinese students in a survey of about 64 Chinese students studying in the region of East Germany measured acculturation strategies; language proficiency; language learning motivation; symptoms outcome; stressful experience and adaptation showed 87%females reported strong preference for integration and 79% males chose separation. Although the findings did not provide empirical data for the association of gender to Chinese international students' acculturation in Europe, the general view of Asian women's gentle, obedient, and charming disposition as against the masculine stereotype of business orientation could be responsible for the gender discriminant (Yu& Wang (2011).

The Church as a Surrogate Family

Research on the Chinese immigrants in the existing China of New York's town under the religious socialization that brought reform through the Chinese Christian Churches in America revealed that immigrants in crisis found the ethnic church as a site of ethnic socialization in the Chinese community (Cao, 2005). A study on how the church as a surrogate family for Chinese immigrants and received Chinese youth; indicates how the church played a vital role in promoting successful adaptation. Cao claimed that "the future prospects of these highly at-risk inner-city youths are enhanced by their involvement in an Americanized, yet Chinese-led Christian church" (Cao, 2005, p.197).

Protestant missions in America organized English classes, medical and social services for the benefit of Chinese immigrants. Churches were involved with helping ethnic immigrants by helping with housing and job issues and provided fellowship opportunities with co-ethnics and counseling, including educational opportunities through parochial school. Immigrants received

comfort, security and fellowship through religious participation (Hirschman, 2003). A case study of the Houston Texas Chinese Gospel Church describes how the church provides its congregants with a sense of intimacy within the large and diverse church community and the awareness of the unity shared of being Christians and Chinese. "Members value the Chinese character of the church, which assures them that to be Christian does not negate being Chinese" (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000, p.89). Churches attended by the Chinese immigrants consist of denominational churches that are supervised by their parent church. However, others are non-affiliated to the mainstream churches and, as such, are non-hierarchical and nondenominational in the way they operate. They have substantial independence to the local congregation, open doors to receive people from diverse denominations and help Chinese Christians to strengthen old ties and develop new ones – to gain converts Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000).

Educational opportunities through parochial schools were organized by Catholic and Protestant missions in forms of English classes, medical and social services that benefited Chinese immigrants. Banquets were arranged for students' graduation ceremonies (Yang, 2000; 2002). Psychologically, the Church helps in dealing with immigrants' mental health issues within the perimeters of the Chinese culturally accepted norms. The Christian religion causes tension between the Chinese ethnic and religious identity; however, it eases the tension between the Chinese and the host country's identity. Students testified how, through church guidance, they were able to navigate their plans and make decisions. Hence, the role of faith in identity development and acculturation- value, interpersonal relationships, role in life and plans ones (Yang, 2000; 2002).

Social-culturally, the church served as a diverse community and opportunity for bridging cultures, thereby understanding the different religious backgrounds of the Chinese immigrants from different locations: Taiwan, HK, and Mainland. Newcomers were sometimes invited to homes of the old members for fellowship. In the challenging experience of the interplay of two cultures in the context of identity formation, the church provides social networks, community resources, and nurture emotional and spiritual needs. Chinese families prefer to confide in a church leader for religious support within the understanding of spiritual strength rather than acknowledging the stigma of a mental health problem. The church provides bi-lingual church services, English speaking, services for international students,Chinese English speakers and

other Asian students. Issues identified included the importance of school and academic success, purpose in life, decision making and relationship building. Through the church, Chinese Christians engaged in diverse networks of transnational ties characterized by the Chinese immigrant churches in the US, connecting people, churches and para-church organizations with people from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, South East Asia thereby helping Chinese Christians to strengthen old ties and develop new ones (Yang, 2000; 2002).

Positive Affect of Meaning in Life and Acculturation

Referring to the writings of Myers' (1992) on the pursuit of happiness, the author argues that religion provides a larger spectrum of things that make people's lives purposeful; and gives meaning. Research attests to the association of acculturation with positive affect among Chinese international students (Yoon, Lee, and Goh, 2008). Pan (2008), on the resilience of the Chinese international students, observed a positive affect as a key element to acculturation through challenge appraisal. Pan maintained that the research participants were not religious and could not connect a positive affect with religion. In earlier research, Chataway and Berry (1989) indicated that positive affect correlates with social support, collective coping, engagement coping, although positive affect was found to be negatively related to stress, avoidance, and religious coping. After general social connectedness had been controlled, the path analysis showed that acculturated students likely have future life satisfaction and positive affect by feeling close to the host country (Yoon Lee and Goh, 2008). Social connectedness with the mainstream and ethnic community enhances the interpersonal relationship that gives a sense of belongingness owing to support received for making sense of one's environment (Du, 2012). Du found that mainstream social connectedness partially mediated acculturation and life satisfaction and positive affect while the ethnic, social connectedness partially mediated the enculturation and negative effect.

Conclusion

The role of religion on the acculturation of Chinese international students showed how religious communities, especially in America, Canada, and Australia, to mention a few, provide psychological and sociological forms of support for Chinese immigrants of which Chinese international students are in the majority. Liao (2007) asserted that regarding Chinese youth immigrant acculturation and Christian faith, it is necessary to make policies and create systems

that enhance the psychological adjustment of immigrants and that the building of healthy communities is central to research on acculturation (Liao, 2007). Going forward, religious communities have the task and challenge of providing a "safe haven" that promotes the social connectedness of Chinese international students with the mainstream and ethnic communities for proper integration. Can the Church today maintain its moral vocation of the Christian commitment to the calling in the secular?

More than 50 million Chinese are considered to be multi-cultural, multilingual, and many belong to multiple nationalities around the world, thereby the Church has a crucial task of meeting their spiritual needs (Chung, 2006). Church models and approaches for nurturing young people (Wilkerson, 1997) in an integrating and multi-cultural setting are implications for Christian religious organizations and include: Taking the liberationist view of appraisal and help for the oppressed; Helping minorities to relate Christianity with their cultural orientation thereby; fostering Christianity and cultural identities; Focus on church reforms in line with the societal needs; harnessing social-justice and fostering inclusiveness; and The social science of caring for an individual with the relationship of groups; multi-cultural sensitivity. Latham and Wu (2013), in their study on "Chinese immigration into the EU: New trends, dynamics, and implications" reiterated the need for commensurate effort and action from EU member nations such as diversity levels of integration, encouraging harmonious integration, economic, social and political interactions. The authors urged EU member states to foster university engagement and research for a holistic understanding of Chinese immigrants.

Limitations

This paper's scope is narrowed to the impact of the Christian faith plays in the lives of Chinese immigrants/international students and most of the information is based on research findings in America and a few other Western countries. There is a need for a review of research findings regarding the Chinese international students in other parts of the world. Moreover, a review of comparative religions and their impacts on the Chinese international students' acculturation based on qualitative research in Europe, will provide more information on the experience of the impact of religion on the acculturation of Chinese international students in EU member nations.

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