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**DIS/ENTANGLING THE GLOCALIZATION OF ESL GROUP BIBLE
STUDY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF ADULT ESL GROUP BIBLE
STUDY ON A U.S. SECULAR UNIVERSITY CAMPUS**

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by

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ABSTRACT

On many secular college and university campuses and in surrounding communities, Christian organizations offer international students, scholars and spouses free group study of Bible stories as well as meals and other social activities. On one hand, Bible-based content is interesting and compelling for some adult language learners and has long been used in small group learning situations in church-based ESL/EFL and religious language school programs (Johnston, 2017; Suen, 2017; Chao & Mantero, 2014; Chao, 2013). Moreover, Christian groups are a resource of Americans who speak English slowly and carefully, who patiently and humbly explain new vocabulary and concepts, and who include internationals into local families and Christian sub-cultures. On the other hand, many Christian groups at work on campuses are part of conservative American evangelical Christian organizations intent on missionizing atheist and non-Christians at a time when they are isolated from friends and family, and on reproducing their anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ politics throughout the world. This study accounted for “glocalization” processes that impact the subjectivities of local Bible study leaders and international students and scholars. It was also a study of religious content and language teaching and learning (Han, 2018). The research was a case study in which Bible study groups intended for international English language learners on and around a secular university campus were studied using an ethnographic research approach. The research techniques were participant observations of Bible study groups, semi-structured interviews of four Bible study leaders and two Bible study attendees, and analysis of documents. Data was interpreted through assemblage theory, which is a Deleuzeo-

Guattarian informed concept for analyzing purposeful and intentional arrangements (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Buchanan, 2013a; Buchanan, 2013b; Buchanan, 2015; Buchanan, 2017) and spatial repertoires, which is an expansion of the concept of translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2018a; 2018b).

The study investigated the way actions, bodies, and things were arranged as content, language was used to justify this content, Bible study leaders and attendees made sense (or not) of this content and language, and spatial repertoires were employed to make communication and meaning possible. I concluded that these groups, which were made up of Bible study leaders with some language teaching skill and internationals with some interest in improving their conversational English and perhaps learning about the Bible, persist on campuses for a number of reasons. First, the experiences create the potential for personal change, which means different things for those involved. Second, the experiences create Christian affect and Christian knowledge, which benefit some participants. Third, the experiences are entangled with conditions of middle-to-upper class privilege and a glocalized conservative American evangelical agenda. I make recommendations for secular left study groups for language learners as alternatives to conservative Christian Bible study groups.

Key Words: Bible Study, Adult ESL, Assemblage, Deleuze, Translanguaging

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Bible Studies as Sites of Socialization for International Students

In this dissertation I explore Bible study groups brought into being for international students, scholars, and their spouses on a secular United States university campus to understand how they work to missionize, provide adult ESL literacy learning and teaching, give care, and help internationals include themselves into a Christian subculture. Christian discipling and missionizing of international visa holders is widespread on secular university campuses in anglophone countries and elsewhere. Free Bible study groups with leaders who work to make difficult scriptural texts comprehensible, interesting, and compelling to less-than-proficient English users are the heart of what I will later describe as a “glocalized” missionizing and discipling project. Bible study leaders are often members of large Christian organizations which function to convert atheists and non-Christians and create bi/multilingual disciples who are prepared to spread the faith when they go back to their home countries. But, as I will show in this dissertation, those being witnessed or missionized also use the work of Christian groups and organizations for their own purposes.

International students entering US universities come into education systems that are prepared to receive them. But they are also forced to take more initiative when it comes to being included into American communities. Many campuses offer a modern

pluralistic environment where students, scholars and others can explore various subcultures, including those inculcating religions or spirituality. The existence of Christian campus groups that specifically missionize and disciple internationals is evidence for desire among some internationals and local Christians to find meaning, belonging and opportunities for interacting in morally oriented communities. But it also indicates that some internationals will tolerate the moral orientation to get a sense of belonging and free English language instruction. The Bible study leaders in my study asserted the expectation in Western individualistic and liberal university culture, that people choose to include themselves into these communities. They can be introduced and invited, they can even be taken by the hand, but they could also decide to go to the library and study or stay home and watch YouTube videos. The fact that some persistently show up for events and activities outside of their own language and cultural organizations indicates that what they want is not limited to improving their English. This dissertation asserts that Christian missionizing and discipling on secular US university campuses is successful not only in bringing international visa holders into events and activities, but giving them a reason to keep coming back. That said, while the international population being missionized and disciplined on university campuses consists of adults who are not in need of meals and other services provided by Christian charity, their emotional and physical isolation sometimes makes them especially receptive to conservative American evangelical Christian discourses. Furthermore, encounters with these discourses are overdetermined for this population on US university campuses because missionizing is more likely to be part of the doctrine of conservative American evangelical Christian churches than more liberal churches (Haskel et al., 2016, Reimer & Wilkinson, 2015).

International students are a significant population in US higher education. In 2019, temporary student visa holders made up around 5.5 percent of the student body on US university campuses (Institute of International Education, 2019), about the same as that made up of U.S. veterans (Hill, 2019). While the number of new international students has been on the decline over a number of years, there has been an increase in the number of international students who persist and finish their degrees and an increase in the number who stay in the US on student visas for at least one year after finishing degrees to work in their field (Institute of International Education, 2019). In the 2016 to 2017 academic year, 91,373 Bachelor's degrees were conferred on international students, and international students were at least as likely to graduate as their white U.S. domestic peers at both public universities and selective schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

In 2019, more than a million international students, mostly from China, India, South Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan, attended a U.S. college or university, usually majoring in engineering, math, computer science, business, or the social sciences (EducationData.org, 2020). The average tuition and fees for international undergraduate students at US public institutions during 2018-19 academic year was \$26,657, not including health insurance, which was more than double that of in-state residents (College Board, 2019) and about five times that of Japan and Korea (OECD Publishing, 2020). While some government, non-government and university specific funding existed for internationals, most grants and merit-based scholarships were only available to U.S. nationals. But for many families, the hyper-competitive domestic job markets meant that if their students' national college entrance examinations were inadequate to get into a

prestigious domestic university or if there was not a domestic degree program with equivalent prestige to the U.S. college experience available at home then a U.S. degree was a worthwhile investment in family security. The phenomenon of internationals seeking American degrees, therefore, is largely explained by economic reasoning and underlying desire to be included into the economies of countries experiencing rapid middle class expansion (Kharas & Hamel, 2018). Most universities have programs and resources such as academic English writing labs and tutors to help international degree seekers succeed academically (Mamiseishvili, 2011; Durrani, 2017). In general, US higher education is doing at least as good a job at getting international undergraduate students through degrees as it is for white US college students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). There is scant data on international graduate students, who are close to half of the total population (EducationData.org, 2020).

International students who have the English proficiency to succeed academically often do not have the English or cultural knowledge to perform regular interaction with domestic students and locals without strain to both parties. As Canagarajah (2018) points out, it is possible “for someone to master literacy proficiency before oral proficiency; or a specialized scientific register before mastery of casual English” (p. 284). There is also a smaller but still sizable population made up of temporary visiting scholars, accompanying spouses of students and scholars, and students enrolled in intensive English language programs who often have less English ability than degree-seekers because they do not have to meet the same TOEFL, IELTS or similar requirements. Campbell and Prins (2016) note that there may be few if any free ESL programs provided to this sub-population by universities. Further, since they tend to be highly literate in their own

languages, sufficiently well-off so that food and/or housing insecurity are not problems, and have enough English and peer networks to take care of basic needs such as shopping, enrolling their children in schools, and visiting the doctor, they fall outside the basic-needs that most community and church ESL programs are designed to serve (Campbell & Prins, 2016). Nonetheless, isolation from the local community and feelings of isolation are significant issues for international scholars and spouses, and lack of English ability and cultural knowledge are obstacles to making connections (Terrazas-Carrillo, 2015; Campbell & Prins, 2016). Thus, for both degree-seeking and non-degree seeking internationals on and around US university campuses, groups of Americans who speak English slowly and carefully, who patiently and humbly explain new vocabulary and concepts, and who include them into local families and sub-cultures, all for free, are a highly valuable resource.

The persistence of Bible study groups brought into being specifically to missionize and disciple international students and scholars on university campuses shows that this population has wants outside of dialogue about bureaucratic matters, economic transactions, and academic English grammar, vocabulary, and writing. Christian campus groups recognize that some portion of this population desires meaning, belonging and interaction in morally-oriented communities. To bring Bible study groups for internationals into being, there is almost always a core of Bible study leaders working on or in proximity to university campuses because Christian campus missionizing is usually attached to local, national, and international Christian churches and organizations (Zhou, 2002). Some of these missionizing and discipling churches and organizations are ethnic-exclusive and some are more diverse. Internationals are more likely to encounter

Christians who are American ethnic-Chinese, Indian, Korean or Japanese than back at home because Christianity is overrepresented among these immigrants: 31 percent of Chinese Americans, 18 percent of Indian Americans, 71 percent of Korean Americans, and 38 percent of Japanese Americans are Christian compared to an estimated 5 percent of China's population, around 3 percent of India's population, around 30 percent of South Korea's population and only 1 percent of Japan's population (Pew Research Center, 2020). It is often through first-language interactions that Christian groups establish inroad into international populations (Williams, 2013). Through word-of-mouth -e.g., classmates inviting classmates, roommates inviting roommates, and laboratory colleagues inviting laboratory colleagues- Christian groups are among the first social communities that many internationals encounter on campus (Zhou, 2002).

Conservative American evangelical Christian subculture, which describes one segment of Christian Evangelical subculture, thrives on modern secular university campuses because it is the power of religious subculture that it grows stronger by engaging and creating tension and conflict with other subculture groups (Smith & Emerson, 1998). Further, conservative American evangelical Christian pastors and practitioners feel a particular calling to convert atheists and non-Christians and disciple everywhere, citing Matthew 28:19-20¹, whereas theologically liberal Christian clergy and practitioners do not share this conviction (Haskell, 2016). Consequently, most of the Christian groups missionizing and discipling internationals are conservative Christians

¹ ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20 New International Version)

and are affiliated with national or international conservative Christian organizations –e.g., Campus Crusade for Christ and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship are two of the largest conservative American evangelical organizations at work on campuses, but also the Fellowship of Catholic University Students.

In sum, conservative Christian organizations missionize and disciple middle-class international students and scholars on secular university campuses because there is enough desire among Christians, atheists, and non-Christians for a social body that studies Bible stories to bring Bible study for internationals into being. In addition to the opportunity to enhance Bible literacy, Christian groups also offer free English lessons, meals, and other activities.

Significance of Group Bible Study for Adult Second language Instruction

I approach this dissertation research as a teacher of adult ESL and EFL with more than eighteen years of experience and as a teacher researcher. For many adults struggling to acquire enough of a second language to communicate and comprehend difficult texts, a growing body of evidence suggests that understanding and using Bible-based content may be a source of motivation. Spiritual texts are likely to be used in small group language learning in church-based ESL and religious language school programs, and this practice has proven beneficial for adult learners (Johnston, 2017; Suen, 2017; Chao & Mantero, 2014; Chao, 2013). Spiritual texts have appeal for some people, and religious affiliation may be significant to language learning preferences (Liyanage et al., 2010).

International adults could hardly choose a more authentically American Evangelical social interaction than group Bible study. According to James Bielo (2009), whose *Words upon the Word* is the only comprehensive ethnographic work on adult Bible study groups in the US to date:

Bible study contends strongly for being the most consequential form of religious practice to the ever-evolving contours of American Evangelicalism. From a sheer numerical perspective, it is the most prolific type of small group in American society, with more than 30 million Protestants gathering every week for this distinct purpose. (p. 3)

For Christian Evangelicals, group Bible study is separate from book discussion groups that read popular spiritual texts and other mediated interactions such as Christian Facebook groups and online Christian chat forums (Bielo, 2009). While participants do talk about their own interests, concerns, and conflicting ideas about this thousands-of-years-old text written by various people from radically different cultures, economies and environments, their purpose for gathering with a leader and attendees is to arrive at an authoritative understanding of how to use scripture as a manual for living a Christian evangelical life in a modern secularizing world (Bielo, 2009). In other words, Christian evangelical Bible study is a didactic and socializing ritual with distinct roles for leaders and attendees (Bielo, 2009).

There is a growing body of research into Christian Evangelicals who are involved in English language teaching (Wong & Canagarajah, 2009). Baurain (2012) reported that Christian teachers in TESOL generally consider their personal religious beliefs to be integral to their educational purposes and practices, and their faith to be part of their

teacher knowledge. According to Baurain (2012), most Christian Evangelicals believe that they can and should spread their faith in acceptable and respectful ways, and many Christians who teach English as a second or foreign language and who are involved in missionary work claim an ethic of service above and beyond adding converts (Smith, 2009; Smith & Carvill, 2000; Snow, 2001). Christian Evangelicals often use the term ‘witnessing’ when talking about how they go about this. Baurain (2015) defines Christian witnessing as: “a holistic, intentional process in which students become aware of the teacher’s Christian faith and reach an understanding of its importance in the life of the teacher” (p. 139). He goes on to state that witnessing “might be direct and verbal, but it should also flow through actions and character, such as by service or patience or showing care or working for justice” (p. 210). Some Christians use a reading of scripture to justify and legitimize adversarial positions to war, capitalism, and oppression -e.g., Liberation Theology and Martin Luther King’s poor people’s campaign. Christians have also used scripture to justify acts of militant resistance to government attacks on civil liberties, e.g., the Waco siege and massacre. Further, it may be that not distinguishing between proselytizing and witnessing, which is what Edge’s (2003) prescribes, gives a view of Christian evangelical missionary work that is too un-nuanced to be useful for those professionals concerned with what happens in language teaching classrooms and wherever language teaching and learning is taking place. As Baurain (2007) puts it:

Proselytize is made to carry connotations of a forced change of mind, outright deception, or questionable persuasive techniques, or an indirect or unethical use of position or power to effect ‘changes of heart’. The related assumption is that people who believe in absolute truths, namely religious believers, must be

arrogant, unreflective, intolerant, and unable or unwilling to dialogue with others.

(p. 204)

According to Baurain (2007), this simply does not describe many of the Christian believers who teach ESL/EFL and many of those ESL/EFL teachers who engage in Christian witnessing.

Bill Johnston, whose treatise on English language teacher values was noticeably devoid of religious beliefs (Johnson, 2003), notes that there is a tendency among TESOL professionals to essentialize evangelical Christian English teachers as right-wingers who are incapable of being reflective, while giving Muslims, Buddhists, and others the benefit of the doubt (2017). Johnston (2017) also acknowledges that Christian Evangelicalism, is far from a trivial phenomenon, it gives hundreds of millions of people in the U.S. and around the world emotional-support and other benefits that come with belonging to a community. Johnston further allows for diversity of thinking among evangelicals, both individually and by denomination.

Even so, Christian Evangelical discourses, like all religious discourses, can be repetitive, dogmatic, rhetorical, and more effectual or powerful than other discourses, which is to say, hegemonic. Johnston (2017) contends that from a critical perspective, challenging religious discourses can open people up to existing hierarchies and the self-evident beliefs designed to preserve those hierarchies. Some Christian evangelical Bible study groups doubtlessly function to do consciousness-raising but many do not.

Until now there have been no studies that examine Bible Study groups on a secular US university campus where Christians and non-Christians, American Bible study leaders and international visa-holder attendees, voluntarily come together and

formally arrange material and expression in order to read and study the Bible through English which many of the attendees use as a foreign or second language. This dissertation analyzes two Bible study groups. It examine how adults are able to affect and be affected within morally-oriented glocalized communities of voluntary readers of religious content.

Research Questions

This dissertation reports on a 14 week study of 2 Bible Study groups serving approximately 20 total international students and scholars most of whom were Chinese nationals. The research was set on a secular university campus in a mid-sized northeastern town geographically isolated from diverse urban centers. In this study I consider the local and global nature of English literacy and Bible literacy learning and teaching among adult international visa holders. There is a focus on Bible study leaders because as a future teacher educator and someone who has been involved in ESL/EFL teacher mentorship and evaluation I am most interested in the people responsible for aiding comprehension and guiding dialogue in adult literacy events. As I will describe in my methods chapter, to complete this study over the course of 18 months I used ethnographic methods, which included observing 8 meetings of one group and 4 meetings of another, and interviewing 4 Bible study leaders and 2 Bible study attendees. As I will discuss in more depth later, I was unable to audio- or video-record these sessions because the Bible study leaders and attendees were not comfortable with this form of data

collection. Therefore, I took notes during my observations, which I later organized by consulting my research questions.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What actions, bodies and things constitute adult Bible study groups for international visa holders on secular university campuses, how are they arranged, and what is the nature of their relations?
2. How does performance of language justify and legitimate actions, bodies and things included into adult Bible study groups for international visa holders at a secular university?
3. How do group leaders and attendees make sense (or not) of adult Bible study groups for international visa holders, what new arrangements and relations do these beliefs make possible (what becomings?), and what are the illusions of transformation that result from overcoding?
4. What spatial repertoires are at work within Bible study for international visa holders?

Analytic Framework

As I considered my ethnographic field data, I came to believe that drawing on concepts from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari could offer a powerful analytic framework. In this study I provide a Deleuzo-Guattarian analysis of learning and socializing within adult ESL group Bible study. I am choosing to use the work of Deleuze and Guattari to provide an analytic framework because it gives me a means of explaining

Bible study groups for internationals on secular campuses in terms of power relations, the psyches of leaders and attendees, and arrangements as aggregates without the presupposition that those relations are coercive, the researcher being a trained psychiatrist, and specific objects and events becoming the focus.

In considering my findings in relation to my research questions, I find the following Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts to be particularly helpful.

The abstract machine – I work with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the abstract machine as the “distinctive plan” or principle for including, excluding, and arranging material and expressive aspects within an assemblage so that these components are “known and integral to its existence” (Buchanan, 2015, p. 385). This concept helps me consider how material and expressive dimensions unite to “constitute an assemblage that is integral to meanings and communication” within Bible study groups (Canagarajah, 2017, p. 34).

The assemblage – I work with Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of assemblage as a purposeful and selective bringing together of material and expression. This concept, as my basic unit of analysis, helps me consider the importance of the material and expressive aspects of Bible study groups.

The Body without organs – I work with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the body without organs (BwO) as the agency of selecting what investments of desire can do. I use this concept to help me consider the conditions of possibility inside these groups.

Desire – I work with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of desire as the unconscious and productive will to form and destroy connections to help me consider how Bible study groups come into being.

Deterritorialization and reterritorialization – I work with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of deterritorialization as the breaking of habits and norms, and reterritorialization as the formation of new habits and norms to consider how instruction and socialization take place.

The material and expressive dimensions – I work with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the assemblage having a material dimension of actions, bodies and things, and an expressive dimension of affect, ideas and words to consider what is included and excluded with Bible study for internationals.

Time – I work with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of time as repeated periods of habituation intermittently broken up by events and objects that strain present life to consider how Bible study groups can cause people to be deterritorialized and reterritorialized.

At this point I also need to clarify two terms. First, throughout this dissertation I use performativity (the words perform and performing) in the sense of acting upon the world (Pennycook, 2004). Performativity is an act that makes claims about the world that structure everyday and political relations. Affect and language are performed. When they are made to perform they “work in the service of altering world” (Walcott, 2003, p. 104). This is also true when performance is regulated (perhaps by other performance). Therefore, performance is part of processes of oppression, resistance, subversion,

subjectivization, and re-invention. It calls into being identities and relations which may or may not pre-exist and be internalized in some form. The second term is literacy. Here, I am limiting my discussion to reading and otherwise interacting with words for pleasure and language learning.

Contributions

This dissertation offers three contributions to knowledge.

Firstly, a contribution is made through this dissertation's accounting for translocal spaces and specifically "glocalization" processes that impact the subjectivities of local Bible study leaders and international students and scholars. By glocalization I mean that subjectivizing in most human arrangements happens in an interzone between a localized, traditional, nationalistic, molar, and/or arborescent pole and a globalized, marketized, liberal, molecular, and/or rhizomatic pole (Boellstorff, 2003; Chu, 2013). Glocal (de)subjectivizing is a non-teleological transformation process, it "does not entail compliance with state ideology" but "neither does it imply a free-wheeling, presocial, liberal self-assembling of an identity...independent of social context" (Boellstorff, 2003, p. 238). In the case of Bible study for internationals, processes were characterized by, to use Boellstorff's (2003) words, partial investments of the self, partial translations and belonging, and partial bringing together of incompatible cultural logics.

Secondly, this dissertation contributes to the study of religion and language teaching and learning, a research subfield proposed by Huamei Han (2018) in a recent position paper. These accounts help us to consider the potential for the use of similar

arrangements, with a particular focus on adult second language literacy development and religious language and literacy learning and socialization among adult language learners.

Thirdly, a contribution is made through my methodological approach. The questions are meant to articulate assemblage theory, which is a Deleuzo-Guattarian informed concept for analyzing purposeful and intentional arrangements (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Buchanan, 2013a; Buchanan, 2013b; Buchanan, 2015; Buchanan, 2017) and spatial repertoires, which is an expansion of the concept of translanguaging recently worked on by Canagarajah (2018a; 2018b). In addressing research questions 1 and 2, I will delve into the inner workings of Bible study for internationals, with question 1 focused on content, and with question 2 focused on expression (Buchanan, 2021; 2013a; 2013b; 2015; 2017). However, as I will explore in depth in Chapter 2, the assemblage cannot be isolated from the Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts of the Body without Organs and the abstract machine. A defining characteristic of assemblages is that they change by internally deterritorializing utilizing the Body without Organs and “strive to persist in their being” by internally reterritorializing utilizing the abstract machine (Buchanan, 2017, p. 463). Interpreting this characteristic is addressed through research questions 3. Finally, in chapter 5 I integrate the concepts of assemblage and spatial repertoires, and put this new concept to work through research question 4.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter two presents a review of literature relevant to the intersections of the various aspects of the phenomenon being studied. The history of Bible study on college and university campuses is briefly given. Next, it introduces the key elements from Deleuze and Guattari constituting the theoretical framework for this research. Then, (trans)linguaging theory is presented. Specifically, I go into greater depth on the concepts I have already introduced and will build a case for why they are part of one coherent package, that is, how they cannot be isolated from each other.

In chapter three, my methodological approach is described. Details of the three Bible study groups I observed and the four leaders and two attendees I interviewed are provided. I position myself as a researcher. Then, I provide the details and rationale for the ethnographic approach to data collection.

Chapter four presents the data gathered during this dissertation research and my analysis of the data through research questions 1, 2, and 3. This primarily takes the form of a series of 3 vignettes from participant observations and journaling. For research questions 1 and 2, I approach the groups as aggregations of content - actions, bodies, and things - and aggregations of performed expression - affects, ideas and words - functioning as ongoing mechanisms of learning and socializing leaders and attendees into forms of adult Christian literacy. Socio-political boundaries restricting these assemblages are also defined. For research question 3, I address the body without organs and the abstract machines. Consequently, I consider the beliefs circulating among group leaders and attendees about the capacities of content and expressions. I also consider the multiplicity in terms of the amount of internal variation due to mutation that these Bible study assemblages can accommodate before they become something else.

Chapter five concludes this dissertation. In interpreting research question 4, I approach these Bible study groups as unique repertoires of (trans)linguaging, thus, I describe how leaders and attendees constantly employ verbal and non-verbal strategies integral to communication and meaning. After that, I map the relation of affect and subjectivism engendered within these glocalized groups to larger agencies of power: State, Church and Market. Next, I consider the implications for co-opting the social forces at work by more traditional (secular) adult literacy programs and in formulating leftist study groups for international visa holders. Finally, I reflect on the limitations and affordances of my approach for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The literature introduced in this chapter lays out the conceptual foundation to the phenomenon of adult ESL Bible study on a secular American university campus and the theoretical framework I used to select and analyze the data. I lay out existing research on topics which examines the phenomenon of international students' attendance at campus Bible studies. Following that, I discuss my theoretical framework for analyzing my finding, which I draw from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Ultimately, my goal is to experiment with what difference is produced if I lay my data alongside Deluezo-Guattarian theory, particularly (as I will describe in my analytic framework section) in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of assemblage and Canagarajah's (2018) concept of spatial repertoires as they relate to language learning for international students. It became clear to me as I did my research that campus Bible studies as sites for language learning have much to offer to our understanding of language learning environments.

This dissertation is an attempt to use theory creatively to analyze given situations of voluntary adult second language learning and teaching. I understand the adult ESL group Bible study as sites of second language socialization (Duff, 2007). While group Bible study is a significant small group phenomenon among adult native English speakers in North America (Bielo, 2009), there is sparse research on these voluntary situations for people reading and discussing the Bible in English when it is not their mother tongue. Existing research indicates that an unknown but significant number of Christian and non-

Christian international students attend Bible study, the Bible study groups that many internationals are likely to encounter self-segregate along ethnic/national/linguistic lines but local churches and (inter)national Christian organizations also commonly offer free English through Bible study opportunities to more diverse groups, and Bible-based content can be comprehensible, interesting and compelling enough to encourage language acquisition (Sun & Rhoad, 2018; Johnston, 2017; Wong et al., 2013; Han, 2007a, 2007b).

The Bible study groups I investigated belonged to Christian Evangelical student organizations which fill a niche, serving Christian students and working to missionize the campus population (Magolda & Ebben, 2006). Like all student religious organizations, they survive only so long as they recruit student members and schedule and sponsor meetings, social events, and the group study of spiritual texts (Williams, 2012; Magolda & Ebben, 2006). Importantly, student religious organizations often have expectations of leaders and members, e.g., abstaining from extra-marital sex and excessive drinking, which would likely be troublesome with many other student organizations (Magolda & Ebben, 2006). Group Bible study is part of what makes a Christian Evangelical student organization a situation of focused learning, teaching and socialization outside of the classroom (Magolda & Ebben, 2006). From an education research and ethnographic perspective, group Bible study, as the heart of Christian service and missionizing, is a window into these constellations of social and educational situations found on secular campuses across the U.S. and around the world.

The first Christian student organizations to establish a presence on U.S. campuses were the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations (YMCA and YWCA) (Grubb, 2006). The Ys also began the long tradition of connecting U.S.

Christian college students to volunteer organizations doing work across the globe (Grubb, 2006). Presently, many Christian denominations as well as Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist students are represented and made visible by university student organizations (Grubb, 2006). On many U.S. campuses, including the one where I did my research, religious activities are institutionally coordinated by full-time religious directors (Grubb, 2006). Student religious organizations are part of what many secular universities in the U.S. consider their mission to produce well-rounded world citizens, but also a way of responding to students' search for spiritual activities (Dalton, 2006). Some universities provide meditation rooms, spiritual centers, interfaith dialogue programs, multi-faith libraries, and spiritual film series (Dalton, 2006). Historically, student Christian organizations have had assigned pastors and staff and financial support from affiliated churches (Grubb, 2006). For ethnic religious student organizations, staff and money often come from large church organizations outside of the U.S., for instance Taiwanese Christian Evangelical organizations have long provided missionary couples and financial support for planting Chinese Christian Evangelical student organizations on U.S. campuses (Zhang, 2006). An additional phenomenon emerged in the middle of the last century with the development of Christian tax-exempt organizations such as Campus Crusade for Christ and the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, which now have a significant presence on many campuses in the U.S. and abroad (Grubb, 2006).

While evangelism and conversion are the stated goals of many campus ministries, including the ones I studied, a small body of research has demonstrated that some international participants in campus Bible studies have little interest in studying the Bible as a religious text or in conversion to the Christian faith (Yu & Stoet; 2019; Sun &

Rhoad, 2018; Park, 2011). While clearly a number of international students come to American campuses already professing Christian faith, many have other reasons for attending Bible study. Yu and Stoet (2019), for example, presented a mix of an ethnographic and survey-based study examining two U.K. churches with programs aimed at attracting Chinese non-Christian international students to Bible study. They found that while group Bible study was at the core of these churches' missionizing, with other social activities essentially serving to get people into seats with English scripture in hand and Bible experts guiding reading and discussion, nevertheless the traditional Bible study emphasis on sermons and moral lessons failed to gain much traction with this population.

[T]he congregations acknowledged that many Chinese students were looking for opportunities to speak English, rather than tackle Biblical issues. Therefore, these Bible classes were provided under the name, 'English through the Bible'. The advertising that promised the opportunity for 'learning English' effectively attracted many students. Nevertheless, in reality, these classes were clearly meant as an introduction to Bible study, since the texts used in the class were Bible stories and all the teachings were Bible-related. (Yu & Stoet, 2019, p. 11)

Sun and Rhoad (2018) found that while the international students in Bible study sometimes had little interest in the religious content of Bible studies, they perceived the U.S. as significantly Christian nation and attended group Bible study to learn more about what they believed to be mainstream U.S. culture. Park's (2011) ethnographic research focused on four attendees of a Korean American Bible study group at a U.S. university who expressed desire to seek out encounters with racial diversity and Bible study sessions where leaders and attendees addressed issues of racial diversity. One vignette

from this research showed how the Bible study leader used the story of the Tower of Babel to try to convince attendees that they are called on to leave their ethnic clusters and befriend Blacks, whites, and other people of color. Park speculated that Bible study groups may be a situation for facilitating discussions on the realities of race and racism for students who would not otherwise take an ethnic studies class.

Considering Language Learning Through a Deleuzo-Guattarian Lens

When I began my research, I was initially interested in why Bible study leaders who were Christian and international attendees who were not Christian desired to work together in group Bible study. During the course of my research, it became clear to me that the fact that international students persisted in these groups in spite of their relative disinterest in conversion and the difficulty of the texts could be of significant interest to adult (second) language and literacy education. What can we learn from campus Bible studies about creating learning environments in which learners persist, in spite of relative disinterest in the stated content?

As I was conducting this study, I was simultaneously engaging in a study of the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari. I was attracted to this work particularly as I explored how it is being used in Canagarajah's (2018) concept of spatial repertoires and as a theoretical framework for second language research by Gurney & Demuro (2019), Pennycook (2017), Turner and Lin (2017) and others. Thinking through the theories of Deleuze and Guattari and Canagarajah has helped me conceptualize the particular arrangement and functioning of the groups I was studying in ways that a community of

practice, a framework commonly used for analyzing language socialization, did not (see for instance Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). As an analytical apparatus, the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of *assemblage*, which explains purposeful and intentional arrangements, has been particularly useful (Buchanana, 2015; 2017). An assemblage “yokes” together forms of content and forms of expression so that the expression causes the content to seem right, legitimate and justified (Buchanan, 2017, p. 473). Working with Deleuze and Guattari involves disentangling and following lines through events in these social, collective, self-referential and autopoietic processes, the focus is on the work that takes place allying and dis-allying different elements to create assemblages which include people into them (Buchanan, 2015; 2017). Canagarajah expands on the work of Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) to include collaborative, socially networked, contingent, non-linguistic, and material resources. In borrowing from Canagarajah’s (2018a) use of spatial repertoires, I am looking at how translingual practice materializes as spatial repertoires within hybridized, translocal spaces. In other words, I use spatial repertoires as a lens for understanding how sense-making, agency, and glocalization (Love-Nicholls, 2015) is “distributed” across “social networks, things, and bodies”, and is both “beyond mind and grammar” and “requiring strategic emplacement” (p. 52). Essentially, what I am trying to do with this framework is link Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of desire and Canagarajah’s concept of spatial repertoires through situations that could not exist without both. In the following sections I give a more detailed explanation of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblage, which has several layers, and Canagarajah’s concept of spatial repertoires.

In what follows, I will outline key features of Deleuze and Guattari's theory, especially as interpreted by Ian Buchanan, that have proven useful in my data analysis.

The Assemblage

In Deleuzo-Guattarian research the unit of analysis is the assemblage. The term "assemblage" is Brian Massumi's English translation of Deleuze and Guattari's original French term "agencement" (Buchanan, 2017). The assemblage is the overarching concept in *Thousand Plateaus* and replaced the concept of the "desiring machine" introduced in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze, 2006; Deleuze & Guattar, 1987). Within Deleuze and Guattari's ontology, the assemblage is the most visible and productive level of social ordering (Buchanan, 2015; 2017; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; 1987). On any given day we interact with countless assemblages -e.g., our families, commutes, friendships, classrooms, and social media platforms. Assemblages are defined by what they produce -i.e., the subjectivities, interpretations, objects, and social structures constituting the socius (Buchanan, 2021). Assemblages also do the work of distributing resources, communicating meaning and belonging, increasing certain capacities and capabilities and diminish others, selecting which bodies and discourses to be part of assemblages and which to exclude, arranging encounters with events and objects that have the potential for producing new subjectivities, and instructing habits and norms. In short, it is through assemblages that relationships with family, schooling, the economy, courts, art, science, the State, religion, mass media, and our own bodies are formed. But while there are often dogmatic rather than pragmatic reasons declared for their being, all assemblages are

“only processes, sometimes unifying, subjectifying, rationalizing, but just processes all the same” (p. Deleuze, 1995, p. 145). What is meant by processes is that all assemblages are dynamic and productive. Therefore, no assemblage represents necessity or progress, those that were perceived to be integral to the socius yesterday are redundant today because very different assemblages producing the same effect/affect and new assemblages producing different effects/affects have become normative (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). For example, lifelong, traditional marriage has secreted single parenting, same-sex married couples parenting, and people deciding to stay single and childless. In addition, no assemblage is permanent, those that seem integral to the socius today are already mutating and dying because the social and material environments in which they live are always changing, they adapt to these new contexts or they become irrelevant and get replaced by other assemblages.

An assemblage is not an impromptu grouping of bodies and things, and every situation is not an assemblage (Buchanan, 2021). For example, “Christian” is too amorphous, a crowd or mob disperses too quickly, and an accident is too informal to be considered arranged in this sense (Buchanan, 2008). Language/languageing is also not an assemblage although it can help to bring an assemblage into being (discussed below) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Further, the Deleuzo-Guattarian terms *rhizome* and *becoming* are not synonymous with assemblage. Rhizome is used by Deleuze and Guattari as an adverb to describe expanding how people coexist, feel, and perceive in a manner that is ceaseless, horizontal, often transgressive, and in all directions (like crabgrass). They use becoming exclusively as shorthand for becoming minority which is the process of giving up the majoritarian or dominant culture, escaping present

dysfunctional economics and deeply-flawed divides, and building strength through vulnerability. Assemblages rhizomatically create the potential for becoming (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Sometimes. Deleuze and Guattari were clear that a becoming, which is also known as a line of flight, is an irregular and discontinuous response to problematization of the milieu and unexpected outside stimulations (difference). A becoming does not come every day and not everyone is equally capable of making an escape. Additionally, while assemblage variation is speculatively infinite due to the human potential for creation, what is internally possible within a given assemblage is limited by structuring principles or logics (Buchanan, 2021; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The problem that assemblages solve is one of “keeping very heterogeneous elements together...of “consistency” or “coherence,”...How do things take on consistency? How do they cohere?” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 179). This means that assemblages are not in a state of constantly shedding or leaking parts. However, they do have to constantly work at holding themselves together. Assemblages generally fall within two types of multiplicities, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) put it:

[W]e distinguish between arborescent multiplicities and rhizomatic multiplicities. On the one hand, multiplicities that are extensive, divisible, and molar; unifiable, totalizable, organizable; conscious or preconscious – and on the other hand, libidinal, unconscious, molecular, intensive multiplicities composed of particles that do not divide without changing in nature, and distances that do not vary without entering into another multiplicity and that constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the course of their communications, as they cross over into each other, at, beyond, or before a certain threshold. (p. 33)

Power relations, then, always exist within assemblages somewhere between overcoding, which may indicate that there has been capture by institutions, mass movements, or large-scale social forces, and undercoding, which is to say there may not be enough differentiation from the social environment for the arrangement to endure. And there is the rub, for assemblages naturally organize and try to resist dissolving into the environment or turning into other assemblages. They tend to move toward the arborescent pole in order to drown out external stimuli because they do not want internal behavior “at the mercy of chance learning” but predetermined by their own rules (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 332). This internal possibility of hierarchal overcoding, which is sometimes experienced as racism, sexism, classism, LGTQ-antagonism, and xenophobia- is why Deleuze and Guattari, who were proponents of making rhizomes whenever and wherever possible, disdained working within mass movement and large institutional assemblages under capitalism any more than absolutely necessary.

Deleuze and Guattari created the concept of assemblage as an analytical tool for examining the various situations humans find themselves in (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Like other Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts, the assemblage is a means of posing problems about the world that shed light on the possible alternatives, the forks in the path that are already present and locatable in intentionally arranged situations. Another purpose of assemblage theory is to help analysts avoid seemingly common sensical transcendent and deterministic cause and effect relations. While the road to social (re)formation is through forming assemblages that affect all assemblages that follow, this does not mean there is always a direct line of causality, one thing does not necessarily lead to or come after another so all interventions are necessarily conditional and uncertain.

In this dissertation I use the concept of assemblage to analyze the work of Bible study leaders and attendees within Bible study groups for internationals to extend what we know about the intersection of religious education, missionizing, and English language teaching and learning on U.S. secular university campuses. Although the analytical toolbox referred to as Assemblage theory is a project in development, the basic framework that I am employing here has been put to limited use (see, for instance: De Assis' (2018) analysis of musical performance, Frazer and Carlson's (2017) analysis of the creation and dissemination of memes on an Australian aboriginal activity Facebook group, Svirsky (2011) ethnographic study of an Arabic-Hebrew bilingual school in Galilee Israel, and Pedersen (2007) ethnographic PhD dissertation of a class for human trainers of animal companions).

Assemblage theory as it is used here is largely informed by my and Ian Buchanan's (2021; 2017; 2015) close reading of Deleuze and Guattari. Buchanan takes seriously Deleuze and Guattari's principles of assemblage theory, the first of which is that desire is the force that produces assemblages. The second principle is the tetravalency of assemblages. Every assemblage has four aspects: a material dimension or form of content, an expressive dimension or form of enunciation, a body without organs (BwO) which is the power of selecting content and expression, and an abstract machine which is a unifying mechanism. Below, I explain the function of these parts within the concept of the assemblage and their relevance to the first three of my research questions, taking desire, the material dimension, the expressive dimension, the BwO, and the abstract machine in turn. But before that, I clarify key differences between the

assemblage theory used in this dissertation and how it is sometimes used by new materialists.

As Buchanan (2021) points out, the way new materialists such as Manuel DeLanda (2006) and Jane Bennett (2010) do analysis through assemblage theory diverges in significant ways from a close reading of Deleuze and Guattari. For Deleuze and Guattari, assemblage theory is not a system or network theory, but a form of psychological inquiry that replaces the concept of behavior (Deleuze, 2006; Guattari, 1984). People think, speak, and act differently as they work out their relations to affects, percepts and values that are localized, globalized, and influenced by various flows and interruptions of social and material production and demolition (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). New materialists tend to leave the unconscious force that must be there to bring a situation into being as an afterthought (Buchanan, 2021). In addition, their analysis generally focuses on the agency of bodies and things, but this is only one dimension of the assemblage; it elides the expressive dimension, the body without organs, and the abstract machine. Further, many new materialist writers, Bennett (2010) in particular, keep adding elements (and...and...and) to a situation to show how agency is distributed among content, particularly non-human things, but this runs contrary to what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) prescribed, in accordance with Hjelmsev (1970), that analysis of an assemblage breaks it apart and establishes a hierarchy of elements and interactions. In other words, there is an assumption that while it may be possible to connect any two things, it does not necessarily follow that these connections actually exist or that all things and connections are equally responsible or blameworthy for a situation. Therefore, my analysis describes Bible study for international groups in terms of essential

component parts: the content and expression that cannot be altered, added to, or subtracted from without creating different assemblages; the BwO that gives agency to minds; and the possibility that this agency can be modified by interested parties using abstract machines.

Desire

Contrary to Bennett (2010), assemblages are formed by human unconscious power and not energy shared by a collection of things. The question that assemblages pose is “what are the conditions under which the unconscious can be produced?” (Deleuze, 2020, p. 233). In Deleuzo-Guattarian language this productive human energy is called *desire*. As with Foucault’s concept of power, desire is conceived to be everywhere and “an immanent feature of all relations” (Kulick, 2014, p. 76). Desire is important to assemblage theory because if an assemblage exists, the desire must also be there. As Deleuze and Guattari (1983) put it

We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire, and that libido has no need of any mediation or sublimation, any psychic operation, any transformation, in order to invade and invest the productive forces and relations of production...Even the most repressive and the most deadly forms of social reproduction are produced by desire within the organization that is the consequence of such production under various conditions that we must analyze. (p. 29)

Assemblages capture, express, and create desire, thus bringing it into the world in a conscious and physical form. “[D]esire only exists when assembled or machined. You cannot grasp or conceive of desire outside determinate assemblage” (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p. 96). The deployment of assemblage as an analytical tool is a means of mapping the flow(s) of desire through situations intended to make it do something useful (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; 1987). As Kulick (2014) puts it:

Following Foucault’s lead, it should be possible to study desire without having to decide in advance what it is and why it emerges; that is, without having to become a psychoanalyst. Instead of a theory of desire, the point would be to develop a means of delineating, examining, and elucidating those domains and those relations that are created through desire, not forgetting for a second to highlight the ways in which those domains and relations will always be bound up with power. (p. 77)

At the time of their initial meeting, Deleuze was a philosopher with an interest in schizophrenics and Guattari was a psychotherapist and activist who was experimenting with philosophy (Buchanan, 2021). Part of what sustained their collaboration across four books was shared dissatisfaction with Marxist critical theory as well as Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis which were still powerful directions of thinking at the time (Buchanan, 2011). Contrary to Marx, Deleuze and Guattari argued that desire is as real as material necessity (economics), and is part of the infrastructure of the socius (Deleuze, 2004). Their dissent from Lacan centered on his insistence that desire signaled lacks (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). For Deleuze and Guattari, inequalities -e.g., lack of a living wage, affordable housing, and freedom from State and vigilantes violence- are distributed

by social structures which are produced by desire, not the other way around (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). So lack and desire are not the same, and, taking this one step further, pleasure is not the norm of desire (Deleuze, 2020; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Their criticism of Freudianism was twofold, first, it reduced all behaviors to consequences of family, sexuality, and memory (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). Second, it tried to translate the lived states of subjects into fantasy. These formulations always/already resulted in analysis that was far too neat and deterministic. In other words, the variety of assemblages constituting the socius cannot be explained by ideology, lacks, pleasure, or mommy and daddy issues alone. All assemblages are arrangements of desire but desire takes various forms as it is expressed and created within assemblages and assemblages arrange flows of desire in various ways (Buchanan, 2021). For example, in both a college literature class assemblage and a book discussion group assemblage it is desire that selects books and gives them the property of something worth reading, but the desire to perform humanist literacy for a degree is very different from the desire to perform humanist literacy without consequences. Thus, these assemblages can be expected to take different forms -e.g., the books that the discussion groups select are going to vary according to the assembled desires of participants whereas there is a top-down and likely bottom-up desire in the college class for young people to encounter particular literature which gate-keepers have determined to be important. Moreover, if elements of the book discussion group are borrowed and added to the literature class, forcing it to become a different assemblage, the desire to sustain it may no longer be there.

The Material and Expressive Dimension

Assemblages originate and expand by “extracting a territory” from the world (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 503). Analysis of an assemblage starts with discovering its territory, which is not a place but a consistent situation -e.g., a set of feelings, structures of thought, habits and evaluations- that keeps the chaos at bay, where chaos is a destabilizing social force or a social body that cannot be endured (Buchanan, 2021). A territory marks what is ours (mine) and defines what authority we (I) call upon when someone tries to take any part of it away or chaos comes knocking. Territories always have a material dimension -i.e., actions, bodies, and things- and an expressive dimension -i.e., affect, ideas, and words (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Material and expressive elements pre-exist and are borrowed from the world, this is the process of territorialization. The material and expressive dimensions exist in a state of reciprocal presupposition. For example, there are certain conditions under which Bibles, as opposed to essays on art or philosophy, are determined and declared to be proper to study; also the words “conservative American evangelical Christian” has a function of making a very different Bible study assemblage from the words “LGBTQ-welcoming Christian”.

The multiplicity of the material dimension is internally limited; that is, an assemblage can accommodate variation of actions, bodies, and things up to a point. As has already been discussed, an assemblage tries not to go beyond this point, it resists forces pushing it to turn into a different assemblage. The purpose of research question 1 is to inquire into the internal limits of variation that Bible study for internationals on a secular campus is capable of.

1. What actions, bodies and things constitute adult Bible study groups for international visa holders on secular university campuses, how are they arranged, and what is the nature of their relations?

Bodies and things often function as mere props in actualizing desire (Buchanan, 2021). Therefore, analyzing only the content misses the general logic of the assemblage, which is this: “In assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodes; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs. The relations between the two are pretty complex” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 177). Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari were more interested in how the discursive side of an assemblage expresses “incorporeal transformation” of content, by which they meant that the expressive dimension territorializes material, or intervenes to give it attributes of having a performative function (or not) within the assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 504). For example, a student is transformed by the word “international” into a body with a different status from a domestic student -e.g., she is not free to overstay her visa and she does not count toward the betterment of the U.S. socius except in terms of capital. Now, a religious organization calling a student international does not have the same effect as when the word is used by a government or university, but this does not change the fact that the authority of the word is itself the result of statements from legal and political systems which are built on a socius in which codes of citizen/non-citizen are presumed. Moreover, as will be shown in chapter 4 of this dissertation, in serving and missionizing international students, religious organizations form assemblages that are different from those doing the same with domestic students.

The multiplicity of the expressive dimension is externally limited; that is, maximum variation of affect, ideas, and words is set by context. Again, this is a line that the assemblage tries not to cross. The purpose of research question 2 is to inquire into the limits of expressive variation that Bible study for internationals on a secular campus is capable of.

2. How does the performance of language justify and legitimate arrangements of adult Bible study groups for international visa holders at a secular university?

Territorialization, Deterritorialization, and Reterritorialization

In order to understand the BwO and the abstract machine, it is also necessary to understand what is meant by deterritorialization and reterritorialization. According to Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology, time is cruel and actively out to break us, it keeps moving us forward, not toward any end product, but into encounters with increasing amounts of difference and a more and more complicated future (Deleuze, 1994). A good territory creates enough order so that we can have a life but is porous to enough chaos that we can be pushed into changing how we feel and think, breaking our habits, stretching our capacities, and re-evaluating our situations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In other words, our assemblages need the capacity to internally deterritorialize, so that we can continue to perform actions on the world and ourselves without being overwhelmed. The alternative is to distance ourselves from the real world through singular investment in psychological complexes and extreme social mechanisms. According to Deleuze and Guattari, living such delusional states is almost certainly suicidal. So assemblages internally

deterritorialize (they also expand by deterritorializing the environment) or they die or grow into cancerous bodies of uncontrolled replication. It is also through internal deterritorialization that assemblages have the potential of becoming unique in some significant ways (Kulick, 2014, p. 76). Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987) becoming is an ethical term. What this means is that becoming minority is the only revolutionary becoming, therefore, the only becoming there is. This is why Deleuze and Guattari felt that despite the risks of radical self-experimentation it is better to err on the side of trusting small counterculture assemblages to figure things out for themselves (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007). Whatever creates more and more difference is probably good, whatever blocks differentiation can probably get tossed out.

That said, assemblages also “always strive to persist in their being; to use a Spinozist turn of phrase, they are subject to forces of change, but ultimately they would always prefer not to change (this is why deterritorialization is always immediately followed by reterritorialization” (Buchanan, 2017, p. 463). Further, internal deterritorialization is usually only partial because we need some “supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 160). In sum, the fundamental function of assemblages is to bring content and expression together, but there are always elements that escape because assemblages are processes breathed into life by the potential for variation (Buchanan, 2021; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

The Body Without Organs

For Deleuze, working from Spinoza and Nietzsche, human agency can only be judged by the intensity in which it occupies existence, i.e., what people can do, given the degree of their power and their capabilities at a specific time and in a specific space (Bowden, 2020). Power takes two forms in a Deleuzo-Guattarian lens, the first pertains to the body without organs, which is also known as the plane of consistency (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The second pertains to the abstract machine, which is also known as the plane of organization.

The BwO contains the free-flowing energy of pure desire (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). These intensities are often experienced as intransitive modes of thought that move us to feel named emotions like love, faith, or authority, but only when sensed through family, church, police departments, and other social formations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). Deleuze and Guattari created the concept of the BwO to explain how Nietzsche's *will to power* is actualized and to define the virtual environment of which we are barely aware where territorialization, reterritorialization, and especially deterritorialization emerge (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Buchanan (2021) adds that the BwO is the agency that can consciously direct that desire flows at particular times, in particular ways, and under particular conditions, so it can be affected by interventions such as therapy. Gupta (2018) stresses its potentiality when he states:

For Deleuze and Guattari, every actual body has a limited set of traits, habits, movements, affects, and so on. But every actual body also has a virtual dimension: a vast reservoir of potential traits, connections, affects, movements,

and so on. This collection of potentials is what Deleuze calls the ‘body without organs’. To ‘make oneself a body without organs’, then, is to actively experiment with oneself to draw out and activate these virtual potentials. These potentials are mostly activated (or ‘actualized’) through conjunctions with other bodies (or body without organs) that Deleuze calls ‘becomings’ (Gupta, 2018, p. 17-18)

The intensities of desire that circulate across the BwO are potentially destructive, but the BwO is also the source of all creativity and individuation. As Colebrook (2010) puts it:

Differentiating is not a false distinction imposed on an otherwise universal humanity. On the contrary, every female is an individuated actualization of a genetic potential for sexual differentiation, and every aspect of that female body - ranging from chromosomal and hormonal composition to the stylization of dress and comportment- is one highly individuated way of actualizing a potentiality. So every woman is an actualization of a potentiality to be female, while the difference between straight and gay gives further specification or distinction, and this would continue on and on to the smallest of differences, marking out not only each body, but also all the events, souls, and affections within bodies. (Colebrook, 2010, p. 80-81)

BwOs belong to subjects, but every assemblage also forms a BwO of its own (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Subjectivity, then, is an assemblage that subjects can work on by entangling themselves within assemblages of friends, like-minded folks, and allies over time. Moreover, the concept of assemblage is political in that an important part of what Deleuze and Guattari are doing with it is problematizing the idea that effective social warfare is only waged through mass movements and institutions. Instead, they espouse

experimenting with many different localized socio-political bodies; that is, radicalizing at the level of everyday desires. They replace the idea of the revolutionary proletariat rising up against the hegemony of capital with counterculture BwOs contaminating the socius.

As Guattari (1995) states:

Changes do not have to come about from large scale socioeconomic conditions. All these systems [of organization and hierarchization] leak from inside, as systems of defense, but also as systems of mutation. Molecular mutations do not always assert themselves on a large scale, and they must be gauged differently in the short term. But this does not mean that they do not exist. We do not have the same relations to reading, writing, images, space, sex, the body, the night, the sun, pain, as we had only ten years ago. Profound and irreversible mutations are underway in all these areas. ” (Guattari 1995, p. 47)

Thus, Deleuze and Guattari’s left assemblage activism aligns with Ernest Mandel’s strategy for revolution in the Global North: “Gradual, molecular, nearly invisible processes of accumulating self-confidence, consciousness of the potential power of one’s own” minoritarian groups in preparing minoritarian explosions (Mandel, p. 2017, p 1). But Deleuze and Guattari also cautioned that right-wing backlash is inevitable and above all we need to be included into or emplace ourselves in assemblages that make homes, respites from fears, anxieties, nature, and violence even as we are subjected.

The Abstract Machine

The power of the abstract machine is the power of institutions to wrangle chaos and human peculiarities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). An assemblage tries to persist or be internally consistent over time and across events through the abstract machine, a unifying logic, an organizing principle, and a defining limit of internal variation and external reach (Buchanan, 2021; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Like the BwO, it is an incorporeal dimension, and this is why it is called abstract (Buchanan, 2021). And it often influences our behavior below our awareness or intention by resonating with the expressive dimension to generate complicated lines of reasoning that explain after the fact why we find ourselves in situations. This is why it is called a machine. Thus, it is not the assemblage per se but the abstract machine that is more rhizomatic, incorporating innovation and pushing for more internal deterritorialization, or more arborescent, pushing toward a closed and defensive system of territorialization and reterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The abstract machine exists in a constant state of tension with the BwO because an assemblage needs both the power to transform into something else when conditions become intolerable, and coded power to hold itself together. For subjects, there is repetition and internalization of differentiation, and repetition and internalization of the normative, habitual, conforming, and institutional. There are also degrees of territoriality, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization within language, which is another way of saying language could not function without abstract machines (or BwOs) (Buchanan, 2021). Moreover, it is abstract machines fixing the codes that differentiate and specialize social territorialities of family, mandatory education, religion,

popular culture, the State, and global capitalism, always with cross-contamination, that define the modern socius (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Context also modifies the blueprints that abstract machines use to determine what assemblages look like and how desire is expressed and created within them. Thus, abstract machines are never justified or legitimized by named desires. As Deleuze (2004) points out: “The same sexual needs will never explain the multiple possible forms of marriage” (p. 20). Finally, abstract machines do not allow everyone’s desires to flow equally, the “rituals of civilization” and the “means of production” generally privilege a dominant or majority group and those bureaucrats who control institutions (Deleuze, 2004, p. 20). In sum, abstract machines liberate people from nature, but only by imposing new desires, through insertion into new social formations (Deleuze, 1994).

Research question three analyzes language that expresses the possibility of escape for bodies and ideas and the principles and interests that hold Bible study for internationals together.

3. How do group leaders and attendees make sense (or not) of adult Bible study groups for international visa holders, what new arrangements and relations do these beliefs make possible (what becomings?), and what are the illusions of transformation that result from overcoding?

Spatial Repertoires

The second part of my analysis which I will take up with research question 4 in Chapter 5 involves integrating the concept of assemblage as defined above with Canagarajah's (2018a) concept of spatial repertoires. Expanding on Pennycook and Otsuji (2015), Canagarajah (2018a) conceptualized spatial repertoires as both the resources people bring with them and those "assembled in situ, and in collaboration with others, in the manner of distribute practice" (p. 37). Spatial repertoires as a theory of language also assumes that communication is "distributed" across "social networks, things, and bodies" and is both "beyond mind and grammar" and "requiring strategic emplacement" (p. 52). I am using Canagarajah's work to look at how translingual practices are done as spatial repertoires. Translanguaging is the behavior of drawing on a communication repertoire -e.g., pieces of different languages, objects, gestures, and symbols- to make utterances that other people in a particular context can be expected to understand (Garcia and Li Wei, 2014). Translingual practices are sometimes referred to under the term metrolingualism because they are prevalent in globalized cities (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). But they also exist in immobile and segregated communities (Flores, 2014). Otheguy et al. (2015) stressed that translanguaging is "without regard or watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (p. 281). Importantly, translingual theory is also a form of political protest against neo-colonial and neoliberal ideologies, as De costa et al. (2017) put it:

...because translanguaging challenges structuralist ideologies of language linked to nationalism, engagement in translingual practices itself is often viewed as a political act associated with a wider critical agenda to develop metalinguistic and cultural awareness and to decolonize the minds of individuals. (p. 465).

Moreover, the complexity of translingual/spatial repertoires is not removed from social class. Indeed, what people bring to a communication situation is always/already mediated through unequal mobility, time, access to media, and schooling (Dovchin, 2017). Further, it is not my claim that translingual practices are likely to be accepted and embraced at most schools, colleges or universities in the foreseeable future (Jasper, 2018; Weekly, 2007). Nor am I making the case that non-native English speakers at a U.S. university are necessarily satisfied with a specialized repertoire or having to rely significantly on non-linguistic entities and the patience and collaboration of others to communicate intelligibly.

At any rate, Canagarajah further aligns spatial repertoires with theories of materialism and performativity. A material perspective of translanguaging looks at how people emplace themselves “strategically in the relevant social and material networks to generate meaning” (Canagarajah, 2018b, p. 282). A performative orientation “treats doing as facilitating *thinking* and *communicating*, and not the other way around”, so there is no assumption that an individual starts with “a coherent picture in mind” or that complicated plans necessarily make communication more intelligible (Canagarajah, 2018b, p. 283). Considering performative communication within a repertoire/assemblage means seeing practices such as reading aloud and praying as both disciplinary and part of the aggregate determining that group Bible study works for some people, and not for

others. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge that ordinary people are perfectly capable of successfully performing rituals together without a common understanding of what it means and with no interest in clarifying or fixing meaning (Lee, 2000).

According to Canagarajah (2018a), Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome is a good way as any of representing how translanguaging functions.

Canagarajah (2018a) states:

The rhizome accommodates the possibility of someone employing artifacts and nonverbal resources equally as verbal resources for successful communication...communication is treated as qualified, responsive, negotiated, and ongoing activity in which people engage with rhizomatic networks for possible outcomes" (p. 284-5)

From a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, however, an assemblage cannot be entirely rhizomatic. Assemblages strive to persist in their present state, and in order to do this there must be some limits placed on what artifacts, nonverbal resources, and verbal resources are included (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). These limitations are conditions of hierarchical/arborescent structuring set by an abstract machine but also continuously contested by the BwO (Buchanan, 2021; 2017; 2015). For example, Bible study leaders and some attendees may view Bible study as the best opportunity to improve fluency in God talk (Bielo, 2009). As Reimer and Wilkinson (2015) put it, whether Christian socialization begins from childhood or later in life, learning to perceive, remember, imagine, think and talk like an Christian evangelical is analogous to learning a minority language:

One problem with a minority language is that it is rarely used in daily life. It is easy to lose fluency. Or you can pick up poor grammar when people around you use the language improperly. From an evangelical viewpoint, many in the broader society claim to be (religiously) fluent, but in reality they are not. False teachers of the language encourage people to express their language intuitively and creatively, ignoring proper grammar (as historically defined). Thus, evangelicals must frequently gather with and learn from those who are truly fluent – especially those more fluent than they themselves are. They must be taught to emulate great historical figures who use the language beautifully – those whose words are recorded in (sacred) texts. Clergy patiently correct vocabulary, grammar, and diction, pointing out those areas where correct usage has been undermined by day-to-day “worldly” interactions. For this reason, clergy must be thoroughly “bilingual.” They should be well trained in the minority language, but also fully aware of the broader societal influences that undermine fluency. (Reimer & Wilkinson, 2015, p. 39)

Further, Sun and Rhoad’s (2018) research shows that internationals who want to study Bible stories and learn more about Christianity on or adjacent to a secular university campus may want some level of authenticity in their group Bible study, perhaps they feel that they are learning more about Christianity from earnestly Christian Bible study leaders and attendees. Some of the attendees were interested in how Bible study leaders argued for the relevance of Bible stories to people living in the 21st century and they also liked the fact that the Bible studies were held in a church. What the concept of spatial repertoires adds to this analysis is that the habits and norms of group Bible

study are partially brought by leaders and attendees, partially the result of in situ collaboration, and partially socialized. Further, these repertoires persist because of potentially far-reaching (over space and time) material and social networks in which international visa holders sometimes emplace themselves to be included into local and global Christian networks.

Spatial Assemblage

Given that Assemblage theory can expand or plug into spatial repertoires, this dissertation research investigates what subjects, locations, materials, networks, and ways of languaging, perceiving, and thinking need to be present and how they need to be arranged so that group Bible study for international visa holders on a secular university campus exists. People emplace themselves into a spatial assemblage because it makes desire visible, but also makes communication possible and supports meaning making. Thus, I arrive at my primary research questions:

Table 2-1: Research questions and theories

Questions	Theory
<p>Research Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What actions, bodies and things constitute adult ESL group Bible study and related activities, how are they arranged and networked, and what is the nature of their relations? 2) How does performance of affects, ideas and words justify and legitimate arrangements of adult ESL group Bible study and related activities? 3) How do group leaders and attendees make sense (or not) of ESL group Bible study and related activities (why these bodies without organs?) and what new arrangements and relations do these beliefs make possible (what becomings)? 4) What spatial repertoires are at work within Bible study for international visa holders? 	<p>The material dimension of the assemblage</p> <p>The expressive dimension of the assemblage</p> <p>The Body without Organs and the abstract machine dimensions of the assemblage</p> <p>Spatial Repertoires and the assemblage</p>

Chapter 3

Research Design

In this chapter I present the background and procedure of my ethnographic method. The Bible study leaders and attendees who participated in my research are introduced and relevant local and global communities are described. I then give details of the method I employed and reflect on my place in this ethnographic study.

Ethnographies of Group Bible Study and Second Language Learning and Teaching Using Bible-based Materials

Methodologically, I have drawn from four ethnographic studies related to my research. The most comprehensive ethnographic work on adult Bible study remains James Bielo's (2009) *Words upon the Word*. In getting a better grasp of the phenomena of group Bible study and in considering my ethnographic approach, therefore, this proved an invaluable resource. While the groups Bielo investigated were majority native English speakers, his research nevertheless contributes to mine as a multi-site ethnography offering rich description of the phenomena of adult Bible study in the US from a sympathetic Christian trained in anthropology. Following Bielo (2009), I view adult group Bible study as its own practice taking place in churches, homes, schools, libraries, and coffee shops across the US and around the world. According to Bielo (2009), group Bible study "is most fruitfully understood as a vital social institution, rooted in the process of collective reading and intersubjective dialogue" (p. 10). While "vital social institution" is in my view hyperbole, these situations are doubtlessly significant, as Bielo

(2009) puts it “no other form of small group, religious or otherwise, is as widespread in American life as group Bible study” (p. 6). Bielo includes groups who read and discuss works of Christian spiritual authors such as C.S. Lewis under an umbrella of Bible study. This is a broader definition than many Bible study leaders accept, but the primary texts of groups I researched did include an illustrated children’s book of Old Testament stories and the *New International Reader’s Version* of the Bible which is a simplified/reduced English language translation for emergent readers.

Rosa Suen (2017) used interviews and participant observations to investigate the case of a long-lived weekly EFL Bible Study group with an American Bible study leader and adult Japanese Christian Evangelical attendees in Japan. Suen found that the communication through the group Bible study was less inhibited than what is typically exhibited in Japanese culture, that the interactions within the group and with the text were comprehensible, interesting, and compelling even for those with comparatively little English, and that discussions extended to social issues such as discrimination. Additionally, Suen speculated that the regular English Bible study group meetings may serve as a buffer against loneliness and despair for attendees who were mostly retirees.

From Bielo I had a perspective of what group Bible study can look like with predominantly native English speakers in the US and I speculated that similar experiences informed the expectations of the Bible study leaders in my research. Suen provided me with a view of what group Bible study between native and non-native speakers can be like. In both these studies, leaders and attendees were Christians who shared (more or less) the same denominational reading. I continued my research journey to ethnographic research into sites where there is at least a partial aim of missionizing.

English Teaching and Evangelical Mission: The Case of Lighthouse School is Johnston's (2017) ethnography of a private for-profit language school in Poland. Johnston spent nearly a year observing language classrooms, collecting pedagogical materials, and conducting interviews with teachers and students. Through this research, he expands on the work of Baurain (2007), Wong and Canagarajah (2009), and his own research with Manka Varghese (2007). Johnston focused on the Bible-based courses taught by North American Christian Evangelicals. Taking a critical theory stance, he looked for and found that the North American missionary English teachers had conservative views and lacked awareness of imperialism and neo-colonialism; also, that the teachers and their predominantly Roman Catholic students expressed opposition to LGBTQ rights and equality. But he also concluded that there was nothing covert about the proselytizing mission, the adult professionals who paid to study at the school knew what they were signing up for and had the option of going to secular language schools. Further, while the students appreciated the classroom prayers and were enthusiastic about the Bible and spiritual-based content, none of them gave up the Catholic confession or loyalty to the Pope for being born again and witnessing. Johnston was also concerned with the language teaching practices. Johnston: "I write as someone committed to quality language teaching who is at the same time deeply interested in the identities and beliefs of language teachers, and how those impact classroom interaction and the quality of experience afforded to the learners" (2017, p. 6). He found that the pedagogy employed was "acceptable" but "mostly unexceptional"; he described one teacher who was fired because she had no business being in a classroom, a few teachers who had significant

experience and demonstrated a great deal of professionalism, and the rest who were somewhere between these two poles (p. 6).

Chao's PhD dissertation work presented her multi-site ethnographic investigation of free adult Bible-based ESL programs for LatinX and Chinese immigrants in urban American churches. She reported that attendees had various experiences, which included learning more about the Bible, Christianity, and American culture; finding personal meaning in singing Christian songs in English; and pretending to be Christian in order to get along better with the Christian teachers. The data also suggests that the programs encouraged the participants to read Bible stories with their families and employ (trans)linguaging practices through these materials at home.

My Informants

Attendees of the two Bible study groups I studied were from several countries where English is a foreign language or, as in the case of Ghana, primarily used by people outside of their homes and neighborhoods. Although there was some promoting of these free Bible-study groups for international students and scholars through posters and social media, most attendees learned about them by word of mouth from friends and acquaintances or through attending free and non-religious adult ESL conversation classes which were also taught by Bible study leaders. All attendees were in the US on F1, J1, F2 or J2 visas, they were not refugees, migrants or immigrants and they had housing, medical insurance, and other resources. In other words, they were not in desperate need of the free English lessons, meals, or any other assistance offered by Christian social and

material networks. Many attendees were Christian, but some were convinced atheists or non-Christians and did not want to become Christian. The group leaders were friendly and seemed well liked by attendees, but were not exceptionally charismatic. The banana bread and cookies offered by one Bible study leader tasted good and the attendees prayed, smiled, and laughed together at every session I observed, but there was nothing obviously coercive about the situations. Attendees were well-educated adults free to come and go as they wanted, and they did.

The Bible study leaders for these groups welcomed any international visa holder who showed up. They also hoped some of the attending Christians would feel compelled to spread the faith when they went home and that some of the atheists and non-Christians would convert. They engaged with international folks they did not know at parks, churches, and public meals, and solicited them to join their free ESL classes, Bible studies, and other activities. All the Bible leaders in my research told me that they were fully aware that some of the attendees only come to improve their English and learn more about American culture. This did not stop them from Christian witnessing, both inside Bible study and through other activities. The Bible study leaders also had diverse perspectives on exactly what was being taught and socialized through Bible study for internationals.

I use the pseudonyms **Claire**, **Grace**, **Joseph**, and **Sebastian** to refer to the Bible study leaders who participated in my study. Grace and Joseph were the Bible study leaders in the group I observed when piloting my research. My observation data primarily comes from time spent with two Bible study groups, one led by Claire and the other by Sebastian. Each group belonged to separate student religious organizations. Claire and

Sebastian were also congregants of different churches and members of different denominations. Claire, Grace, and Joseph worked for a large tax-exempt conservative American evangelical organization for which I use the pseudonym Campus Gospel Partnership (CGP). This organization had formed an international student Christian group and had been at work on this campus for approximately 30 years. At the time of my study, Claire and Joseph had been at this campus leading Bible studies and organizing other activities for around eight years, Grace for around two. Sebastian's group had been in existence for barely a month when I observed his Bible studies. Sebastian had moved with his wife and children to this college town 5 years prior, and at the time of this study they were part of a community of seven other families, all congregants in a conservative Anabaptist group. These families were neighbors and homeschooled their young children together, with the parents sharing teaching responsibilities. Sebastian and the other parents had met through conservative Anabaptist conferences and had decided to come to this university town to set up the headquarters of an international tax-exempt missionizing organization and to plant churches in the area. But Sebastian's student group had no affiliation and received no financial or other support from the organization he worked for. Prior to starting his own student Christian group, Sebastian had approached Claire and Joseph about leading or assisting with leading Bible study as part of their organization, but was told that it would not be possible due to denominational differences.

Claire, a mature cis-gender white American woman, had a B.A. in education of exceptional children at both ends of the spectrum, and a M.A. in cross-cultural education. She and Joseph, a mature cis-gender white man, were married and had three adult-age

children together. Prior to coming to this campus, they spent 23 years as missionaries in the Philippines where they also raised their children. During that time, Joseph, who was an ordained minister, learned Tagalog. He said in an interview that he had a good enough grasp of the language for every-day activities but regretted that he had not learned enough about the culture to effectively make emotional appeals. Claire also studied Tagalog but described herself as basically English monolingual. When their Evangelical organization shut down, Claire and Joseph found new positions with the CGP at this university, Joseph was employed as minister and Claire as staff. They both had extensive experience leading Bible study with linguistically and culturally diverse populations. Grace, a cis-gender twenty something white American, had a B.A. in international affairs. She took Mandarin in college and spent two years teaching English in China where she also led mostly one-on-one Bible study groups. I observed that when an attendee spoke Mandarin to her, she responded, “Your English is better than my Chinese.” According to Grace, she used limited Mandarin in her teaching and Bible leading because she lacked confidence in her ability and wanted attendees to use the time practicing English. Sebastian, a cis-gender middle-aged white man, had previously taught history at a Christian school for high school and young adult age students but did not have an education degree. He had years of experience leading Bible study with groups of native English speakers, but at the time of my study he had been working with less-than-proficient English users for only about a year. He had not worked or missionized overseas and described himself as English monolingual.

Table 3-1: Summary of Bible study leaders

Name	Age	Taught English and Bible abroad	Organization Affiliation	Languages
Claire	50s	Yes – Kenya and Philippines	CGP	English
Grace	20s	Yes – China	CGP	English Some Mandarin
Joseph	50s	Yes – Liberia and Philippines	CGP	English Tagalog
Sebastian	40s	No	Not applicable	English

I use the pseudonyms **Rebekah** and **Hannah** to refer to the two attendees of group Bible study who I interviewed for this dissertation research. Rebekah attended Clair’s Bible study and Hannah attended Sebastian’s, both on a regular basis. Rebekah, a twenty something cis-gender Ghanian woman, was a nurse and a nurse educator for five years in her home country. At the time of my research she was in her second year of PhD studies in nursing at this university. She self-identified as Christian and had regularly attended Bible studies before coming to the US. She was very self-conscious about her

accent despite being, in my estimation, a C1 proficient² English user. Hannah, a thirty-something Chinese national, was a visiting scholar in computer science, a professor at a university back at home, and had produced several academic publications in her field written in English. She self-identified as a non-believer and had not read the Bible before attending Sebastian's Bible study group. She said that she wanted her middle-school age daughter to read Bible stories with her at home, but had no intention of becoming Christian. She was in my estimation a B2 independent English user, able to understand and communicate about computer science in English with a degree of fluency, but with a more limited general fluency.

Table 3-2: Summary of Bible study attendees interviewed

Name	Age	Country of Origin	Purpose at university	Belief	Bible study leader
Hannah	30s	China	Visiting Scholar	Atheist	Sebastian
Rebekah	20s	Ghana	PhD student in Nursing	Christian	Claire

² C2 High proficient User (very fluent), C1 Low proficient User (fluent in a wide range of matters), B2 High Independent User (fluent within a specialized field), B1 Low Independent User (can deal with most common situations), A2 High Basic User (capable of simple exchanges), A1 Low Basic User (can use familiar expressions)

Missionizing

Most of the attendees in the Bible study groups I have observed were from countries in an area of the world evangelical Christians often refer to as the 10/40 Window or the resistant belt, a geographical rectangle with long sides 40 degrees and 10 degrees latitude north of the Equator. This includes North Africa, the Middle East, China, and south-east Asia. According to the website for the Joshua Project (2020), a Christian Evangelical organization, the 10/40 Window is home to the majority of the world's unevangelized countries and megacities. Many evangelicals, including the Bible study leaders in my research, consider the 10/40 Window a critical focus of their Christian mission, which includes translating the Bible into as many languages as possible and training people from the area in effective missionizing and witnessing. In other words, many American evangelical Christians are invested in sending Christians and Bibles to the homelands of most of the world's Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and State atheists. The Joshua Project is unequivocally antagonistic toward the Other, referring to the ideological structures of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and State Marxism/Atheism as "strongholds of Satan" and to Christians who die while evangelizing in the 10/40 Window as martyrs. The four Bible study leaders in my research were not directly affiliated with the Joshua Project, and Joseph at least was critical of fetishizing martyrdom. But the website of the organization that Sebastian worked for did include a prominent link to the Joshua Project (2020) website.

In addition, all the Bible study leaders and some of the attendees I met believed in at least some of what was written on the Joshua Project website, for example that the

story of the Tower of Babel describes a historical event in which different languages were instantly created by God in response to the defiant human act of building a structure that might allow escape from a second flood. The website of the CGP and many other large Christian organizations at work on campuses explicitly state one of their reasons for working with international students is that they are fluent in the languages and cultures of the 10/40 window and most are expected to return home after their studies, so if they become evangelical in the U.S. they will serve as indigenous missionaries. Some evangelical Christians go so far as to refer to a mother tongue as a person's heart language because they believe it is the royal road to the Christian relations and personal decisions necessary for conversion (Handman, 2009).

Religiosity

In this research, I am following Cooperman' (2016) definition of *highly religious* as having the habits of praying daily and attending services at least once a week. The leaders of the Bible study groups and some of the attendees met these criteria. There are a number of others practices strongly correlated with highly religious people that also emerged in the data from the Bible study leaders and believing attendees in my research, first, highly religious people are likely to volunteer and to donate money, time and/or goods to help the poor and needy (Cooperman et al., 2016). I have myself participated in volunteer food packing work with some of these Bible study leaders and attendees; I have also observed them serving food to the poor and including them in conversations and Bible study at weekly church sponsored public meals. Second, religion is often discussed

within the homes and friendship circles of highly religious people. Third, most highly religious people consider religious beliefs to be fair game for discussion in public, and do not avoid discussing religion with people from other belief systems. Fourth, highly religious Christians are likely to read the Bible and other religious materials. Finally, highly religious people are likely to use prayer to make important decisions.

Called to Teach

All the Bible study leaders in my research said that they felt that God had directed them toward helping people, particularly atheists and non-(Evangelical) Christians, to better understand the Bible. They also saw helping less-than-proficient English users to improve their English communication and American culture repertoires to be part of their duty of serving God. Joseph and Claire taught English and the Bible in Liberia and Ethiopia respectively before marrying and joining a missionary organization in the Philippines. Grace tutored international students in college and taught English at a university in China while surreptitiously leading adult Bible study. Sebastian taught at a Christian school for 4 years; also, at the time of my research he was homeschooling his children and the children of other members of his conservative Anabaptist group with a Christian curriculum.

Claire was the only Bible study leader with a teaching degree and also the only one with a TESOL certificate. Religious people in the US are particularly drawn to teaching, and education has been described as a “safe haven for the religious” (Kimball et al., 2009, p. 22). Americans who are highly religious are more likely to graduate with

education degrees, and education majors who start out religious are likely to become more so by the end of their college learning (Kimball et al., 2009). Those entering other majors –e.g., business, humanities, social sciences, sciences- tend to walk out less religious (Kimball et al., 2009). Hartwick’s (2012) meta-analysis of 519 research articles on the religious and spiritual lives of American public school teachers found that religious teachers tend to draw on their convictions and practices in dealing with problems at school and understand religiosity to be part of their cultural identity. But there is no reason to believe that the call to teach is limited to those Christians who graduate with teaching degrees. Joseph, Grace, and Sebastian found ways to be in teaching roles despite their lack of formal teacher training.

Organization

Both Bible study groups I studied were part of recognized student religious groups. This meant that they had to have ostensible student leadership and actively recruit student members, but it also gave free use of the campus spiritual center and other university facilities. The Bible studies and free campuses meals I observed were held in the spiritual center, where the CGP also had dedicated office space. I discuss the Bible study groups in more detail in Chapter 4.

The CGP was a Christian tax-exempt organization, with revenues of more than \$10 million in 2019, that employed Bible study leaders and ministry support staff to minister to domestic and international students and scholars at a number of U.S.

campuses in several states in the north east. It operated by forming recognized student religious organization partnered with local churches. At this university it had long-term established social and material networks through affiliations with three churches. The CGP also organized a yearly youth conference which was attended by thousands of Christian college students and featured Christian speakers and Christian music performers. Most of the performers and many of the speakers scheduled for the 2020 conference were black or people of color. In addition, it was a conservative American evangelical Christian organization, and there was at least one scheduled presentation on how to counsel Christian LGBTQ students to practice celibacy.

Sebastian and his family arrived in the area with a group of four other families, which eventually became a community of eight families. Their intention was to plant local conservative Anabaptist churches and establish the headquarters for an organization that consulted on conservative Anabaptist missionizing and church planting overseas. Unlike the CGP, the purpose of this organization was not to missionize campus populations, but part of why the families decided on this area was the density of internationals which was a consequence of the university. Nonetheless, Sebastian and his wife led ESL classes and Bible studies without support from the organization or the other families.

The CGP and Sebastian's student Christian groups were not the only religious institutions available to international visa holders in this college town. Chinese nationals, who made up the largest portion of international students, visiting scholars and Bible study attendees in my research, had their own ethnic Christian churches where services and Bibles were in Mandarin. There were also Korean churches offering the same in

Korean. Attendees could access the Christian capital of both their ethnic churches and the American Christian organizations (Goh, 2016). The Christian capital offered by the CGP included free ESL classes, meals, help moving furniture, trips to national/local sites of interest, and short-term homestays with American Christian families. At a larger scale, belonging to the CGP or other large Christian organizations like Campus Crusade for Christ might allow them to emplace themselves into expansive conservative American evangelical Christians social and material networks in the U.S. and around the world.

Becoming Disciples

As part of their work for the CGP, Claire, Grace and Joseph facilitated disciple training which took place in sessions separate from the Bible studies I observed. By disciples, I mean young educated bilingual and multilingual upwardly mobile professionals who will return to their home countries to missionize or witness their family, friends, colleagues, and others. I was not able to gain access to disciple training, but from how it was described to me by Claire and Joseph, it was intended only for true believers and it included training in how to lead Bible studies.

Teaching English

The Bible study leaders in my research were also teachers of English as an additional language. I observed free adult ESL classes taught by Grace and Sebastian. I also observed Bible study leaders teaching reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening and

speaking through the content during Bible study meetings. As an experienced adult ESL/EFL teacher I am qualified to evaluate the language teaching, and I do so in Chapters 4 and 5. The Bible study leaders knew about my experience and Grace and Sebastian solicited advice from me on teaching. I suggested strategies for making the language more comprehensible and small group speaking activities that might get students up out of their seats. I did not observe the teachers try to implement any of these strategies and I do not know that these adult attendees wanted more active or participatory group meetings. I have adapted the group Bible study format of reading aloud and discussing texts around the table, with additional writing and speaking as homework, for my own non-religious adult ESL reading classes. I am not claiming that group Bible study as a method is any more effective or efficient than other forms of adult second language literacy learning and teaching. It is different and some parts of it have worked for me and my students.

The Site

This dissertation research was conducted on a secular university campus in a university town surrounded by a rural overwhelmingly white population in an eastern state. The community did not represent the urban lives of most Americans, and the nearest center of migrant workers was close to a two hour drive away. At the time of my research, international students made up around 10 percent of the total student population at this university which is among the most costly for out-of-state and international

students to attend, but it was also a Research 1 institution so it had resources and faculty that attract many of those wanting to enter STEM fields.

Affiliated Activities

Sebastian owned a small farm and would regularly invite attendees of his ESL class and Bible studies to visit with their families. He also held Bible study with proficient English users at his home. Sebastian was a volunteer with a day job and his resources were limited. The CGP, by contrast, was well-resourced which allowed it to sponsor several events in addition to group Bible study. It organized two meals in partnership with local churches, the first was a soup kitchen lunch at a Methodist church just off campus on Wednesdays when the university was in session. This was open to the public and attracted many international folks, not just members of the CGP. Joseph, Grace, and Sebastian frequented these lunches, they would sit down with international folks, start up a conversation, and hand out contact cards and flyers for their activities. These lunches also drew local elderly, poor, anybody who needed a free meal, free coffee, and a comfortable place to relax. Everyone was served equally and humbly.

The second meal was a regular Friday dinner at the spiritual center on campus immediately following Claire's Bible study. This event was open to all university students, faculty and staff and was attended by international folks who did not come to group Bible study or other CGP activities. There were usually activities after the meal. Often Joseph or members of the CGP staff gave a brief PowerPoint presentation on American Christian culture, and then led participatory activities such as mock weddings

or dying Easter eggs. Sometimes there were invited speakers. I observed one member of the mechanical engineering department give a PowerPoint presentation of creationist interpretation of biology and geology. I regularly attended these meals and activities for about three months.

The CGP also had several invite-only activities for international students, scholars, and some local church congregants. Claire and Joseph had regular events on Saturday evenings at their home throughout the year. At these meetups there was typically dinner, volleyball, board games, singing, bonfires, prayer circles, and Bible study. Joseph gave students rides from campus to his home and back again. I observed only one of these Saturday events. The CGP also organized free or discounted trips to Christian tourist sites. While I was doing my study, they went to the Bible Museum in DC and the Ark-shaped Creation Museum in Kentucky. Trips were sometimes accompanied by opportunities to stay with American Christian families. I did not join any of these trips. The Saturday meetings, which were alcohol and smoking free, sometimes served as sites for young single Christians to meet and I am aware of at least two interracial marriages that resulted from relations formed through the CGP. Members of the CGP could also be counted on to help with moving furniture.

Methodology

Rationale for Ethnography

According to Han (2018), an ethnographic approach is valuable for getting at a “more informed, nuanced and complex analysis” of the intersection of religion, English language teaching and learning, and globalization (p. 440). Han describes ethnography as providing “rich information to contextualize and historicize practices, discourses, and beliefs of individuals, groups, and institutions at multiple scales and dimensions, ranging from present to historical and from local to national, regional, and/or global” (p. 440). Following Han, I applied critical, empirical, and reflexive principles to my research. Additionally, I closely read interviews, texts, and observation notes. Following my theoretical orientation, I attempted to do ethnographic justice (Buchanan, 2011). I demonstrate, for instance, how it helped me to write at least some aspects of Bible study leaders’ and attendees’ becoming-other (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), that is, how they formed new relations and habits. I also fully acknowledge that there is a great deal of that becoming/constructing I cannot hope to grasp (Buchanan, 2011).

Outline of Method

Including my pilot study, I gathered data for three semesters or approximately nine months. My initial contact was with Joseph in Fall of 2018. I found Joseph’s email through the student religious group website and after exchanging a few messages he agreed to meet for coffee and to talk about my research. He then invited me to visit the

free adult ESL classes they do on campus and the adult Bible study they were doing off campus. I observed both but decided that the ESL classes were not very useful to my research. During my pilot study in fall 2018, I collected data from Sunday Bible study at a local church, this included eight observations of meetings and interviews with the two Bible study leaders, Grace and Joseph. Based on my pilot study, I decided that data gathered through traditional ethnographic inquiry methods -participant observations, interviews, collecting artifacts and documents and keeping a research journal- would be sufficiently rich and my informants -the Bible study leaders and attendees- would be sufficiently communicative for my purposes. By this point I had already done a lot of the legwork making connections and Grace and Joseph agreed to continue to participate in my research. I also had a list of three churches and four other adult ESL Bible study groups in the same college town. I sent out emails but due to the general drop in enrollment of international visa holders in the spring 2019 most of these groups failed to materialize so I had trouble finding a research site. Four weeks into the spring 2019 semester, I was able to connect with Claire who invited me to visit her all-women Friday evening Bible study group. I ended up observing this group for eight meetings and interviewing Claire and Rebekah. Claire's group went on break for the summer and I was told by Joseph that he and Claire would rather I did not observe them again in the fall because they felt my presence changed the group Bible study dynamic. I met Sebastian at the Wednesday lunch during the spring 2019 semester and he gave me a contact card for his group but at that time he was still working on getting the group recognized by the university. I contacted him through email when I saw a poster for his group at the campus spiritual center just before the start of the fall 2019 semester. We met at a local restaurant,

owned by members of his church, so that I could explain my research. He had concerns that my research would be limited to a critical perspective of Christian ideologizing. He invited me to observe his group after he had three sessions to establish rapport and a routine. I was then granted three additional observations for a total of four. I also interviewed Sebastian and Hanna.

Making entrée

Beginning with my pilot study, I followed Bielo's method of making entrée. After receiving IRB approval, I met with the Bible study leaders to explain the methods and purpose of my research. Upon being granted permission, I visited their groups and explained my methodology and purpose to the attendees. I answered questions and asked them to vote on whether they wanted to be included in the project. Fortunately, permission was unanimously granted by the pilot study group and the two campus groups. Additionally, the four Bible study leaders and two attendees read and signed consent forms.

Ethnographic Inquiry

In terms of methodology, my primary guides have been Hammersly and Atkinson (1983), I also draw on the ethnographic work of Bielo (2009), Rosa Suen (2017), and Johnston (2017). Following Johnston (2017), whose methods were informed by Fetterman (1989), I designed the study as a standard ethnography. I initially proposed

spending four to five months at my primary sites observing, interviewing, and collecting materials. As it turned out, my participant observations of the Bible study were limited to four and seven weeks for the two groups on campus respectively, although the groups met for most of the semester. The reason for limited time observing is that the group leaders felt that my presence inhibited the potential for the sharing of affect during Bible study. In any case, I employed standard procedures of ethnographic inquiry. The data sources were 1) written fieldnotes collected from written description of participant observations, 2) interviews with leaders and international attendees, 3) collected artifacts such as online documents and teaching materials, and 4) a research journal.

Participant Observations

The purpose of the observations was to get a grasp of the ordinary practices, habits, things, ideas and languaging of these adult group Bible studies for internationals. Following Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), I strived to never lose the sense of being a stranger while also monitoring my affect and systematically adjusting my role at sites to collect different data. Following Johnston (2017), I observed as many Bible study meetings as I could, wrote descriptions while I observed, and used these descriptions to write fieldnotes. I also observed CGP affiliated activities such as public meals and other events. I occasionally played a part in lessons. The Bible study leaders knew my background and would sometimes asked me questions about grammar, ways to explain vocabulary, and my experiences in Korea. But I tried to follow Johnston by sitting at the side of the room and observing. Following Suen (2017), I hoped to find uninhibited and

interesting discussions while also attending to how those with the least complex English repertoires participated. Johnston and Bielo audio-recorded at their sites, but the Bible study leaders and attendees would not allow me to do. According to Joseph, some of the Chinese nationals were particularly concerned about China's State surveillance. In keeping with Canagarajah's (2017) performative orientation, I attended to what members did as much as to what they said. I am an experienced classroom observer and my fieldnotes over the time I observed provided sufficient data for my purposes.

Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to learn more about intentions, objectives, desires and beliefs of Bible study leaders and attendees. Following Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), I strived to treat what my informants said on their own terms and attended to both solicited and unsolicited accounts. I followed Johnston (2017) closely in my interview process of the four Bible study leaders and two Bible study attendees. I had many short informal unrecorded discussions with leaders and attendees before or after a Bible study meeting or at other affiliated events such as meals. I elicited some of these discussions, asking about a previous group meeting, but other discussions were initiated by my informants. Formal interviews were semi-structured and audio-recorded. All interviews were in English, and between 50 and 90 minutes. I have followed up on some of my interviews with member checking. Following Johnston, I listened to the audio-recordings and transcribed selectively for close reading.

Materials Collection

Following Johnston (2017), I collected teaching materials used by the Bible study leaders, which included handouts and PowerPoints. I also investigated the websites and other public documents belonging to the student religious groups and the Bible study leaders' organizations.

Reading and Writing the Data

Following Canagarajah (2018) and Valente (2011), I looked at what was significant in situated communication, and I sometimes used a narrative approach in presenting my data. The purpose of my research is to understand what these adult moral oriented subculture groups do to teach, learn, and socialize language, theology and morality. That said, this research is not removed from wider critiques of globalized neoliberal education schemes (Allan & McElhinny, 2017; Lynch, 2006) and globalized Christian right agendas (Edge, 2003; Edge, 1996; Johnston, 2017).

Research Journal

Following Johnston (2017) and Bielo (2009), I kept a research journal for the duration of data collection. I wrote facts, feelings, and reflections immediately after each observation and interview. I also used the journal to reflect on my reading of theory and to begin data analysis and synthesis.

Positioning Myself

I was a partial insider in this researcher. Like the Bible study leaders, I am a white native English speaker. I have and continue to teach ESL/EFL to adults, who are anywhere from basic to proficient English users, using chalkboards, stories, PowerPoint, pens, computers, paper, and books. Like Joseph and Claire, I lived and worked abroad for more than a decade and through that experience I know what it means to try to make a life surrounded by language and culture that you only partially understand. Like the international attendees, I do not call the college town where I live my home and I do not have a nearby family network. Like some of the attendees, I am a graduate student and I have a child who at one point needed help from an ESL instructor and went through a lot of culture shock when she came to the U.S. after spending her first 12 years abroad.

I was a partial outsider and had to find my feet (Geertz, 1973) which was a process I began in my pilot study and continued with my dissertation research. Christianity involves teleological thinking; typically Christians assumes that events do not happen arbitrarily but have a purpose and people are part of that purpose. I was raised and continue to be a committed atheist and an anti-teleologist. Growing up, I was surrounded by science fiction, atheists, homosexuals, and pornographic artists; also, I remember America's reaction to the mass-murder at Jonestown, the absurd modern-day witch hunt that was the Satanic Panic of the 1980s, and the Christians who abused women outside clinics providing abortion services. In many ways, then, I have been socialized to see Christian Evangelicalism as a subculture which is dangerous, authoritarian, anti-woman, and anti-science. When I entered my ethnographic locations as

a researcher, I also came with assumptions and expectations of evangelical Christians that were the result of more than sixteen years of adult ESL and EFL teaching. I spent fourteen years of my teaching career in South Korea. While I was there, Christian colleagues told me that it was one of the easiest places in Asia for them to find like-minded communities, as evidenced by the festooning of thousands of neon crosses across the horizons of Korean cities, the incredibly large number of mega-churches in Seoul (more than any other city in the world), and the significant number of Christian Evangelical missionaries Korea sends out to the world (CBN News, 2018). At any rate, the vast majority of the Christians I knew there considered faith to be a personal and private matter, but I was also the direct supervisor of more than 120 expatriate faculty and every year there was invariably one or two who had taught at Korean Christian schools or church-based language academies before and had graduated from a Christian Evangelical university such as Oral Roberts. This background was a red flag because it sometimes corresponded with complaints from students or Korean faculty and administrators that the teachers could not keep the God talk out of their classrooms. As a result, I kept a closer eye on them. I also remember one woman who proposed a Bible-based student club which we decided not to recognize as an English academic activity because she refused to edit her mission statement to remove anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ language. I admit, therefore, that it has been a struggle to find a critical footing which is also fair to my informants and lets them speak for themselves. Writing an ethical ethnography is important but I also feel a personal responsibility because the Bible study leaders and some of the Christian Bible study attendees I met through my research were sincere in seeking out encounters with difference, not just with people who have different

colored skin, different body odor, different understanding of what sweet, salty, or spicy is supposed to taste like, but the kind of linguistic difference that guarantees strained communicating. This is more than I can say of many of my fellow committed atheists.

Through various experiences I have developed an appreciation for the affect and disciplining in ritual practices, as well as for human investment in shared collective belonging and meaning. I am not a Bible reader, but during doing this research I occasionally attended a local progressive LGBTQ-positive church. I did this to get a feel for *churchiness* and variety in interpreting doctrine. I am not spiritual, nor do I feel a need for spirituality, but I have done some spiritual tourism. I have participated in a Buddhist student organization and in group teachings (in English) from Buddhist Monks in Korea and the U.S. I have done the 108 Buddhist bows every morning for several months and ritually washed, sat, bowed and chanted at US Mosque services where I was the only white person in a room of more than a hundred men. That said, all forms of communitarians still make me nervous.

Table 3-3: Summary of questions and research methods

Questions	Research method
Research Questions 1) What actions, bodies and things constitute adult ESL group Bible study and related activities,	Participant observations Materials Reading Journaling

<p>how are they arranged and networked, and what is the nature of their relations?</p>	
<p>2) How does performance of affects, ideas and words justify and legitimate arrangements of adult ESL group Bible study and related activities?</p>	<p>Participant observations Materials reading Interviews Journaling</p>
<p>3) How do group leaders and attendees make sense (or not) of ESL group Bible study and related activities (why these bodies without organs?) and what new arrangements and relations do these beliefs make possible (what becomings)?</p>	<p>Participant observations Materials reading Interviews Journaling</p>
<p>4) What spatial repertoires are at work within Bible study for international visa holders?</p>	<p>Participant observations Materials reading Interviews Journaling</p>

Chapter 4

Presentation of Data and Analysis of Research Questions 1-3

In this chapter I present three vignettes written up from my observations, interviews, and reflective journaling. These vignettes were purposefully selected for the analysis of research questions one, two, and three which are presented in the second part of this chapter. Vignettes are “ethnographic narratives rather than raw retellings” (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 2). I use them here to help readers change scales, connecting situations of national/international missionizing, global higher education and mobility, and everyday local Bible study and adult ESL pedagogic practices at a secular university. I sometimes write myself into the texts by taking a first person stance to make visible how I am “participating in the creation of knowledge” (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 30). An example of this is in Vignette 1 when I talk about my decision to bow my head and keep still when the Bible study leader and attendees are praying. The interviews I conducted with the Bible study leaders -i.e., Claire, Grace, Joseph, and Sebastian- and the Bible study attendees -i.e., Hannah who is an attendee in Sebastian’s group and with Rebekah who is an attendee in Claire’s group- provided their background information and reflections for my analysis. I also use the artifacts I collected and draw from informal conversations I had with my informants and overheard at public events.

I would urge readers to focus on how Bible study leaders work to move international graduate students, scholars, and spouses toward interpretive and reflexive dialogue on the Bible. From a curriculum and instruction perspective, preparing ELLs with the reading and communication skills to participate in particular academic and

cultural contexts requires moving beyond studying language to developing specific literacies (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). In my discussion after the vignettes, I show that the Bible study leaders defined part of their educational tasks as introducing internationals to styles of thinking, reading, and speaking done by professional evangelists and church planting missionaries. As members of this profession, they were best qualified to help internationals think, read, and speak like evangelists and church planting missionaries. This is not to say that Bible study leaders expected most attendees to be included into a missionizing profession, or that they were preparing them for theology study. But they were definitely invested in internationals having basic Bible literacy and understanding of group Bible study as an approach to further Bible literacy. According to Bielo (2009), being able to do group Bible study that effectively furthers Bible literacy involves 1) an understanding of the structure, accountability, and predictability of group Bible study, 2) the reading endurance and vocabulary to read large tracts of the Bible line-by-line/verse-by-verse on one's own, and 3) the ability to orally respond to Biblical text in a way that integrates one's own opinions and experiences with the Bible study leader's interpretation of scripture.

Vignettes 1 and 2 are built from observations of Claire's Bible study group which was promoted and supported by the Campus Gospel Partnership (CGP), a pseudonym, while Vignette 3 is built from observations of Sebastian's Bible study group which he did without support from an outside organization. Both Bible studies were held in the spiritual center, a two-story building centrally located on the university campus. Claire's Bible study room was on the second floor, at the end of a hallway of doors to offices for student religious and spiritual groups. Sebastian's room was on the first floor just off the

main lobby. Claire had 12 people signed up for her Bible study; Rebekah was one of them and was present for the meetings in Vignettes 1 and 2. Sebastian had 10 people signed up for his Bible study; Hannah was one of them and was present for the meeting in Vignette 3. Neither Rebekah nor Hannah attended every meeting I observed. During my 8 observations of Claire's group there were a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 11 people in attendance; in Vignette 1 there were 5, and in Vignette 2 there were 8. During my 4 observations of Sebastian's group there were a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 8 people in attendance, and 8 were present in Vignette 3. Claire's group meetings took place on Fridays from 5:30 pm to 6:45 pm during the academic semester. Immediately after Bible study, Claire and most of her attendees went to a free dinner catered each week in turn by a number of local churches. This was held on the first floor of the spiritual center. Sebastian's group meetings took place on Wednesdays from 2:15 pm to 3:15 pm and followed a free adult ESL class which he taught in the same room. Hannah and some of her fellow attendees went to both the ESL classes and the Bible study meetings.

Vignette 1

The Bibles live in a cardboard box most of the week. The box is kept in the Campus Gospel Partnership (CGP) office which is two doors down the hallway from the room where the Bible study takes place. The Bibles cannot be kept in the Bible study room because it is a general space used by other organizations. A self-proclaimed "perfectionist", Claire arrived 30 minutes before the 5:30 start to lug over the box of

Bibles and make sure things are *just so* in a room. By the time I arrive, a map labeled “The World of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Kingdom of Israel” has been taped to the whiteboard. Four folding tables have been arranged into a rectangle with a narrow space in the middle, and a dozen chairs have been placed around them. Claire tries to establish a language partnership between lower and higher proficiency attendees early in the semester and by now they have their regular seating arrangement next to each other. She does not expect many attendees today because several have already told her through WeChat and WhatsApp that they will be absent. She lays out eight copies of the New American Standard Bible (NASB) around the table; each book has four yellow bookmarks she has placed to mark the readings in Exodus for the day. She has a couple of Large Print copies in the box just in case one of the older Bible study attendees decides to show up. Some of the Bibles on the table are Mandarin-English bilingual copies. Back in the CGP office, there is another box filled with dusty Japanese-English bilingual Bibles, a reminder that the population of international visa holders to universities and Bible study is always changing. Having finished setting up she takes a seat with her back to the picture window which looks out onto campus from the second floor of the spiritual center. A late-February snow flurry is just starting as the attendees start to drift in. I sit to the side with my notebook and pen. The group is not officially gendered, but in casual discussions Claire and Joseph refer to it as Claire’s Friday women’s Bible study. This is my fourth observation, so I have already established my presence as a researcher who sits quietly in the corner watching and taking notes. Still, I am conscious of being male in a female space. I know that one of the attendees, a middle-aged woman from China, is

nervous speaking to men because she told me so when I tried to strike up a conversation at the CGP dinner the week before.

Around 5:30, attendees begin to drift in. Rebekah is dressed conservatively, but many of the rest wear university logo sweatshirts. They toss their backpacks and handbags on the floor or in nearby chairs. There will be five attending today. The number varies each meeting, but I never observed all 12 on Claire's official list in attendance. Most are PhD students and visiting scholars with conferences, articles, and research that also demand their attention. Claire begins the session, as always, by passing around a Tupperware container of snacks. Today it is banana bread. She usually makes these from scratch and she tells the group that she got this recipe from a friend who claimed it is the same one that Starbucks uses. There is time for casual conversation as everyone takes a piece and eats. The topic of stress comes up and Claire recommends to the group that if they are looking for a healthy way to escape from overwork, they should join her and another attendee in the women's morning Pilates class at her church.

Claire says that it is time to pray, and they bow their heads. I had already decided to bow my head and stay silent during prayers because it had seemed the polite thing to do and I had not wanted the sound of writing or shuffling papers to be a presence at that time. After a moment of silence, Claire asks God to help the graduate students and scholars find the strength to complete their research as well as the determination to make time for worship and self-care. Claire and the attendees say amen together. They had started the Old Testament story of Passover the previous week and are continuing with it today. Claire begins with review: "Who were the slaves of Egypt? There are two words, one begins with I and the other with J." The attendees give the desired answers of the

Israelites and the Jews. Claire asks the group to list the plagues (natural disasters) and she counts them off on her fingers as they go. Claire: “What was God trying to do with these natural disasters? Why does he do these horrible things? Rebekah, you’re shaking your head.” Rebekah: “He wants the Egyptians to turn to him.” Claire: “One thing is he wanted the Israelites to be free. The other thing is that he wanted the Egyptians to turn to him. It’s a severe mercy.” [Through my research I recognize this as a reference to the Sheldon Vanauken’s (2011) spiritual autobiography which remains very popular among American Evangelicals although it was not part of Claire’s curriculum.] “Sometimes God allows really hard things in our lives and we get angry but he uses these things to get us to turn to him.”

Claire continues the review. She asks how the Jewish people protected their children from being killed by God: “Look over at that door there. They are going to mark the door with what?” An attendee responds: “With sheep’s blood”. It appears that Claire is not satisfied with that answer. She moves to connect it to the Christian interpretation, which retells this story as a prophecy for the coming of Christ. Claire clarifies that it is the blood of a lamb and then asks, “Who is called the perfect lamb?” After a pause filled with literal twiddling of thumbs by students, Claire explains that the perfect lamb is a symbol of the purity and sacrifice of Jesus. Claire handles this failure to understand/deliver the desired Christian rhetoric with a smile. Claire: “The brain is finally engaging now. Have another piece of banana bread and it will do wonders.”

The review is finished, and she tells them what page to open to, indicated by the first bookmark. Everyone is looking down at their Bible except Rebekah who uses a Bible application on her phone. She holds her cellphone close to her face. She has the

brightness turned up and the way her glasses reflect the light make them look like a pair of headlights. Claire has her personal copy opened up before her; it is distinguished by the purple cloth cover and liberal multicolored markup.

Claire asks for a volunteer to begin reading aloud and they proceed like this around the table with everyone except Claire reading one paragraph. Rebekah is unhesitant and clear in her reading. Some of the less-than-proficient English users speak so softly it is difficult for me to hear them over the roar of the room ventilator. Attendees sometimes pause at unfamiliar words, such as *chariot*. Claire uses this as a cue to give standard pronunciation. Otherwise, her corrections of pronunciation and miscues are infrequent³. For me, this is a noticeable contrast to how Joseph, who I observed in my pilot study, led his studies with less fluent English users. Joseph stopped his attendees nearly every time they gave non-standard pronunciation to model and have them repeat back words. Where Claire halts the flow is when the reading is shifting from one attendee to another. During these stages, she previews some of the low-frequency words in the next paragraph, often giving them time to use bilingual dictionary apps. She tells them: “You go right ahead and look it up.” Today these words include *wailing*, *slaughter*, and *blemish*. She also takes time to explain some vocabulary herself; for example with *unleavened bread*, it is not enough to just say “bread with no yeast” but she explicitly connects the word to the Jewish escape from Egypt. Claire: “When you have to leave in a hurry” she makes an upward motion with her hand, “you don’t have time to let bread

³ The one correction of this kind that I could find in my notes was when an attendee substituted disciplines for disciples. There were far more reading miscues that never got corrected.

rise.” To explain *girded loins* she first tells them that the Jews of the time wore long flowing robes. Then she stands up, steps away from the table, bends over and touches her ankles. Claire: “The robes came down to here. So, what are they supposed to do with their robes? They tuck them in.” She stands up again and demonstrates tucking imaginary robes into her loins. Claire asks and immediately answers: “What does that do? It frees your legs to run.”

Claire also asks close-ended and open-ended questions between readers. She usually addresses these to the group rather than calling on attendees by name. Near the end of today’s session she asks: “Why did the Jews obey? Would you have obeyed?” As attendees respond, and not everybody does, Claire steeples her fingers in front of her mouth, leans forward with her elbows on the table, and shifts her position slightly to make eye contact with each interlocutor. After this exchange, Claire says, “This is the bright spot to me. Someone read verse 38 please...”. Rebekah volunteers to read the text aloud. Claire: “So, some of the Egyptians left with the Israelites, they realized that their God is the one true God. It seems that this is harsh.” She closes her book. Claire: “But the message is that we are forgiven. Questions.” Claire then responds after an attendee asks whether the bitter herb mentioned in one passage was eaten by the Jewish people so they would not forget about the Egyptian babies God killed with “That is a possibility.”

There is a pause and everyone takes this as a cue to close their Bibles and get out of their seats. They pack the Bibles into the cardboard box and a volunteer carries it back to the CGP office. Other attendees meet at the doorway, hug, and chat (in Mandarin or English). An attendee has more questions for Claire, presumably about scripture, and

they stay behind for a few minutes to carry on a discussion. This is an ordinary occurrence. Meanwhile, the rest of us drift down to the first floor for the free CGP dinner.

Vignette 2

The group is discussing the Ten Commandments. At present, they are working on the one about not bowing down to false idols. Claire asks the group to look up the word *idol* on their phones. One attendee forgets to mute Google, and the Mandarin translation is loud enough for everyone to hear. This prompts her study mate to comment that the Chinese and Korean sound almost the same. They try to pronounce the word in each other's language. The group discussion proceeds to examples that idols can take, these include traditional spirit beings worshipped by some tribes in Ghana and money in Korea. Claire asks about things that they might personally bow down to. Rebekah: "Grades." Claire: "Right, or your research." They move on to Commandments about using God's name in vain and then the one about keeping the Sabbath. Claire: "I think all PhD students should read this verse." Claire talks about how work can also be an idol and how important it is to trust that six days is enough to get everything done that needs to get done. She adds that taking a break from work is not just keeping a commandment, but also about self-care, it is critical to physical and mental health. The last commandment discussed today is the one on honoring your parents. They discuss how respect for parents is expressed in the Philippines, Ghana and elsewhere. Claire summarizes: "What God is saying through the Ten Commandments is not 'I am love' but 'Trust me, let me be in control.'"

Vignette 3

Folding tables are arranged in an L, with chairs on the outside of both the vertical and horizontal tables. Sebastian has a separate table set up inside the L with a chair and a laptop arranged on the outside so that he faces the attendees. There is a moveable screen set up to the left of Sebastian's table, the ceiling projector is on and linked to his laptop. The university charges a fee to use their screens so he brings his own each session. Sebastian takes binders, the big old-fashioned three ring type, from a cardboard box which he keeps in a shelf on the wall behind the attendees, and places them on the tables in front of the chairs. The binders are labeled with the attendees names and contain many plastic sleeves. Sebastian distributes two copies of a double-sided handout, one for the attendees to put in their binder and one to take home. There is a list of vocabulary and definitions in English on one side and an excerpt from the New International Readers Version (NIRV) Bible on the other. The attendees, all Chinese nationals, are chatting in the hallway. Most have stuck around after Sebastian's free one hour ESL class which ended a few minutes ago. During my first observation, four attendees packed up and left at the beginning of the Bible study session after apologizing for not being able to understand the King James Version (KJV) which Sebastian had tried to use as content for the first two weeks. From that session on Sebastian had started using the NIRV Bible but two of the escapees would not be lured back to Bible study. When Sebastian asked about the new content at the end of the last session, attendees said they found it far more approachable.

At 2:15 pm, the attendees start to drift into the room and sit down. The tables are now littered with thermoses and disposable coffee cups. Most of the attendees are visiting scholars so they dress professionally, no University Logo sweatshirts in this group. Hannah has a zebra striped cloth pencil case on the table in front of her. From this she takes out a Minnie Mouse pencil. When I say that I like her pencil she tells me that she borrowed it from her 12-year-old daughter. Sebastian says that it is time for a prayer. Everyone bows their heads. After a moment of silence, Sebastian thanks God for helping one of the attendees get her driver's license, this refers to a conversation from a prior ESL class. Everyone says amen and looks up.

Sebastian warms up each session I observed by introduce a few idioms with Biblical origins. He goes through a couple PowerPoint slides, see Fig 4-1 for an example, each containing an idioms, a brief explanation, an example sentence, and the Biblical citation. Attendees look up at the screen.

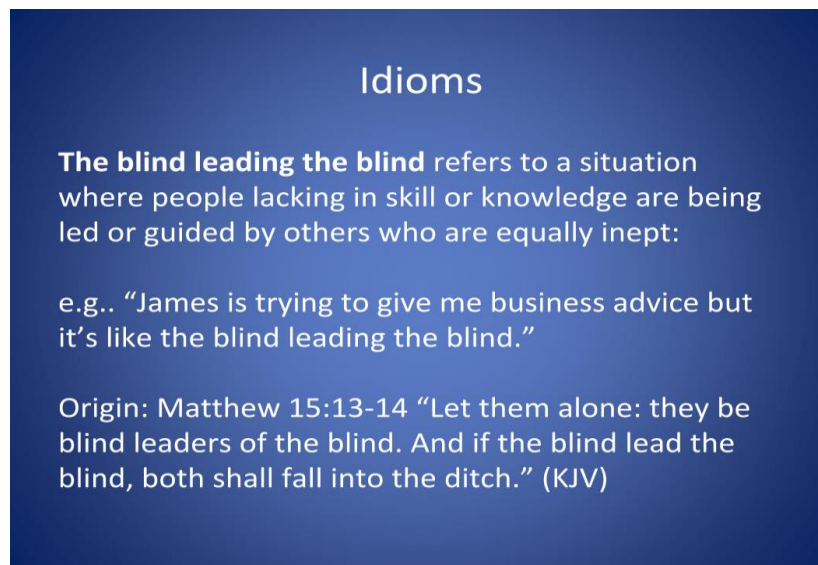


Figure 4-1: PowerPoint slides of idioms from Sebastian's Bible study.

He then moves on to the handout. Today's lesson is the story of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments. Sebastian asks attendees to look at the vocabulary side of the handout, see Figure 4-2, and starts going over the words. As he does this, he clicks through the PowerPoint. Each slide, see Figure 4-3, has the word, a short definition, and a Mandarin translation. Some of the slides include a picture cue. Slides are in the same order as the handout, which is in same order as the words are encountered in the story. Attendees take notes on their take-home handout which does not contain the Mandarin translations. In presenting the vocabulary, Sebastian models pronunciation and reads off the English definitions. He has attendees individually repeat back some words and tries to correct some non-standard pronunciation. Sebastian: "Watch my lips. Tool, pinch your lips." He gives the past tense of irregular verbs and the various forms of some words. Sebastian: "Sinful. Sin is a noun. To sin is the verb. Sinful is an adjective." He also talks about sociolinguistic aspects of some words. Sebastian: "The Mandarin translation of sinful literally means to break the law. I have a friend in China who knows Mandarin and he says there is no word that means sin in the way Christians mean it."

Bible Literacy - Lesson 102

Vocabulary

finish - complete
tablet – flat slab of stone with writing on it
covenant – promise or agreement between two people or two groups of people
stone - rock
fellow - man
metal – substance such as gold, silver, or copper that can be heated and made into objects
earring – something worn on the ears for beauty
calf – baby cow
tool – something used in the hand to make something
altar – a raised place for worship or offering animals to God or gods
offering – something given to another person
dance – move quickly up and down or side to side
wild – not being under control
sinful –doing many things that are wrong and against God
quickly – doing something very fast
Israel – a country on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea
stubborn – hard to handle or persuade; unwilling to cooperate
mercy - kindness that makes you forgive someone, or give them less punishment
destroy – bring to an end; ruin; kill
anger – feeling upset and unhappy about something that was wrong or bad
nation - country
power – strong force
mighty – strong physical ability
hurt – to cause pain, harm, damage
wipe – to remove by rubbing
pity – sadness about people and their difficulties and problems
belong –to be in a proper and good relationship with family or friends

Figure 4-2: Sebastian Bible study vocabulary sheet .

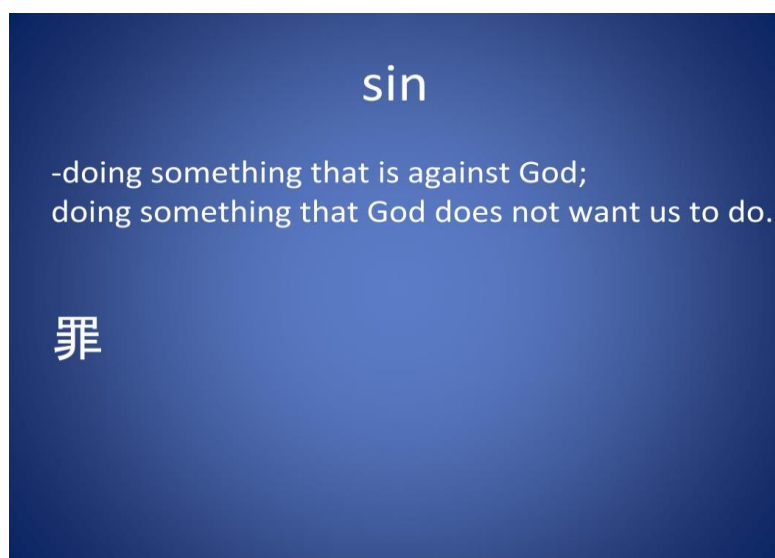


Figure 4-3: PowerPoint slide of vocabulary from Sebastian Bible study.

After presenting the vocabulary, Sebastian clicks to a slide with a modern-day map of the Middle East. He walks over to the screen and points out Egypt and Israel. Returning to his seat, he turns the page in his own binder and signals everyone to do the same. He calls on attendees by name to read one or two numbered lines aloud. The first reader had been reviewing another page from her binder before and had focused on the PowerPoint slides, so she starts reading from the wrong page. Hannah puts her hand on the woman's arm and tells her in English, "I think you are on the wrong page." Then Hannah puts the handout, which was still on the table, story-side up in front of the woman. After this false start they proceed. Another reader pauses at *Mt. Sinai*, which is not on the vocabulary list. Sebastian models the correct pronunciation. Sebastian does not stop attendees to correct non-standard pronunciation and miscues as they read, but attendees correct each other. Sebastian stops the flow when the reading is shifting from one attendee to another. One time he compliments an attendee on her reading: "You have

good expression when you read.” He also rewords certain passages: “Aaron is not being honest. He said ‘I just put the gold in the fire and out came this calf.’” Attendees also use these pauses to highlight, write marginalia, and use their cell phone dictionaries. Seeing Hannah looking confused during one pause, Sebastian asks another attendee to show her the English-Mandarin bilingual Bible application on her phone. I am struck by the contrast between this and Joseph’s Bible study group, which I observed in my pilot study. Joseph told his group, whose general fluency seemed about the same as this one, not to use their cell phones for translation during the session because it would take time away from spontaneous speaking.

After reading through the story, Sebastian asks if there are any questions. He then responds to an attendee asking whether a connection existed between God and gold by saying that the use of gold in constructing the golden calf had to do with the Jewish people not having any workable material other than gold earrings. Hannah asks the group whether Christians believe that they can actually hear the voice of God. A believer attendee relates her experience feeling a supernatural force that compelled her to end her travels early and return home. Sebastian: “That happens sometimes. I’ve heard that sometimes it is an audible voice and sometimes it is through a feeling and sometimes it is through a person or sometimes it can be through a book. I’ve never had it happen to me. Does God only speak to Christians? [Smiling broadly] No, Paul was a Jew.” Sebastian briefly previews next week’s story but by this time the attendees are writing down final notes and gathering up their papers, so they do not seem to be paying attention.

Research Questions and Analysis

Having provided these three vignettes, in what follows I will analyze the first three of my research questions which are meant to uncover various aspects and dimensions of these group Bible studies for internationals through the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the assemblage. The concept of the assemblage has already been explained in Chapter 2 but I remind the reader here of the four components and how they relate to my research questions. According to Buchanan (2021), an assemblage is not an ad hoc collection of miscellaneous things (Buchanan, 2021). Rather it is the primary social form comprising the socius. An assemblage can only be understood as the interaction of four components (Buchanan, 2021; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). First, there is a material dimension composed of actions, bodies, and things. Research question one locates limits of material variables for Bible study for internationals. In working through this question, I draw from Vignettes 1 and 3 as well as interviews and collected artifacts. The second is the expressive dimension which is autonomous to the material dimension and acts to capture or territorializes actions, bodies, and things by labeling them as material appropriate to the assemblage. Research question two analyzes language that presuppose forms of content, thereby producing the social reality that is Bible study for internationals. In working through this question, I draw from Vignettes 1 and 2 as well as the interviews. The two remaining parts form the infrastructure of assemblage. The Body with Organs (BwO) is the potentiality for adding or subtracting variables. The abstract machine is the set of principles or codes which prohibit these changes. These two components often exist in a state of tension. Research question three analyzes language

that expresses the possibility of escape for bodies and ideas and the principles and interests that hold Bible study for internationals together. In working through this question, I draw from interviews and collected artifacts.

In this dissertation I sometimes evaluate the language teaching and learning that takes place because as an expert in the field and I am concerned about adult ESL/EFL pedagogy. I also sometimes take a critical perspective (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Pennycook, 1999) because as a left academic I am concerned with problems of global capitalism, anti-feminism, LGBTQ antagonism, white supremacy, and religious nationalism. I am not a Christian educator, therefore, I cannot evaluate the efficacy of these assemblages to enhance Bible literacy and missionize. All I can shed light on is how these aims are clearly conditions of the work being done inside them. During my research, I did not look for or meet any recent Christian converts; all I have is anecdotal evidence, but I presume that there are international atheists and non-Christians who have decided to become Christians within Christian groups on campuses. That said, interviews with Bible study leaders revealed that they all had experiences with attendees who invested considerable time and energy into group Bible study and acquired a fair degree of Bible literacy but never asked to be baptized. They also told me of attendees who stopped reading the Bible and going to Bible study when they returned to their home countries. Bible study leaders accepted uncertain outcomes, although they did not always understand how a person can perform collective happiness and contentment in Bible study while at heart being more influenced by the desires and motivations of the spiritually broken world. I show evidence in this chapter and in chapter 5 of ways internationals have found to experiment with spirituality, enhance their Bible literacy,

and improve their English through Bible study for internationals. I also show that Bible study leaders have found ways to fulfill their desires to serve Christians and witness to atheists and non-Christians. Employing the concept of assemblage as a unit of analysis allows me to define Bible study for internationals by the principles that hold it together, the limitations of what can and cannot be counted as being part it, and the functions it fulfills (Buchanan, 2021). I now turn to my three assemblage-based research questions.

Research Question 1

What actions, bodies and things constitute adult ESL group Bible study and related activities, how are they arranged and networked, and what is the nature of their relations?

An assemblage territorializes space, but a territory itself should be thought of less as a site than set of ideas, feelings and habits (Buchanan, 2021). This explains why the Bible study leaders indicated pragmatic reasons for using the spiritual center. The rooms were free for Claire and Joseph to use because Bible studies were activities belonging to recognized student religious groups. They were also convenient to scholars and students like Hannah and Rebekah who spent most of their weekdays on campus. But the Bible studies leaders said that they actually preferred homes and coffee shops to churches for group Bible study because the former are relaxed and normative community spaces, while the latter can seem exclusionary to atheists and non-Christians. I provide a brief analysis of the study spaces here at the beginning of the discussion of the material dimension, not because there is anything about the rooms or the spiritual center that

necessarily adds to or subtracts from Bible study assemblages, but to provide context for what follows.

The chapel on the main floor and the rolled up Muslim prayer rugs in the basement and the office for a pagan spirituality student group spoke to the intention of this building, which was to serve as sacralizing space on a secular campus. In the rooms where Bible study took place, there were no built-in podiums, whiteboards/chalkboards, or projector screens. Movable white boards were present, but I did not observe the Bible study leaders do any board work. As Vignette 1 shows, Claire did sometimes tape poster visuals to a white board. Vignette 3 shows that Sebastian, unlike Claire, made significant use of PowerPoint. The spiritual center charged groups a rental fee for use of their movable screens so Sebastian carried his own back and forth from his car every week. Vignette 1 shows that the CGP had its own office just down the hallway from the room Claire used for Bible study. Sebastian's group was too small and new at the time of my observation to have allocated office space. Both Bible study rooms were equivalent to a medium-size university seminar room and furnished with chairs and folding tables which could be arranged in various ways. The room that Sebastian used had a bookshelf covering one wall and as Vignette 3 shows Sebastian kept the student binders in a box on one shelf. The rest of the shelves were mostly filled with copies of the Torah and prayer shawls because the room was primarily used by Jewish student groups. The most distinct feature of the room Claire used was the poor overhead lighting. Even with windows on two walls there was not much sunlight entering the room in the early evening in February and March. As Vignette 1 shows, this was a significant problem for Rebekah who had a visual impairment, the combination of the low contrast between the paper and ink in

these older Bibles and the dim lighting made it necessary for her to use a NASB application on her phone. I noticed other attendees leaning close to their Bibles which may indicate that they too had trouble reading them.

The key content of the groups I observed were internationals who use English as a second or additional language, a Bible study leader who works with attendees differently from how she or he would work with native English speakers, Bible stories, and the actions of sitting in a circle and reading aloud. The possible combinations of these elements in the group Bible study produced situations which principally ease the transition from beginner Bible literacy in English to Bible study that furthers Bible literacy. I now move to discuss in detail the actions, bodies and things that could not be added or subtracted without creating different assemblages than Bible study for internationals.

Content based instruction.

As I worked through my analysis, one of the first things that occurred to me was that pedagogically, these assemblages might be best described as Content Based Instruction (CBI). As a form of sheltered second and foreign language instruction, CBI, also known as Content and Language Integrated Learning, has been found to produce language gains comparable to language classrooms (Dupuy, 2000) and place language learners on par with their native speaking peers on assessments of content knowledge (Friedenberg & Schneider, 2008). No less important, it has been linked to students seeing themselves as second language users and to their developing language learning autonomy

(Dupuy, 2000). According to Dupuy (2000) there are two necessary conditions for effective CBI: 1) an organizing principle that coordinates teaching and learning around subject-matter rather than language, and 2) an instructor who endeavors to make the course of study comprehensible to language learners. The campus Bible studies I observed met both these conditions and can therefore be understood as CBI.

There were a number of aspects of Claire and Joseph's instruction typical to the CBI classroom. First, in interviews Bible study leaders confirmed that they had no expectation of new grammar and vocabulary being retained. Second, the Bible studies excluded native English speaking attendees, which, according to Dupuy (2000) helps "ensure that instructors will speak at a language level comprehensible to non-native speakers" (p. 206-7). Third, the Bible studies featured extensive pedagogical modification (Dupuy, 2000) which Mcquillan (1998) calls *elaborative assistance* and Krashen (2019) calls *comprehension-aiding supplementation*. What is meant by this is that instructors use actions and things that make content more comprehensible and sometimes more interesting. Thus, language and subject matter are taught simultaneously (Dupuy, 2000). Physical demonstrations were part of both Bible study leaders' teaching repertoires. Vignette 1 shows Claire bending down and touching her ankles to demonstrate that Israelite robes "went down to here" and then tucking her imaginary robes in to demonstrate the phrase "girded loins". In an observation not included as a vignette, Sebastian started spasming in his chair to demonstrate the world *tremble*. As is common with CBI teachers, these Bible study leaders commonly used visual aids. In Vignette 3 Sebastian brought up a slide of a modern-day map of the Middle East and pointed at Egypt and Israel which helped contextualize the story. Some of his vocabulary

slides also featured pictures or photographs, but I found his use of images for explaining vocabulary to be a bit hit or miss. For example, he used a picture of a rabbit with the word *approach*, but it is difficult to see how attendees were supposed to make the connection to a verb rather than the object. He could have more effectively demonstrated the word by walking toward them and simultaneously taught the word *retreat* by backing away. Bible study leaders sometimes used elements of the space, for example in Vignette 1 Claire told attendees to look at the door of the room and then asked them about how the Jews marked their doors to escape from God's retribution.

A fourth aspect of these Bible studies that were typical of CBI classrooms was that students were typically given some time to work with their L1. In Vignettes 1 and 2 Claire asked attendees to look up words on their smart phone translators that were important to meaning in the next paragraph. What this shows is that Claire trusted that a self-directed cursory study of low-frequency vocabulary would generally suffice for these particular attendees to tackle the deeper meaning of the stories. In an interview Sebastian disclosed that he networked with the wife of the minister of a local Chinese church to make sure he had accurate Mandarin translations to put on his PowerPoint slides which we see in Vignette 3. This vignette also shows that there was time between readers for attendees to use their cellphones as translators, and at one point Sebastian recommends to Hannah that she consult the Bible translation application on another attendee's phone. What is clear is that giving time for attendees to look up words in their L1 in these groups had the purpose of making the stories comprehensible, not for pushing retention. As Krashen et al. (2018) put it "When we look up a word in a dictionary while reading in a second language, our usual goal is to make the text more comprehensible, not to master

the unfamiliar word” (p. 13). Thus, there were none of the matching exercises, crossword puzzles, or quizzes that would be typical of a language classroom.

Some explicit teaching of language is to be expected in CBI and was present in the Bible studies I observed. In Vignette 1 Claire pre-taught a small list of Bible vocabulary, which included the phrases *unleavened bread* and *girded loins*. She also occasionally corrected mispronunciation and miscues. In Vignette 3 Sebastian pre-taught a full page of vocabulary and had attendees practice pronunciation of words as unique lexical units. He also spent time on irregular verb forms, metalanguage of grammar, and sociolinguistics.

Neither Bible study leader attended to rhythm, intonation, and flow of passages but in Vignette 3 Sebastian complimented an attendee on having “good expression” when she read. This suggests that the music or beauty of Biblical passages was important to him, but he did not have the expertise to help attendees sound more natural. It should also be noted that the NIrB that he employed is written to be readable by people with a 3rd grade literacy education but in doing so most of the poetry of the language in the KJB and NASB is lost. On a continuum between language class and content class (Brinton, Snow, and Esche, 2003), Sebastian’s Bible study fell closer to language class than Claire’s. This was partially in response to the language needs and desires of his less fluent attendees, but, as will be discussed later, it also reflects his decision, likewise based on their level, to focus on making the stories comprehensible rather than having attendees produce a lot of oral responses to the texts.

Prayer.

Both Claire and Sebastian led short prayers at the beginning of every Bible study, but during my pilot study I observed that Joseph did not. In an interview he said that he felt that such overt Christian ritual could function to exclude atheists and non-Christians who came out of curiosity about the stories and to improve their English. This probably speaks to the different roles that Claire and Joseph play in the CGP, with Claire primarily serving Christians and Joseph being more focused on witnessing to atheists and non-Christians. Hannah, a self-described atheist, bowed her head during the prayer and said amen in Vignette 3, which suggests that the performance did not bother her.

Sitting.

I did not observe Bible study leaders attempt to integrate attendee bodies into learning through Total Physical Response (Asher, 1969) or role play. However, during the dinners following Claire's Bible study there were usually games, cookie or Easter egg decorating, or some other physical activity. What this shows is that adult attendee bodies are expected to sit for the duration of Bible study and that there is an intentional separation of more serious text-based dialogue from socializing for its own sake.

Sitting in a circle allows everyone to look each other in the eye and to read each other's body language. Partially, this served is a self-governance function (Foucault, 1988). During my observations of Claire and Sebastian's groups, attendees were mostly focused on the lesson and rarely looked their phones other than for translations. This was not true of the group Bible study I observed in my pilot study, but even there, attendees

surreptitiously checked their phones under the table. The seating arrangement also increased the potentiality for switching roles, so while the practice was usually for Bible study leaders to guide the dialogue, attendees also sometimes posed questions to the group. In Vignette 3, when Hannah asked whether people believed they could hear the voice of God, her puzzlement was clearly visible on her face. She told me in an interview that she knew that some of the attendees were believers and that she was genuinely curious about how they expressed their Christian imagination. When the attendee related her experience of feeling compelled she had an expression of joy on her face. These performances of exaggerated happiness and contentment were common when Bible study leaders and Christian internationals talked about their intimate relationship with the supernatural. In Vignette 3, Sebastian's expression was a subdued smile which is probably due to his not having had the experience of a supernatural push or hearing a voice, but during an interview when he spoke of going through a crisis of faith he also performed exaggerated contentment. I discuss some of these embodied practices as part of the (trans)lingual repertoires being instructed within Bible studies for internationals in Chapter 5.

In an interview, Claire said that she tried to sit lower and higher English proficient attendees together as study partners, and that they really appreciated the extra language assistance. This practice is shown in Vignette 1. However, the only peer support interactions I observed in Claire's group was when an attendee indicated to another where in the Bible or on a page they were supposed to be reading. There was surprisingly little dialogue between these attendees during the Bible study proper. It was, instead, very Claire-centered. Although Sebastian did not formally arrange peer support, it emerged,

nonetheless. For example, Vignette 3 shows attendees correcting each other's pronunciation and reading miscues. It also shows Hanna correcting the woman sitting next to her when she started reading from the wrong page. What this primarily indicates is that Sebastian's attendees needed more peer support to make the content and classroom discourse comprehensible.

Reading in a circle.

Not every Bible study that involves international language learners can be described as Bible study for internationals. In an interview, Grace revealed key differences between an all-women Bible study group she led and the one I observed Claire leading.

In my women's group sometimes they would bring their babies or young children so there was a little bit of chaos that happened. It is a safe space for them to come and just be a mother and talk about stuff that is pertinent to their situation.

What this shows is that a study group of mothers with children was a different sort of assemblage because attendees did not come together principally for studying Bible stories and the distractions of having children sharing the space meant members were unable to sit still and give their attention to the text, the study leader, and each other. Because it was a "safe space for them" attendees might even perform sadness, frustration, anxiety, or anger, which was definitely non-normative in the normally joyful evangelical Bible studies on campus. The Bible study groups I observed tried to divorce an hour or more from other commitments through the strategic employment of the Bible to manage

the dialogue. The most obvious example of this was round robin reading. The problem, which Claire, Grace, and Joseph understood, with having everyone read aloud is that language learners are often ineffective models of pronunciation, rhythm, intonation and flow for other language learners (Opitz & Guccione, 2009). Further, there are other far more effective means of encouraging the development of reading fluency such as choral reading (Kuhn, 2009) which Grace and Joseph told me in interviews that they use occasionally. But here, round robin reading seemed primarily a tool for managing attentiveness. As Grace explained in an interview, the practice helped “keep everybody on their toes”. Also, it helped distribute participation since even the stronger readers like Rebekah were rarely called on to read more than a paragraph and in Sebastian’s group each attendee might read only one or two sentences.

Bibles

I did not observe the use of Christian books or devotional texts other than Bibles during Bible study. Christian images and other texts were abundant outside of Bible study, e.g., during dinners, games, songs and trips, which shows that Bible study is an assemblage for serious consideration of scripture, therefore partitioned from the constellation of assemblages meant more for relaxing and building community. In interviews, Bible study leaders confirmed that they consider reading and comprehending the Bible stories to be basic and fundamental. They also admitted that the stories were a draw for many atheist and non-Christian internationals who were simply curious. Claire used the NASB. Sebastian used the NIrB Bible, after spending two weeks with the KJV.

In Vignette 3 the attendees who left after Sebastian's ESL class said in so many words that trying to read the KJV was not worth their while. Sebastian admitted in an interview that considering the language of KJV to be appropriate for these attendees demonstrated his lack of experience working with less than proficient English users. But he also related that one more fluent attendee told him that she actually preferred the challenge of the KJV. The NASB uses modern phrasing and more common vocabulary compared to the KJV Bible and some other versions. The NIV was created specifically for low-literacy adults and English language learners so it features significantly reduced language -e.g., simpler sentence structures and mostly high-frequency vocabulary. In Vignettes 1 Claire placed Mandarin-English bilingual NASBs and non-bilingual copies on the table.

Attendees did not bring their own material Bibles. In preparing for each session, Claire placed bookmarks in the pages she planned to read. What this shows is her conscientiousness about making reading as easy as possible and not wasting time. But attendees still sometimes had trouble finding the place to start reading because Claire skipped chapters and verses. Vignette 3 shows that Sebastian gave attendees two copies of a double-sided handout. Each attendee was supposed to put one copy in her or his personal binder, which was kept in the room, and take notes on the other copy for home study. During the read-aloud portion of the session, the first reader started reading from the wrong page because she had been reviewing a previous handout in her binder at the beginning of the session and had been looking only at the PowerPoint during the vocabulary presentation rather than the handout. Hannah's correction of the situation shows not only that Sebastian's organizing approach worked for her, but the gentle collective autonomy of the group.

Sebastian reduced the day's lesson to a two-sided handout. On one side of there was the list of vocabulary accompanied by brief definitions or synonyms. Sebastian prepared these materials by reading through the NIrV text and pulled out mostly middle and low-frequency words that were necessary for comprehending the story. He also included some high-frequency words which did not need to be explicitly taught because these were not absolute beginners. This again indicates his lack of ESL teaching experience because an experienced teacher would have a better sense of which words to prioritize during precious instructional time. A copy of a page from the NIrV was on the reverse side. A key functional difference between materials in these two Bible studies is that in Claire's group I only observed one attendee taking notes. She was a believer and had a dedicated notebook, while as Vignette 3 shows, most of the attendees of Sebastian's group highlighted and wrote marginalia in Mandarin on their take home copy of the handout.

As attendees read aloud the leaders followed along silently with their own texts. Sebastian used his own copy of the handout. In Vignette 1, Claire reads from her personal Bible which she did not always bring. I observed Sebastian bring his personal Bible only once. In conversations, Claire, Joseph, and Grace said that they marked up their personal Bibles, which were NASB, with multi-colored highlighters and pencils while Sebastian said that he left the pages of his personal Bible, which was KJV, unembellished because he preferred to "start fresh so that he can discover something new every time".

In an interview, Rebekah said that she had her personal Bible which she read from every day and marked up, but she did not bring it to Bible study because her laptop and the materials for her nursing courses were already a lot to carry. She used the Bible

application on her phone because it allowed her to dial up the contrast which she needed because of her visual impairment. She said that her phone was adequate for the limited amount of reading they usually did during meetings. In conversation, Claire said that although she encourages attendees to take Bibles home, they rarely did. Some attendees of both Bible studies were members of local Chinese churches and had Mandarin or bilingual Bibles of their own at home, I do not know what version they used. Hannah did not have her own NIrV Bible or a Bible application on her phone. In an interview she related how she had tried to get her daughter to read the Bible stories with her, but this had been met with the girl's absolute refusal to participate. What this shows is that an atheist parent may have literacy practices during study but not instruct them, or be able to instruct them, as home literacy practices. Hannah said that she did not study the Bible stories herself outside of class because she was too busy, but as I show later, she did sometimes read other scriptural texts for pleasure.

Belonging

Claire's attendees had formed relations through Bible study and CGP events, as a result there were incidents of performed affection. In Vignette 1, some felt comfortable embracing at the end of sessions and in Vignette 2, when the attendees shared the connection of Mandarin and Korean pronunciation of *idol*, they smiled and touched each other on the arm. Sebastian's attendees were friendly toward each other, but I did not observe the same kind of performed friendship between most attendees in this group. Likely contributing factors to this included that Sebastian's group was mixed-gender,

mostly made up of parents and professionals from different departments. Also, the group was relatively new and he did not have the resources to offer regular meals and activities. In other words, these attendees had not had the time to bond.

In addressing research question one I have shown that Bible study leaders and attendees understand that it is possible to acquire language mostly incidentally and incrementally through assemblages of comprehensible immersion and sustained focus with content. At the same time, Bible study for internationals is a form of Content Based Instruction, which means that the assemblages can only exist where Bible study leaders and attendees sometimes manage it as a language learning space. Bible study for internationals does not territorialize religious spaces but it does habituate practices of sitting in a circle and reading Bible stories and sharing particular affect together.

Research Question 2

How does performance of affects, ideas and words justify and legitimate arrangements of adult ESL group Bible study and related activities?

From the Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, language is an action as much as it is communication (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). What this means is that by labeling some students and scholars as internationals, governments and universities bring about changes in the actual existence of the internationalized subjects, e.g., increasing the precariousness of their stay and producing bureaucratic hurdles for them to jump over. The word *international* also had a function within these Bible study assemblages. One way these assemblages produce internationals is as foreign guests, which was meant to

oppose their subjectification as people with strange customs and ways of speaking. In interviews and conversations Bible study leaders referred to Chronicles 29:15 (NIV) – “We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope” - as part of their inspiration for teaching English and Bible literacy to internationals. As guests, they were invited to partake in meals, sports, games, and Bible study at Bible study leaders’ homes. Cultural mixing (Hao et al., 2016) was also performed, for example, the CGP Facebook page had posts with photographs of members gathered in Claire and Joseph’s kitchen preparing traditional dumplings for Chinese New Year. In another example, Sebastian used a picture of Buddhists outside of a temple in China to help explain the verb *bow* on one of his PowerPoint slides. But *international* was also synonymous with English language learner in these groups and this meant that Bible study for internationals was a very different formulation to what Bible study leaders and some attendees thought of as traditional Bible study, the kind that furthers Bible literacy and has the potential to change behaviors. I discuss Bible study for internationals as a form of remedial Bible study further with research question three.

Bible study for internationals was mostly Bible study leader-centered. Sebastian took this as granted. In an interview, he said that what he saw as his principal responsibility in working with less-than-proficient internationals was to make Bible stories “they might hear again at some point” comprehensible. Claire, Joseph, and Grace said that as much as possible, they tried to get attendees to talk, but the reality was that attendees’ output, aside from reading aloud, was mostly short responses to open-ended and closed-ended questions. This is consistent with what Bielo (2009) describes as

normative practice for Bible study leader's conversation management. Most of Claire's close-ended questions functioned to make attendees do basic exploration of the text and move the dialogue forward in particular ways. In one example, she asked about the cause of Solomon's downfall and when Rebekah responded with "women," Claire elaborated further: "That's right, he was a womanizer and began to worship other gods."

Claire posed some open-ended questions meant to get attendees to consider the spiritual brokenness of the modern world, such as in Vignette 2 when she asked about idols that attendees personally bow down to. Overall, Claire's guiding dialogue, such as in Vignette 1 when she asked "Why did the Jews obey? Would you have obeyed?", did not seem intended to elicit much reflexivity, which shows that she was not trying to walk attendees through changing their behavior. In interviews, Claire and Sebastian confirmed that they expected the dialogical process of making the Bible a living document, giving guidance in the modern world, and having attendees demonstrate recognition of implicit meaning, e.g., interpretation or explanation of the significance of the language used (for an example, see Shobe (2016)) in Bible study at their homes but not during the campus Bible study. Instead, Claire and Sebastian led attendees in a more-or-less straightforward manner to a takeaway. For example, in Vignette 2, Claire ended the lesson by telling attendees that the point of the Commandments is to let God be in control.

The Old Testament.

I observed Claire and Sebastian teaching the Old Testament. In an interview Claire said that the parts of the Old Testament she chose were intended to prepare attendees for understanding the New Testament. As she put it:

I used to go all the way through the Old Testament to the New Testament, and I realized that some of the things in the Old Testament weren't really necessary for them to understand. I think that the Old Testament is very critical but only up to Abraham. ...understanding the meaning of the temple or things like that, I think it comes at a later point and I found that it wasn't necessary for their understanding of the Gospels, to move through to Jesus Christ.

I also observed Sebastian tell his attendees, "If you are going to read the Bible, read the first part, Genesis. Then skip this part." He held up his copy of the KJV Bible and separated the rest of the Old Testament from Genesis. "It's difficult. Go right to the New Testament." Like many Christians, the Bible study leaders I observed considered the two testaments to be non-autonomous, with the Old Testament serving as a prequel to Christianity. In conversations, Joseph and Sebastian defined Old Testament Judaism as dogmatic religion, although they held that the same was true of Catholicism and many Mainline Protestant denominations. Joseph compared these forms of "church talk" with their own forms of Christian spirituality grounded theology. While Claire might spend most of a spring semester on selections of Genesis and Exodus, what must be borne in mind is that a lot of Christian energy has gone into developing arguments that these Jewish stories should be read as signs of the coming of Jesus, and Christian educators

often use them to draw attention to prophetic interpretations (Levenson, 1993). For example, in Vignette 1 when Claire was leading the group through the part of the story of Passover where the Jewish people ritually sacrifice the Paschal lamb, she asked “Who is called the perfect lamb?” expecting attendees to respond with Jesus. Joseph said that he chose the stories that were easy to read and easy to discuss. For home Bible study where they also used the NASB, he said another important element was that the text be long enough so there was “something to work with” because the Bible is full of “little parables” that are “too condensed, too thick, and would take too much to explain”.

Other texts.

During my pilot study I observed Joseph and Grace working with the Jesus Storybook Bible (Lloyd-Jones, 2011). This was their standard material and Joseph brought a box of them to the Wednesday lunches where he led easy English Bible study with anyone that wanted to stay behind after the tables were cleared and cleaned. I observed Joseph and Grace use this book during my pilot study. In interviews they said that they had come to rely on it with low fluency adults because the illustrations aided in teaching about the clothes and other contextual aspects, the text was written in what Joseph called a “conversational form” which I take to mean that it makes reading aloud easier, and the stories were short enough so that one or two could be covered in a single hour-long session. The illustrations in the book also featured Biblical characters with various shades of brown skin.

Not scriptural.

While Bible study leaders limit Bible study for internationals to Bible stories, internationals are almost certain to encounter others missionizing on campuses. At the start of one Bible study session, Hannah asked Sebastian about a small book of scripture with a green cover that had been given to her by a missionary on campus. After a quick look Sebastian handed it back and told the group that it looked like a Jehovah Witness (JW) text. Frowning, he went on to state that because they use false translations of scripture, the JW were not Christians and their materials lead to dangerous misunderstandings of important Christian concepts. In an interview, Hannah said that she sometimes read from a pamphlet which she also picked up from missionaries⁴ on campus. She said that what she found most interesting was the way it paired different anxieties and negative emotions with Biblical verses, she understood that the intent was to help readers deal with problems in life. She considered this devotional text, as she did the Bible and Buddhist and Daoist texts, to be part of collective ancient human wisdom. She said, “I think those verses can give me power, or can encourage me to face the current difficulties.”

⁴ I did not see the pamphlet but I assume it was also a Jehovah Witnesses devotional text because they were prevalent on campus and they had the habit of putting their materials directly in the hands of people they perceived to be internationals.

Details.

In interviews Bible study leaders said that they considered giving information about *Biblical times* to be an important part of leading a group because without knowing something about ancient clothes, food, and religious ritual it is difficult to make sense or see the significance of certain actions, things, and words. Grace explained that even atheists and non-Christians in the West can call up basic Biblical imagery because of the pervasiveness of the Nativity (as an example) in popular culture, but this is not necessarily true of many Chinese nationals. She and Joseph used the illustrations in the Jesus Storybook Bible to talk about these contextual details. Claire, Joseph, and Sebastian could reel off *Biblical times* details as easily as scripture. In Vignette 1 Claire spent time talking about gory door markings, unleavened bread, and the length of men's robes, but seemingly with the purpose of getting attendees to appreciate that the salvation of the Hebrew firstborn meant obeying God/Moses to the letter. She went on to claim that there was a "bright spot" to this story of genocide, which was that some of the Egyptians converted and escaped with the Israelites. What this shows is that details were not only intended to contextualize but push toward the takeaway which in this case was to trust and obey God and know that no matter our mistake, "we are forgiven" if we convert and stay faithful. Sometimes attendees asked about details, such as in Vignette 1 when one of Claire's attendees asked if Jewish people could have eaten bitter herbs to remember the Egyptian babies that God killed, and in Vignette 3 when an attendee of Sebastian's group, possibly thinking about Buddhist statues, asked if there was a connection between gold and God. Claire's response was that it was possible, and Sebastian responded that the

gold from the earrings was a convenient communal material. What this shows is that when details do not fit within specific Christian teaching rhetoric, Bible study leaders generally decide not to expand on them very much.

The difficult bits.

The Bible is full of good guys and gals who are also polygamous, incestuous, and murderous. In interviews, Bible study leaders revealed that they were well aware of the many problematic verses which make it inconceivable that this thousands-of-years-old text can be recontextualized wholesale to the present. Claire said that one of the verses she particularly struggled with was Ephesians 6:5 in which Paul tells slaves to obey their masters. Bible study leaders said that there are parts of the Bible they would never consider teaching in Bible study for internationals because attendees usually do not have the language proficiency to actively engage in dialogue about historical and cultural context and progressive redemption. But I observed a Bible study in which Sebastian did attempt to recontextualize/reterritorialize slavery from the Old Testament. In this lesson, he pointed out that the U.S. fought the Civil War to abolish slavery less than two centuries ago and then asked, I assume rhetorically, if it had existed in China. One attendee responded that in school they had learned a little about slavery in the U.S., but almost nothing about its history in China. The attendee then went on to say that whatever the practice in ancient China may have been, he did not think it was comparable to the institutionalized forms that existed in the U.S. or during Biblical times. From a critical perspective, both Joseph and the attendee failed to acknowledge slavery as it presently

exists in China, e.g., as it is structurally perpetrated on the Uighurs and Falun Gong, and elsewhere.

Messaging affect.

Within the CGP, sugar treats and social activities were part of a constellation of assemblages that brought into being a particular form of fundamentalist Christian moral subculture (Smith & Emerson, 1998). We see this in Vignette 1 when Claire passed around banana bread and invited attendees for Pilates at her church. What I observed to be normative in CGP Bible study and other events was the performances of collective happiness and contentment, and an absence of angry sermonizing. In Vignette 2, when Claire was teaching the commandment about keeping the sabbath, she said “I think all PhD students should read this verse.” She went on to talk directly to the PhD students about how keeping the commandment was also a way to maintain their physical and mental health. This was one of many instances in which Claire used Bible study to instruct attendees in how the Bible can make them feel better.

In addition, the promotional poster for the CGP had the slogan “Fun, Family, Faith” above a posed photograph of internationals gathered around Claire and Joseph with a scenic landscape from one of the group trips in the background. The group’s Facebook page also featured many photographs of multi-racial/ethnic bodies playing volleyball and card games, cooking, sitting around a bonfire, and posing as a group on the deck, all taken during the Saturday evening events at Claire and Joseph’s home. What is being shown here is a singular image of racially diverse, friendly, cheerful, and joyful

evangelist Christians. Moreover, it cannot be missed that Claire and Joseph were performing the role of Christian parents for an international foster family. Since many of the international members of the CGP were at risk of becoming depressed (Wei et al., 2007), Claire and Joseph perceived this role to be necessary.

There was another outcome of bringing young people together. More than one heterosexual interracial marriage resulted from relations formed through the CGP. Regardless of whether attendees were looking for Christian singles meetups, hanging out with Christians was a draw for internationals who decided to stay within the boundaries of an anti-premarital sex, anti-alcohol, and anti-drugs social sphere. Rebekah related the experience of including herself in the organization in the interview excerpt that follows:

When I came here, I didn't know of CGP. It was my second semester. I went to church one day and I met a Ghanaian friend who recommended CGP to me...She said there is this international Christian fellowship that you can join because I was always complaining that apart from studies, I wasn't doing anything in this university. Just going to lectures, maybe church on Sundays, then home, just there was that triangle. I needed to really socialize; life was getting boring here. So when I told the person she recommended CGP and told me about their trips and the fellowship I can have with other international students and not just international students but I get to meet a whole lot of people that I can mingle with and spend some time with. So, I decided to join them, but it was one Sunday that my friend introduced me to two of the leaders, Joseph, and Claire, they were right behind me, they sat behind me in church, so Joseph gave me his information card... that is how I came to join CGP. And my reason was fellowship with others,

get the chance to study the Bible, and also meet people yes, and break away from the routine life of going to school and not doing anything fun.

Sebastian's group attracted spouses and scholars who were generally older than many of the members of the CGP. The slogan for his group was "Faith, Values, Friendship", which placed the seriousness of Christian education at the forefront. Instead of family, friendship is offered, but for many young internationals the American concept of friendship at university is more superficial and temporary than they expect (Gareis, 2012). While the word friendship may have been pretense with these older attendees, Sebastian invited them to his home for meals and helped one attendee with getting her driver's license. He also had regular Bible study with a group of more English proficient internationals at his home and put up flyers - which included a photograph of young Asian children feeding his chickens - at local international grocery market, extending the invitation to visit his farm to international families in the area. Sebastian's wife sometimes co-taught ESL classes and co-led Bible studies with him and he acknowledged that without her help, the form of witnessing that he did would not have been possible.

In addressing research question two I have shown that within these groups the word international carries the meaning of guest and English language learner. What this means is that Bible study leaders design and manage Bible study for internationals as an introduction to the Bible. In addition, the constellation of other assemblages, of which Bible study is a part, serves to instill a sense of Christian health and happiness in internationals who may or may not be Christian.

Research Question 3

How do group leaders and attendees make sense (or not) of ESL group Bible study and related activities (why these bodies without organs?) and what new arrangements and relations do these beliefs make possible (what becomings)?

One of the most important interpretations to emerge from my data is that Bible study for internationals was what Bible study leaders viewed as necessary remediation before the Bible could be properly interpreted and recontextualized to deal with raising a family, personal problems, and societal issues such as racism, poverty, sexism, and injustice. Bible study groups existed to grow and instill faith, and the authenticity of faith is important to Christians, therefore, it needs to be performed through emplacement in Christian relations and literacy events (Bielo, 2009). In other words, Christians need to talk about the authority and sufficiency of scripture for other Christians to know that they are genuine. For the Bible study leaders in my study, Bible study that furthers Bible literacy is a dialectical process. That is, attendees must be able to ask meaningful questions and comprehend answers that contain important Christian concepts. There was also an intent in group Bible study of universalizing and absolutizing a true conscience (Maybee, 2020). This missionizing was not to be limited to attendees either, but through them to reach the millions of people worldwide who have no Christians among their friends and family. Bible study leaders described this as giving the opportunity for growing faith and conversion. The intended outcome was defined by Sebastian as having “Jesus change your heart supernaturally and give you new desires, new affections, new motivations.”

Bible study exists outside literary genres, critical approaches, and periods of secular literacy (Bielo, 2009). A Bible literate adult who is Christian is expected to be able to integrate the textual ideology of the Bible study group and the Bible study leader's interpretations in ways that recontextualize, employing familiar and every-day symbols and narratives (Bielo, 2009). In other words, Bible literacy means not only knowing the most important people, places, and events of the Bible, but performing Christian dialogue which includes contributing scripture and thought to discussion of the Bible as an "ongoing model and guide for individual and collective living" (Bielo, 2007, p. 8). While the point of group Bible study is not always or primarily to arrive at resolution, it is meant to sustain particular rhetoric and forms of imagination. Thus, the abstract machine keeps dialogue mostly within the bounded micro/macro political environment of the particular group/denomination (Bielo, 2007). So the groups I observed would almost certainly have been very different assemblages if instead of conservative Christian Bible study leaders they had been led by the lesbian and pro-choice minister of a progressive church I sometimes attended. Also, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue cannot be Bible study at least in the sense of evangelical Christianity, because the Bible study assemblage rests on taking particular historical-theological-moral visions seriously (Engelhardt, 2007). It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Claire and Joseph denied Sebastian's request to facilitate or lead Bible study within the CGP. This dissertation does not attempt to delve into the particulars of their denominational differences.

Ideas of good Bible study.

In order to understand what was and was not possible in Bible study for internationals, I asked Claire, Sebastian, and Rebekah to describe what good Bible study looks and feels like, clarifying that whatever this meant to them, it did not have to include the group Bible study they did on campus. Excerpts from the interviews follow:

Claire: I think for me the thing that I call success is if I can see a person's life changing, being transformed, so at the end of a lesson I am not so concerned that they have all the facts or all the ducks in a row but what principle can you take from this lesson that you can apply in your life that is going to make a difference. And if they can say something, like for example on Saturday night our Bible study gets into small groups and then we come back together, they share something that has impacted them, and I remember so many of them saying I really saw that God's timing is different from ours, his timing is perfect and I want it now and I am unwilling to wait. But to trust him, so to me you can grab a hold of that. God's timing is perfect, that's pretty significant.

Sebastian: With the ones that I've led, if the lightbulbs came on. There it is. This is what I've been trying to figure out. Or they'll start asking questions, from what I'm reading here I should be doing such and such. So if there is some new understanding, that I think is a good part of the Bible study. I would say that the Bible studies I have participated in, either some new understanding that I haven't thought about before or some spiritual transformation or something finally

clicked, and I understood that ah-ha, okay. I'm not going to be the same as a result of reading this and studying this and thinking about this and somebody's comment. I would say that most church services I go to it's just kind of therapy, hearing things I've heard before, thinking about them again, pondering back on my life, thinking about how God has led me, that kind of thing. A reflective, meditative kind of thing. But occasionally there is a Bible study moment when you hear something and you think, "I've never heard that before. That is a good way to think about this. That's some missing pieces in the puzzle or some strands to the spiderweb, I can now fill in that I didn't have filled in before or something like that."

Rebekah: To me group Bible study is fun, because when I read the Bible on my own, there are times when I don't really spend time to ponder about what I have read or to really reflect on what I have read. When I am reading the Bible on my own, I tend to just read it for reading sake. But with group Bible study you have a leader who can come up with some questions that help you think about the passages you have read. And also, there are times when I don't understand certain things in the Bible, but once a question is asked you get someone there, someone in the group who understands more than me and can sometimes share the idea. And yeah, that way I learn more than when I am studying the Bible on my own...To me a good Bible study is one that people get to share what they know about the Bible and even before we come to the Bible study to me a good Bible study is one where we all have an idea of what we are going to discuss, so I

prepare, you prepare on the topic we are going to discuss so that it is not just based on our own opinion, just what we think, but we have researched, you know when we research we get more ideas, we get new ideas, we get authentic ideas to really share. And to me that is a good Bible study. And because it is a group study I don't expect only one person to just be talking. We should all contribute, no matter how stupid we think it is, you come up with something that we can all learn from. So I love it when people contribute, it's not just one side, you have a group of people, let's say two or three who are just contributing and the rest are just listening. I don't see that to be a group study. I would love to always learn from others, so I mean if I get to learn something new I love it that way. To me I prefer to come to a group where I've learned something new. At the end of the day, I know this is what I have learned and this is what I am taking home, I don't want it to be the same old thing that I have heard over and over and over again. I don't like it.

Claire and Sebastian used similar language when talking about ideal outcomes of Bible Study assemblages, these terms include *life changing*, *transformational*, *making the light bulb come on*, helping people *come to a new understanding*, and *causing things to finally click*. Claire gave the example of her Saturday evening home Bible study in which she said attendees were able to grab hold of the concept of feeling happy and spiritually enriched purely through scripture and faith. What is being implied here is that wealth possession and material success play a non-essential role in one's overall happiness. For Sebastian, going to church was a "kind of therapy" or a "reflective, meditative" process,

whereas the more traditional Bible study made the kinds of connections that could result in a person walking out internally changed. Therefore, what they believed possible within the process of traditional Bible study is for attendees to encounter bodies and ideas that push them to deterritorialize their secular or non-Christian subjectivities and reterritorialize an authentically Christian one.

Rebekah admitted that reading the Bible on her own was sometimes ritualistic. She expressed that there are limits to motivation and understanding when a body and text interact on their own. Thus she wanted to share the BwO of the group to help make the connections she might otherwise miss with her own study. Rebekah did not appear to be looking for the same kinds of ah-ha moments as Claire and Sebastian. Instead, she focused on the process of the assemblage, wanting her fellow attendees to have and to share informed and prepared perspectives, which she referred to as “authentic ideas”. In some Bible study groups, people take turns acting in the role of leader, which means that all attendees have responsibility and investment in how scripture is taught and learned (Bielo, 2009). It is not at all clear that she was looking to lead Bible study sessions herself, but for Rebekah, Bible study was “fun” when there was distributed “contributing” from attendees who had first done their “research”. What she meant by “research”, as shown below, was using Bible textbooks or study guides, content she had experienced studying inside her Ghanaian Bible study groups. Like Sebastian, Rebekah said she did not get the growth she desired from sermonizing, “the same old thing” she has heard before. She contended that even if the concepts attendees came up with turned out to be “stupid” a good Bible study community immediately forgets people’s mistakes so there was no reason not to share.

Christian sense of campus Bible study.

Having an idea of what Christians might consider deterritorialization or a line of flight, I then asked Claire, Sebastian, and Rebekah to talk about how close Bible study for internationals on campus came to their experiences of good Bible study. Excerpts of the interviews follow:

Claire: Oh my goodness. It's so far away. It just is. I think because there is just mixed abilities. So, I struggle with that. Trying to figure out in a group study I'm not sure who is getting what. There's people who are more advanced and so I don't know, sometimes I feel like I am just constantly messing up. (laughs) Yeah, it's not close to being perfect Bible study.

Sebastian: So, its Bible literacy. I'm trying to introduce them to the stories of the Bible. The ones they might hear again at some point. If it's a Bible study I'll often use Sermon on the Mount, Jesus's teachings in Matthew 5:67, and we just go through that. Generally a lot of questions are raised as we study that and we have quite a bit of discussion about a short section. I find with these Bible literacy students that I have here that they don't know enough English to be able to converse very well so we just stick to the stories and teach them the stories and that's the extent of it. But when they know English quite a bit better we can actually have a conversation and they ask good questions. So, with Sermon on the Mount, that's sometimes referred to as the constitution of the Kingdom of God

and I introduce it that way. Here's how God wants us to live in this era. We study that and there's often a lot of interest in that.

Rebekah: The first thing I need is being aware of what we are going to discuss. So, back at home we have a structured Bible study lesson where we all have the book, the teachers have the teacher's manual, and the students have their own copy of the various topics that are going to be discussed for the year, or maybe the first portion and the second portion, so it is that structured. So I know that this week, this is what we are going to talk about, and even if you don't complete it, maybe the following week everything is going to lead to this and that and that. So, that is a difference, that is what I don't see here, if I miss let's say this week I won't know what was discussed, I wouldn't know what will be discussed with the Bible studies, probably I will have an idea, But if I am to miss a Bible study today the likelihood that I wouldn't know what will be discussed is very high, unlike back home where I had the book I know this is week 12 and I know what we are supposed to be studying, I know that this is what we are going to talk about. Even if I miss it I have the book and I can go back to it on my own to read and know about, I'll miss what the others shared, the ideas that the others talked about but I will still know about the lesson. Unlike here, when I miss I will only get the chance to learn what the lesson was at the beginning of a new class when the leader asks "what did we learn last week?"...I think back at home it is more structured, we had a textbook, whereas here we don't have the textbook, or a Bible study guide.

For Claire, Bible study for internationals was more of an intermediate level language class than she would like and she did not always feel competent to handle the “mixed abilities” she regularly encountered. Sebastian used the term “Bible literacy” to define what he did, which is meant to mostly scrub away the morality and leave the stories “they might hear again at some point”. As has already been shown, his Bible literacy lessons actually included quite a lot of moralizing. Nevertheless, he described the Bible study he does with internationals at his home, which at another point in the interview he calls “traditional Bible study,” to be about delving into the moral codes meant to be applied to living in a modern spiritually broken world. As both Bible study leaders describe it, the principal holding together traditional Bible study is growing faith. This means making informed decisions, which requires practices of attendees asking meaningful questions and comprehending meaningful answers. They found this kind of capacity to be largely beyond the communicative proficiencies of many attendees of Bible study for internationals on campus.

For Rebekah, Bible study for internationals on campus did not have the structure, accountability, and predictability that she was used to, and this mattered because she wanted the dialogue to be responsible to the text, or as she described it, moving “beyond mere opinion”. Similarly, Deleuze defined philosophical concepts as ideas that stop “thought being a mere opinion, a view, an exchange of views, gossip” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 136). According to Rebekah, working from Bible textbooks or Bible study guides puts adults in the position of knowing precisely what to study each session. This means that they are expected to do homework which would create a very different assemblage, but as Claire told me in an interview, she had long ago given up trying to get busy graduate

students and scholars to do Bible review outside of group study. However, what Rebekah is referring to as “research” may be more genuinely thought provoking than Claire’s past attempts to get them to fill out worksheets and write summaries.

Hannah’s sense of campus Bible study.

I now move to Hannah who walked into Bible study as a novice. I found her perspective interesting because apart from participating in a student group that was really a Buddhist cult, I have also never done group study of spiritual texts. In an interview, Hannah said that with attending Bible study: “My primary target is to improve my everyday English. So, I was more interested in the conversation session. But I think the Bible stories are also interesting, and I wanted to learn more, just to know more.” What is meant by “conversation sessions” are the ESL classes that Sebastian taught before the Bible Literacy meetings. Hannah had researched other options available to international scholars. Hannah: “I saw that there are many Bible study groups in town, and the teachers are very nice, and passionate to tell us about the Bible stories. But it is hard to find the everyday English study group, or technical English study group.” What this suggests is that if Hannah had a choice, she probably would have gone for academic language over Bible content. But she related that she very much preferred learning English through reading stories, which she had been doing from middle school. In Sebastian’s Bible study, she particularly enjoyed stories about “how the God created the world and the human beings.” Hannah said that she also enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the Christian imagination from Christian believers, which included her fellow Chinese

attendees. An example of this is found in Vignette 3, when she initiated a group conversation about Christian belief in supernatural compulsion. During this discussion, the Chinese woman sitting next to Hannah shared her personal experience with obeying what she understood to be God's will that she end a vacation and return to her home country. This kind of dialogue would probably not be as openly and casually conducted on a secular university campus in China. Potentially, through Bible study for internationals, Hannah was becoming an advocate for more religious freedom in China, but she also saw a need to protect the young from religious dogma, as is shown in the interview excerpt that follows:

Hannah: I think the stories of the Bible are interesting, and verses, most of the verses are useful for the common people. But I have a concern that if a child accepts the Bible in his young age, I am wondering whether it will be difficult for him or her to study science. Or to accept the rules of the science, of physics, biology or chemistry or something. It's just the one question about that.

Interviewer: That's a very good question. So, in your case, you would prefer that your daughter, if she were to study the Bible, that she would wait until she is an adult and had a background in science before?

Hannah: Yes. For adults, they can tell what is the real world, the science technologies or theories from what are the spirit level things. But for children, they cannot.

Here Hanna expressed that what Bible study can and ought to provide are interesting stories and spiritual guidance for adults to feel better. But as soon as the Bible is taken as a serious alternative to the abstract machine of sciences, it crosses the line to propagating socially dangerous superstition. I observed both Claire and Sebastian express Christianity as a “rational religion” during Bible studies, and they made claims that there is archeological evidence for the story of the Tower of Babel which explains all of the world’s races and languages as being instantly created by a punitive God. I also observed CGP events in which university faculty came to talk “specifically to atheists” using rhetoric meant to make Christian faith sound scientific. For example one professor from the Engineering department gave a 40 minute PowerPoint lecture on how creationist geology shows humans and dinosaurs coexisted and how creationist evolution accounts for differentiation of species. I gave up trying to understand his argument after about ten minutes.

Grace and Joseph’s sense of Bible study.

To give a more complete perspective of Bible study for internationals I include reflections from Grace and Joseph, although their groups are not the focus of this dissertation. Grace led Bible studies in China, where she taught English, before joining the CGP. Her groups in this college town consisted mostly of visiting scholars and the wives of international students and visiting scholars, so fluency was generally not as high as with Claire’s group. In an interview she described groups in China and this university

community as having two very different discourses which she attributed to her altered socio-political positioning and attendees' different motivations for being there.

In China, we were actual professors...Basically unless people asked us about what we believe or what we know or believe to be true we couldn't talk about it. A lot of them are just curious in general, so they want to know about the Bible in terms of American culture...Maybe in China, if somebody asked they were more serious about it because there were not that many opportunities so the people who actually came were very curious and would ask us whereas here it more "oh it's just another English opportunity" oftentimes...I guess we had more serious questions in China than here...Life and death, purpose of life, how do you make decisions...Here it's more about learning culture and what is in the Bible.

As Grace described it, Bible study in China, which usually happened in homes and was often one-on-one, was close to how Claire and Sebastian described the more traditional Bible study that occurred in their own homes. For Grace, serious Bible study involved attendees asking serious questions about Christian perspectives on the after-life and the role faith plays in decision making. By contrast, her sense of the Bible study she usually did in the U.S. was one of attendees generally considering it as "just another English opportunity". But later in the same interview she separated international students and scholars from international spouses. Grace: "What makes our classes different than other classes is that we teach practical life applications like how to order, how to go to the bank, but we also offer the more spiritual or faith-based lessons they're not getting in secular university classes that they might be interested in." She went on to express the

relationality that Bible study leaders try to create as definitive of Bible study for internationals.

Also, I know that teachers always love their students, but I feel that there is a genuine love and concern for them outside the classroom as well. That's why we do want them to have community and friendship and to adjust well in the U.S. We do want them to find faith, and peace and love in Jesus, but I also want them to enjoy their time here and to not feel like an outsider and to have good memories. So we take them on trips and do stuff to help them experience more of American culture more than just the Bible stuff. And we always advertise that it is a Bible class, we are not deceiving people.

Here Grace refers to herself and other CGP Bible study leaders as teachers and she describes the "genuine love and concern" that they have as being more nurturing of the psychological state and spiritual worldview than what secular teaching can or should provide. She also expressed that helping internationals to build survival literacy and have "good memories" of their life in America through trips, community, and friendship was not a deceptive ploy to lure atheists and non-Christians to the "Bible stuff". In interviews, all the Bible study leaders said that they wanted to form friendships with atheist and non-Christian internationals and that they saw witnessing as a slow process with no guarantees. However, they also believed that Christianity is the only route to salvation and that scripture provides ways of coexisting, feeling and perceiving that atheist and non-Christian structures of thought do not.

Grace related how her own experience as a foreigner in China strengthened her faith and gave her an understanding of the potentiality that comes with being in a state of vulnerability.

I think that came mostly out of realizing that being out of my normal comfort zone that there was this feeling in the U.S. that I am a good person if I can earn my way to heaven or to earn God's utter respect, but when you're out of your normal situation you realize that oh I'm like a child in a big sense, like right now I can't even feed myself, I can't understand what is going on around me, I need to realize that I am not this powerful human individual that can do everything. I am in need and God provides peace and understanding which I can produce in myself...Here students are feeling the same thing, out of their comfort zone and it's nice to know that it's okay not to have it all together.

I am agnostic as to whether Bible organizations like the CGP represent a genuine desire to witness or a cynical attempt to take advantage of people who might be lonely and depressed. There is nothing magically mind-altering about friendly conversations, and atheist and non-Christian internationals took advantage of the free English lessons and friendship offered by Bible study leaders without converting. In Grace's own experience of vulnerability as an expatriate in China, it is clear that the desire was already there to become more religious. She was raised under a Christian abstract machine so being a stranger in a strange land was just the impetus she needed, but it could have gone the other way. In chapter 5, I argue that there is a big difference between the work of very nice Bible study leaders who are passionate about sharing Bible stories and the agendas

of the conservative American evangelical Christian abstract machine forming student religious groups at college and university campuses.

In an interview Joseph expressed somewhat paternalistic presumptions about internationals, as shown in the excerpt that follows:

For internationals, they are very much performance oriented. If they are at the top of the top of the top of the class, they get bumped up in middle school and high school and college and on. So, they don't even get to choose their degree; their parents often choose the best degree and then they are pushed and pushed and pushed. So it is very hard for them to not look at the external to the point where at times they don't get proper sleep, they can't find any rest or stress relievers because they have no time to relieve stress and it's not a priority. So they just push the body some more, so people can get into an out-of-whack mode of thinking about what is life and what is their purpose which is academics, academics, academics...I know that balance is necessary in life, so in some ways what we are doing is supplementing their lifestyle while we are also bringing in something that's meaningful. And part of it is play or just taking a break or making friends and looking at people in the eye and talking. Part of the problem is that all of that is really about relationship building rather than the academic ability. Relationship is in my mind the dynamic uniqueness of humanity.

Here Joseph viewed internationals as out of balance because of their socio-cultural backgrounds and lack of communal-based coping strategies. What he seemed to mean by balance is making more room for religion or spirituality and relations with other religious

or spiritually-minded folks and less room for anxiety, depression, materialism, hedonism and secularism.

Within the CGP, the potentially harmful stress relievers of alcohol, casual sex, and drugs have been replaced with wholesome activities -e.g., sports and board games- and the fellowship found in “looking at people in the eye and talking”. Joseph seemed to understand that the ideals of meritocratic global competition push the limits of how much study and isolation a body can bear (the BwO), but failed to acknowledge that many internationals find balance, whatever that might mean, talking to friends and family online and turning to networks of people from their own countries.

Limits of God talk.

While distancing mechanisms such as sober Friday and Saturday night events create situations that some international graduate students and scholars desire, the CGP did not provide opportunities to acquire U.S. corporate-popular culture capital often essential for forming friendships among domestic students (Best & Lunch, 2006). Something my daughter quickly figured out when she entered American middle school after spending the first 12 years of her life in South Korea was that if she did not watch South Park and learn the lyrics to some popular songs and read certain young adult novels, she would have no shared ground for dialogue with other girls, domestic and international, because they had absolutely no interest in Korea.

The CGP and Sebastian’s group were among the few social bodies with the time and patience for forming relations with less-than-proficient English users so it makes

sense for internationals to take advantage of the situation. It is also to be expected that among international participants, some come from conservative Christian backgrounds already, some are merely curious, and some are taking advantage of the resources offered while internally being unsympathetic or even antagonistic toward the Christian imagination. On the other hand, social bodies like the CGP and Sebastian's group habituate people to bring up Jesus and scripture in conversation, invite atheist and non-Christian friends to church, and put normative blinders on when it comes to non-binary gender roles, contraceptive use, and LGBTQ relations and love. This has the potential of creating a conservative cult-like mentality, or at least it puts more strain on interactions in the secularizing world than there needs to be. Scripture-based communication and meaning has little generalizability across milieux, yet all of the Bible study leaders expressed that conservative American Christianity was a good enough lens to understand American culture. For example, the CGP organized trips to the Bible museum in D.C. and the Ark Encounter museum in Kentucky, and arranged stays with Christian families. Also, in Vignette 3 Sebastian warmed up the session by teaching common idioms with Biblical origins⁵. Bible study leaders, then, were invested in portraying conservative American evangelical Christianity as still relevant. But the trend among young Americans is unquestionably that of becoming less religious and more progressive (at least on some issues) (Inglehart, 2021). Additionally, those holding on to creationist and fundamentalist beliefs are not representative of the diversity of Christians in America. At

⁵ I have spent almost my entire life understanding and using idioms while being largely ignorant of and unconcerned with their etymology, but some people do find this information interesting.

the end of the day, the Bible study leaders were out of their depth when it came to the social milieu of American atheists, non-Christians, and even progressive Christians. Therefore, with research question four in the next chapter I take up what Bible study leaders knew best, which is instructing attendees in what to add to their repertoire to be good Bible study participants.

In striving to find a middle ground between taking language study and Bible study seriously, Bible study for internationals does not fully realize the desires of Bible study leaders and some attendees. There are expectations of what is possible through guided reading and discussion of the Bible, and there is hope, among Bible study leaders at least, that Bible study for internationals can be a remediation toward that potentiality. The constellation of assemblages that includes Bible study for internationals portrays Christian relations as the only healthy relations. They are not. It also portrays America as a conservative evangelical Christian country. It is not.

Chapter 5

Analysis of Research Question 4, Discussion, and Conclusion

As stated in Chapter 2, part of my purpose in this dissertation is to experiment with integrating the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of assemblage and the concept of (trans)linguaging (spatial) repertoires. I interpret Bible studies as spatial assemblage through research question 4 below. Therefore, I begin this chapter by locating material and expressive elements integral to communication and meaning within Bible study for internationals. To do this, I re-examine the vignettes from chapter 4 and draw from additional observation and interview data. I then return to Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of time and the assemblage to bring about a more geopolitical understanding of what is happening with group Bible study for internationals. After that, I discuss implications of this research for adult ESL and foreign language literacy education and for left activism. Key points are summarized in the conclusion. Finally, limitations of this research and suggestions for future research are given.

An assemblage can connect internal semiotic resources and artifacts with external networks of other assemblages. Competence in language is distributed or facilitated by these networks of assemblages which operate at both local and distant scales of space and immediate and relatively long-term scales of time (Canagarajah, 2018a). But competence within one assemblage, say using computer programs and collaboration to write academic papers, does not necessarily transfer across milieu, say to chatting with someone at a dinner party. People are automatically included into some assemblages, such as a school classroom which connects them to larger education networks which in turn includes them

into the economy, but also emplace themselves in assemblages such as Bible study groups strategically and temporarily. Assemblages instruct and socialize (Duranti et al., 2014) people in what they ought to add to a personal repertoire -e.g., the acceptable forms of speech, posture, gaze, gestures, dress, and objects- for producing intended effects/affects (Rymes, 2014). Thus I arrive at my last research question.

Research Question 4

What spatial repertoires are at work within Bible study for internationals?

I will now explain how I have come to think about the process of adding to a spatial repertoire through reflecting on a personal experience of my own. When I lived in South Korea, I used to ride city buses a lot. I would usually stand and hold on to the handle so that elderly people, pregnant mothers, and parents with young children could take the seats because that is what you do. I arrived knowing no Korean and practically nothing about Korean culture, so I was surprised the first couple of times an elderly person grabbed my shopping bag or backpack from my hand and put it on her or his lap. It became apparent that this was normative behavior, part of reciprocal relations inside a Korean bus assemblage where having shopping bags and students' backpacks in an aisle already crowded with bodies was inconvenient, especially for the elderly folks who depended on public transportation. Some expatriates with different body shapes and anxieties from mine would only take taxis because they decided that they could not deal with being jostled around and having people grab their stuff. For me, updating my repertoire with ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving in relation to my personal space

and items made riding city buses less stressful, and it made me feel like I was being treated like a Korean, occasionally it even earned me smiles from elderly Koreans. That said, there was nothing to stop me from riding the bus with a different attitude. I might have treated it like I was riding a New York subway, by keeping a death grip on my stuff and hating every foreign smelling body close to me, and still got to where I wanted to go. In this way I would have benefited from the assemblage while only minimally including myself into it. While I was never emotionally invested in being a bus rider and the choice to ride the bus said very little about my values at the time, I did want to disappear into the crowd as much as a white man in Korea could. For this reason, a lot of the repertoire building I did as an expatriate was about performing flexibility and stoicism. Mostly, what this meant was trying avoid being annoying to Koreans. But I was also privileged in that I was able to get by with basic Korean; I did not need Korean vocabulary and grammar integral to a specialized field or job. By contrast, many international scholars on J1 visas at American universities have language to conduct research but may have far less developed basic interpersonal communication skills (Canagarajah, 2017).

A repertoire can only be evaluated within a particular assemblage; it is only as good as it is fast and accurate enough for a given mode and problem. One time my repertoire was (barely) good enough was on a particularly crowded bus when an elderly bus rider did not offer to take my shopping bag but I wanted to put it down in the space which looked just big enough for it on the seat beside her. I did not know how to ask her in formal polite Korean for this, so I lifted my bag, smiled, bowed slightly, and said **할머니 미안 해요 그곳에 주세요** (Grandmother, I am sorry. There, please). She did not smile and was probably annoyed but she did take my bag and put it in the desired

location because she understood the social expectations even if this 외국인 (foreigner) spoke like a four-year-old.

Korean city bus assemblages were low-stakes situations for me. My mistakes did not carry significant or long-term consequences, so I was able to draw broadly or rhizomatically from my repertoire. Highly formal and accurate language that matters in justifying and legitimating capital such as transcripts, diplomas, and degrees draws from a relatively narrow or arborescent skill-set possessed mostly by people from middle/upper class families, although academic discourse is also successfully resisted and transformed (Michael-Luna & Canagarajah, 2008). Sometimes. Moreover, this is not to say that rhizomatic is necessarily preferable to arborescent, some people may find writing an academic article to be less stressful than trying to make friends in another language and culture because they have more time and control over the assemblage -e.g., they can define aspects such as space, resources, and collaboration (Canagarajah, 2018a). While Bible studies for internationals are nowhere close to as formal as university foreign language and literature courses which are defined by testing, grades, and images of potential graduate students majoring in their programs, Bible study leaders do have a stake in preparing less-than-proficient English users for traditional Bible studies at their homes because they believe faith is genuinely cultivated and nurtured through traditional Bible study not the more remedial Bible study for internationals.

As stated in chapter 4, the Christian abstract machine dictates that the dialogue that is supposed to happen within traditional Bible study involves more equal participation between the Bible study leader and attendees. This necessitates attendees comprehending the Bible and the ongoing dialogue well enough and generating questions

and expressing their own ideas quickly and accurately enough so that there is a flow in which occasional performances of what some Christians consider to be transformative learning occur. Bible studies for internationals that I observed, then, were meant to take an international like Hannah, a B2 independent English user (Council of Europe, 2020) with very little Bible literacy, to the point of being able to participate in more traditional Bible studies that include internationals like Rebekah, a C1 proficient English user and certainly far more Bible literate than myself. The campus Bible studies I observed and the home Bible studies did not necessarily prepare attendees for Bible study with majority native English speakers. Based on websites, rather it seems that the intent of evangelical Christian groups working with internationals was more to nurture desire to do friendly evangelical Christian witnessing to their families, friends, and colleagues in their native languages back in their own countries. But importantly, the Bible-based dialogue that happened inside their homes was denominational, which meant that it needed to be close enough to fluent speaker Bible study that it would be immediately recognizable to any Christians of the same denomination as Christian teaching and socialization within that denomination. Thus, the main question for these groups was this: How to include internationals into traditional Bible study without it becoming a different assemblage entirely? Bible studies on campus were an intervention with the end goal of good-enough Bible study. To achieve this, they provided sustained instruction on communication and meaning according to Christian abstract machines. Doubtlessly there was denominational variation that impacted Bible studies, but that kind of analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation. My task in this section is to describe work of repertoire building that took place within two assemblages of Bible study for internationals, and aspects of Hannah's

and Rebekah's repertoires which were part of this process or were integral their purposes within Bible study but formed elsewhere.

What makes group Bible study an assemblage is that Christians do not leave the eternal salvation of millions to just any social formation; there is a denominational path that is guaranteed to avoid Hell and put one close to Jesus and that can only be followed by a close denominational reading of scripture. This means that for Bible study leaders, the text cannot be anything attendees want it to be as long as it works, but rather, the flow of belief must stifle the flow of desire. Even in the case of friendly opportunities to learn about Christianity while acquiring English, there was instruction in more arborescent Christian expression, by which I mean that they were invested in attendees learning the "right" version of Christianity.

The linguistic norms of Bible study are bendable, but only so far (Bielo, 2009), and as a result the communicative practices of campus and home Bible studies often did not reflect the (trans)linguaging norms of B1 and B2 independent language users (Wei, 2017). Vocabulary was the most obvious example. As has already been shown in Chapter 4, a lot of the words and phrases that Bible study leaders called attention to, such as *girded loins* in Vignette 1, were low-frequency outside of Bible study but important to their takeaways. In another instance, Claire corrected an attendee who substituted disciplines for disciples when reading aloud. Since she decided to ignore a number of other miscues – words that were not specific to the Christian message - this shows the importance she placed on Christian vocabulary being accurately expressed from the start. Below I describe more of the verbal and non-verbal elements of Bible study and (trans)linguaging repertoires I observed.

Becoming Responsible to the Text

Group Bible study is not exegetical study, which is done by Bible scholars, but expository teaching, a way of packaging Bible facts into an easy-to-follow and socially enjoyable form as well as including people into Christian communities (Bielo, 2009). Within some Bible study groups, dialogue may allow members to contest the application of scripture -e.g., there may be a conversation about whether God wants humans to live under democratic governance. But a group that reads a secular text as more relevant and authoritative than the Bible would be a different assemblage from the assemblages I observed. Thus, it is the Bible study leader's job to effectively communicate her or his interpretation of the authority and relevance of scripture for any aspect of life (Bielo, 2009).

For Bible study leaders and some attendees, the answer to misunderstandings or breakdowns in communication was to return to the text. The first objective of Bible study was making attendees more and more responsible to Biblical text. This means deterritorializing ordinary habits of reading for pleasure and general information, and reterritorializing Bible study habits of focused study for application and context (Bielo, 2009). For example, during one observation Claire was reviewing what was discussed the previous week and asked the group to list three things that God said to Moses. When nobody was able to answer she asked them to silently read the relevant passage of Genesis. In response, one of the attendees let out a loud sigh and asked Claire to just give them the answer. It should be noted that this was the only time I observed an attendee perform frustration or anxiety during Bible study. Claire, who seemed a little surprised by

the manner of expression, responded: "I know it's Friday and you are really tired. Wait, wait until they have finished reading and then we will go on." The complaining attendee then dutifully looked down at her Bible performed reading. What this situation shows is that Claire was determined to inculcate a particular practice of silently re-reading, which also involved slowing down and being careful and engaged.

Signaling

Non-verbal signaling was habituated in Bible study. One example is from Vignette 1:

Claire: "What was God trying to do with these natural disasters? Why does he do these horrible things?"

Rebekah, you're shaking your head." Rebekah: "He wants the Egyptians to turn to him."

Claire: "One thing is he wanted the Israelites to be free. The other thing is that he wanted the Egyptians to turn to him."

Whether it was intentional, Rebekah's body language signaled to Claire that she was invested in participating in that part of the dialogue. I observed attendees who were new to Claire's group raise their hands to indicate that they wanted to ask or respond to a question. But for those who had long-standing membership, a smile coupled with a shake or nod of the head was the cue to Claire and others that they had something to say. Further, I observed all the Bible study attendees smiling and Bible study leaders performed even greater joyfulness when giving their takeaways or talking about applications of Bible morality. This, in agreement with Wilkins (2008), shows that

performing happiness is an integral way believers in these joyful and friendly university evangelical student groups expressed their strong faith. Some attendees were not believers, and some were from less joyful denominations, but it would seem that they learned to communicate within practices codified by joyful believers. Body language was also used by Claire to elicit more spoken output, as shown in Vignette 1 when she steeped her fingers in front of her mouth, sealing it shut, and leaned forward while making eye-contact. In this way she communicated that she valued what the speaker was saying. She was also instructing the group that it was proper to listen when someone was sharing ideas about the Bible and to take a chance at speaking because this was a space of forgiveness for strained interactions. In this way, Claire and Rebekah were working to bring Bible study for internationals closer to their ideal images of what it should be.

Getting there Eventually

Interviews revealed that Claire, Grace, Joseph, and Sebastian accepted that the repertoires of less-than-proficient English users may be quick and accurate enough for communication in many contexts, but not for performing introjection of Christian belief and identification as Christians (Ryan et al., 1993). In other words, some international participants may not be able ask and answer questions during sessions. This created a confounding situation for them since dialogue was the only means Bible study leaders had to assess whether any of their more literalist interpretations were sticking. Claire, who had decades of experience working with English language learners, related that she still felt some ambivalence about her instruction with the lowest-proficiency attendees in

her groups. Sebastian, who had started working with English language learners less than a year before this study, was invested in an assemblage where communication and meaning needed to be negotiated even more than with Claire's group. It is possible to get a feel for what is involved in a Bible study leader moving beyond former limits of tolerance for ambiguity with the excerpt of Sebastian's interview that follows:

Language is definitely a challenge. Probably for the first six months I found when I would talk with someone who didn't know English very well I found myself tensing up and trying to listen and really get this, and by the time I was done, feeling really worn out, just listening. Anymore, it's like we have all day, we'll get there eventually, so I'll keep asking until I understand, and I don't think I tense up that much anymore, it's just all part of it. I find that other people who have not had interactions with internationals try interacting with internationals for the first time probably the first couple of times they find it terribly frustrating and they're not sure they ever want to do this again. (laughs)

Here Sebastian described an initial period of being "worn out" by trying to quickly get at explicit expression of ideas, memories, and requests, It took him 6 months to deterritorialize these habits and reterritorialize a sense that "we have all day, we'll get there eventually". Sebastian believed that he had differentiated himself from other Bible study leaders and attendees who had not spent significant time trying to communicate with English learners. This is one way of describing Sebastian's process of becoming a Bible literacy teacher working with internationals. It also again shows just how differently the repertoires worked between more traditional Bible study and his Bible literacy class.

L1 Interactions

Sebastian's attendees were more likely than Claire's to talk to each other in their home language. This is to be expected since they all shared Mandarin in common and the focus of his instruction was on making the stories comprehensible rather than eliciting spoken production. Sebastian encouraged the use of Mandarin but he was not always confident that attendees could/would indicate when there was a lack of comprehension. In one instance I observed him asked Hannah and another attendee who had been conversing for close to a minute in Mandarin if they had a question. Hannah smiled and said, "The question is too many questions." Neither woman appeared frustrated, and Hannah told me in an interview that it was not the grammar and vocabulary from the NIV Bible that she found challenging but keeping track of names of places and people and how they all related. The attendee she had been speaking to during the session was a Christian believer who had more Biblical knowledge, but less English fluency than her. Sebastian's attendees also used the take-home handouts to write notes in Mandarin and often looked at each other's papers to see if they had missed anything.

Hannah's Repertoire

I have no means of assessing oral and aural proficiency of attendees other than through the observations and conversations I did during this research. As an experienced ESL/EFL teacher I estimate that the visiting scholars and international spouses that made up Sebastian's group were B1 and B2 independent English users. Hannah, a visiting scholar in computer science, was in the B2 range which meant that she could

communication on general topics without too much strain and was able to speak and presumably write about her field using professional vocabulary and some more advanced language structures. The grammar and vocabulary of a multilingual repertoire is not necessarily cumulative, and does not necessarily develop in a linear process from basic discourse to academic writing (Canagarajah, 2018a). In an interview, Hannah said she initially decided to try out Bible study because she saw it as an opportunity for more English conversation practice. Through Sebastian's Bible literacy class, Hannah's repertoire was broadened by adding some common Christian stories, embodied practices such as praying and reading together, and recognition of Christian witnessing, or to use her words, Christians being "nice" and "passionate to tell us about the Bible stories". Whether these components were generalizable to non-Christian dialogue is debatable. Chapter 4 showed that she also read pamphlets and devotional materials from Jehovah Witnesses (JW) outside of Sebastian's Bible study. In this way she practiced narrow reading, a language learning strategy through which linguistic redundancy that facilitates language acquisition is achieved by reading multiple texts from one author or multiple texts on one topic (Bryan, 2011). Hannah was unable to distinguish Christian or Christian adjacent denominations and it is quite possible that she would not have given the JW texts a second look when encountering the missionaries on campus if she had not already come to see herself as a Bible story reader through Sebastian's group. In an interview she describes the Bible stories and JW artifacts as tools to enhance her wisdom literacy. At the time of this study, Hannah was an atheist, a mother who believed in protecting her daughter from religious dogma, and a STEM professor with research and publishing responsibilities, therefore, it was unlikely that she sought out more Bible study when she

returned to China. But in interviews she revealed that she appreciated spirituality-based content and considered the Christian imagination no more or less valid and important than that of Daoism or Buddhism. While Hannah doubtlessly also added some new grammar and vocabulary from Bible study, in my view she represented the upper end of the continuum of attendees who effectively benefited from Sebastian's Bible study as a language learning assemblage. It was convenient but not the ideal fit given her priority of moving from a B2 to a C1 independent language user. She did not need the explicit instruction of basic vocabulary that Sebastian provided, and would have acquired more English from being exposed to more comprehensible language perhaps through reading multiple pages of the NIV Bible each session rather than just one or a more difficult version such as the NASB. She probably could have handled and benefitted from Clair's more output intensive Bible study as well but the addition of another B2 language user might have changed that assemblage.

Rebekah's Repertoire

I estimate that the English language proficiency in Claire's group, which was made up almost entirely of visiting scholars and PhD students, ranged from B2 independent to C1 proficient users. Rebekah was among the more outgoing and advanced language users, she also regularly read the Bible independently, and had done group Bible study in her home country of Ghana since childhood. The combination of these characteristics situated her outside of the population that Claire's Bible study for internationals was designed to help. For her part, Rebekah had limited expectations of

what the group might add to her repertoire, as she related in the interview excerpt that follows:

With this particular Bible study, I get to learn new words, yes, and even pronunciation of American words, because I come from a country where we speak British English, so some of the words do differ, how I pronounce the words, and because of my background, my accent and everything is different, when I say something and it's not the right pronunciation, or I do not understand it, my leader gets a chance to correct me. Or I get to learn new words. That's how come I like this particular Bible study.

Rebekah wanted more standard American pronunciation, or at least the pronunciation of university educated middle-class white north eastern Americans. In my observations and during our communications, Rebekah's pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation occasionally deviated far enough from standard variances of British and American pronunciation so that listeners had to do some work to comprehend. However, it would be unrealistic for her to set a goal of "the right pronunciation" if that meant eliminating any strain in regular interaction since adult language learners often never change fossilized inaccuracies even with regularly encountering more locally used forms (Han, 2013). More to the point, Rebekah revealed in an interview that she was very self-conscious about her accent and this anxiety had inhibited her socializing. This was not entirely true, however, Rebekah and I once sat and talked for 30 minutes after a CGP meal about her frustrations with the material resource problems of health care in Ghana and the impact of the toxic for-profit American health care system. Although it did not

come up in our interactions, I imagine Rebekah also recognized that having a strong accent was a potential obstacle for her professionally, since patients, nurses and doctors in anglophone health care contexts can be apprehensive about communicating with nurses who are non-native English speakers and Black or people of color (Likupe & Archibong, 2013). What those of us who are advocates of (trans)linguaging in teaching and learning should take from this is that the desires and anxieties of advanced language user professionals like Rebekah are often in conflict with a more fluid or borderless perspective of language and there is probably very little we can do at the conscious level to shift that.

Interestingly, outside of Bible study I observed Rebekah switch to African American Vernacular English when talking with another Bible study attendee from Ethiopia. The other woman did not respond with AAVE which may indicate that it was not part of her personal repertoire. What this shows is both the complexity of Rebekah's repertoire and her preference for speaking differently when communicating in English with other Black women. Rebekah expressed her anxiety about her accent and she was clearly reluctant to talk about the native idol worshipping religions of Ghana when Claire asked about them during a Bible study, suggesting that she had a degree of antagonism toward Claire's positioning of her international subjectivity, which I would argue is the only subjectivity she can ever have in the CGP. It is fair to speculate that if she had gone to a university with a larger Black student population, Rebekah might have included herself in a Bible study group with native-English speakers who mostly looked like her.

I have shown that (trans)linguaging and transnational assemblages sometimes take the form of conservative Christian moral subculture groups, but participation in the

CGP and similar organizations does not make the experiences and desires of Christian Ghanaian international students, Christian Chinese international students, Christian Korean international students, and Christian first/second generation immigrants the same. Further, Rebekah's presence in this dissertation research does not erase the diversity of experiences and desires among international and domestic Black university students (see for example Mwangi & Fries–Britt, 2015).

Thus I conclude that the spatial repertoires that define Bible study for internationals are both affective and material. By this I mean that what was being generated within the groups was Bible Knowledge and the sense that the Bible and Christian relations are worthwhile. Communication and meaning were negotiated through a combination of strategies, including gestures, the performance of joy, the occasional use of a L1, and the constant return to the text.

Scaling Up

(Trans)linguaging as inclusive pedagogical practice is social justice politics because it aims to remove the privilege and power of grammatical correctness and give emerging multilinguals the ability to shape social position/conditions within an academic context (Garcia et al., 2017). As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) point out:

Forming grammatically correct sentences is for the normal individual the prerequisite for any submission to social laws. No one is supposed to be ignorant of grammaticality; those who are belong in special institutions. The unity of language is fundamentally political. There is no mother tongue, only a power

takeover by a dominant language that at times advances along a broad front, and at times swoops down on diverse centers simultaneously. (p. 101)

While the work that (trans)linguaging research does to recognize and affirm emerging multilinguals who (trans)language and to respond to ethnolinguistic racism in higher education is important, this does not address larger structures of power that are normalized within (trans)linguaging and monolingual assemblages alike (Block, 2020). The Bible study groups I observed expressed messages that were anti-racist and pro-immigrant, and many others that were ultra-conservative. These discourses are evidence that the spatiotemporal scale of Bible study for internationals goes beyond the immediate Bible study groups (Canagarajah, 2018a); that is, there is a connection to conservative American evangelicalism and global capitalism. It is to arguments about the teaching of ultra-conservative theology, the role of student Christian organizations in the national and global conservative American evangelical Christian agenda, and the inevitable reckoning with secularism and plurality that groups face that I now turn.

Meritocracy

Bible study leaders may not have wanted a world of open borders, but they made it clear in Bible study sessions and conversations that they opposed ethnic and religious-based restrictions on movement enacted by any government, particularly the Trump regime visa restrictions. I observed Grace and Claire leading separate sessions in which they taught the story of Joseph as the fable of an immigrant-slave who became a wealthy and powerful elite. But in doing so, they emphasized his divine inspiration, diligence,

wisdom, and determination to work within existing structures. Here Christianity is expressed as pro-merit-based systems, which aligns with charismatic pro-capitalist self-improvement doctrine (Aschoff, 2015). I observed no teaching or discussion about whether God actually wants people to live under capitalism or neoliberal austerity policies, which suggests that the ideals of meritocratic global competition were generally taken as granted. Rather than taking a Liberation Theology perspective of social reform (Barger, 2018), the Bible study leaders expressed that scripture, Christian relations, and personal decisions were sufficient to endure neoliberalism.

Laying down the Law

Bible study leaders sometimes drew attention to parts of the Bible to justify and legitimate making law and order a religious concern. During a Bible study session on the Ten Commandments, Sebastian conflated scripture with existential security, as shown in the word-for-word excerpt from my observation:

Why do the people believe that if God speaks to them they will die? [He immediately answers his own question] This is a time when people are superstitious. Maybe you can look up the word. [He pauses to let attendees look up the word *superstitious*] God is not that kind of God. You do not have to fear him. He will not strike you down for making mistakes. These laws are good for a nation. What would happen in a society if you allowed murder? If we were stricter with our laws it would be safer. If you have to hide your wife behind a veil it means you fear that people could take her, that makes an unsafe community.

But I don't think a country should have these laws as their laws. Government should not enforce religious laws.

Here theocracy is expressed as being no safer than a secular state, as the allusion to fundamentalist Islamic countries is meant to show, and God-given laws are expressed as not being supernaturally enforced or even interpretable by secular courts. At the same time, it is argued that the Bible legitimates expansive policing and the prison industrial complex. What is also implied is that a more religious population, as opposed to State enforcement of religious laws, suppresses violence. It does not (Inglehart (2021)). From a critical perspective, Sebastian failed to acknowledge structural and systemic racism and classism in punitive legal systems (Wacquant, 2009).

In another example, Claire was leading a session on the Exodus and the creation of the theocratic state of Israel. She asked the group what promises God made to Abraham. Collectively they built a response of a healthy nation for his descendants. She then quickly asked and recast their responses in the word-for-word excerpt that follows:

What makes a nation? You must have your own territory. You need land. What else makes a nation? Citizens. What makes China a nation? Culture. What makes a culture? Religion. What else? A leader. What else? Laws. China is very unique because of its laws. The U.S. is unique because of its laws. You can do things in the U.S. that you can't do in China, and vice versa. They [the Israelites] don't have laws. God says, 'I'm going to shape you into a nation.' Part of that is 'I'm going to give you my laws.' Look back at page 312, verse number 3. [She has an attendee read the verse aloud]. God is going to shape the people, give them

culture and laws so they will be a model for the rest of the world. God wants to use them to shape the rest of the world.”

Here Claire’s use of the word “unique” erased structural discrimination, majority surveillance, state-sanctioned violence, and mass incarceration in all three modern nations. Furthermore, she expressed that a nation or people can be defined by a covenant with God and that supernatural action can create social formations “to shape the rest of the world.” In other words, some cultures and laws are given by God rather than socially constructed. In an interview Claire said that she did not want to live in a theocracy, but she did want Christian moralism to be applied in the criminalization of some behaviors, she mentioned abortion specifically. Neither abortion nor homosexuality came up during the Bible studies I observed, but the organization website of the CGP contains information that is explicitly anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ.

Conservative Machines

What must be born in mind with the CGP in particular is that the only reason it had the resources and staff to be able to engage with international students and professionals at this level is that it was a multi-million dollar tax-exempt para-ministry planting machine, not a student-initiated and student-organized religious groups. Further, it was allied with Campus Crusade for Christ (now called Cru) and other large campus para-ministry organizations⁶ to more effectively allocate evangelical Christian tax-

⁶ The abstract machine of modern conservative American evangelicalism was formed in resistance to desegregation of Christian schools in the 1960s and in support of George Wallace, Richard Nixon, the Reagan Revolution, and California’s Proposition 13

exempt funds for the broadest possible contact with atheist and non-Christian students and so as not to compete for the same Christian students. Public media for this alliance brazenly states that they view college and university campuses as the accumulation of future political and economic elites both domestic and international, so its purpose is political.

Moreover, the CGP, by working with internationals and being allied with Cru in particular, was implicated in the conservative American evangelical Christian agenda to colonize social forces globally. With 25,000 full-time missionaries in 190 countries, Cru is one of the world's largest Christian Evangelical organizations (Forbes, 2019). In 2013, it invited Seyoum Antonios, head of United for Life Ethiopia, to give a hate-filled polemic against LGBTQ folks and abortion rights to 300 university students in Lagos Nigeria (Wilson, 2013). While religious fundamentalism has been losing ground in the U.S., conservative American evangelical organizations have helped to successfully push Christian nationalism and criminalization of contraceptives, abortion, and LGBTQ folks in a number of African (Baptiste & Foreign Policy in Focus, 2015; Kaoma, 2012) and European (Provost et al., 2020) counties.

Religions are under no obligation to put forward something better than their own history, theology, and morality (Paglia, 2011). Moreover, any policy devised to make sure that conversion is only sought and never offered would be managerial and condescending. If those being educated at secular universities do not have personal

(which has severely damaged public services to minorities) (Wadsworth, 2018). One of the architects of this machine was Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ now known as Cru (Wadsworth, 2018).

responsibility for deciding their own identities than who does? Importantly, more than 40 percent of incoming freshman at U.S. public universities in 2019 identified as agnostic, atheist, or non-religious, which shows a significant trend toward secularism (Stolzenberg et al., 2020). Moreover, Generation Z is more racially and ethnically diverse and progressive than previous generations (Parker, 2021). Therefore, many idealistic young people have already moved beyond what conservative American evangelical Christian groups have to offer on social justice, equality, and fairness. Many do not have time for gay celibacy as the route to inclusion⁷. Many recognize the hypocrisy of InterVarsity issuing statements about how Black Lives Matter but remaining silent⁸ when it comes to criticizing the police or supporting the lives of Black LGBTQ folks, black women who want abortions, and black abortion providers (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, 2020a). Idealistic young people are the reckoning that the CGP, Cru, InterVarsity and other tax-exempt conservative Christian student organizations have to deal with. Within this new social ecology, the niche able to sustain claims that sincerely held religious beliefs justify some discrimination, such as excluding LGBTQ folks from leadership, is being eliminated. For idealistic young people, Christians are not being persecuted by demands to compromise and accommodate to the left and secularism. Instead, they are being offered the opportunity to remain relevant.

⁷ Around half of Generation Zers believe that the normalization of same-sex relations and gender non-conformity is a social good (Parker, et al. 2021).

⁸ <https://intervarsity.org/news/intervarsity-and-blacklivesmatter>

Implications

In the time I spent in the Bible study groups, I saw multiple practices at work, including presenting vocabulary through demonstrations and using guiding dialogue. Some of these seem to resonate more in different configurations of learners, such as making the texts comprehensible to lower proficiency attendees or getting more proficient attendees to be responsible to the text. But the bigger point is that learners will tolerate all kinds of practices, including practices we do not feel are pedagogically ideal, if certain conditions that Deleuze and Guattari helped me think about are met.

That is, in my view, in terms of language learning and teaching, group Bible study does three things right. The first is that it guarantees encounters in which members speak to the group from their own meaningful interests and interests that will also be of interest to the group. It does this by structuring the dialogue around a text everyone has come together purposefully to comprehend. The assemblage makes the minority voice -i.e., the less than-proficient language user, likely to be heard and acknowledged, but discussion is not what matters most. Indeed, from a Deleuzo-Guattarian perspective, discussion, like the Bible, is a mere prop. The actual work is to instill a sense of achievement of successfully learning, comprehending and communicating. Thus, the second contribution to language learning and teaching that Bible study for internationals makes is to form a community whose members are capable of confidence in themselves and in becoming (Deleuze, 1998). What is meant by becoming is the formation of assemblages that follow, for example Hannah deciding to try out religious pamphlets that gave her a different,

albeit no more truthful, perspective on emotions; and Rebekah deciding to join the CGP Saturday evening events.

For Bible study leaders the text cannot be anything attendees want it to be, and the discourse cannot completely ignore existing conventions of Christian education because the point is to put attendees in contact with a particular interpretation of scripture. But as soon as attendees are invited to ask questions, something new is allowed to approach. When the attendee in Vignette 1 asked if the Israelites ate the bitter herbs to remember the Egyptian children that God killed she created a concept of the godly remembering their own privilege. The choices and decisions involved with such a concept have profound consequences. Just because a discussion did not spark with this creation does not mean that it died there. The third thing about Bible study that makes it conducive to language learning and teaching is that it offers, as Canagarajah (2011) put it, “an extended temporal and social context”, so language, issues and ideas that are missed, murky, or misunderstood may come round again or they may sit and stew and be interpreted later on with more context (p. 17).

Deleuzian Time

This dissertation is partially inspired by Deleuzian ontology according to which a life is made up of events and objects with the power to deterritorialize people thus opening up the possibility that they will reterritorialize themselves (Deleuze, 1994). Given that homes, neighborhoods, education quality, occupational opportunities, and biochemistry are the result of thousands of lines of chance and conditionality, there is no

way of determining with any kind certainty which experiences will actualize potential for becoming and which will cause someone to double down on old ways of doing things.

Claire expressed her own concept of individuation when she described her Bible study attendees in the interview excerpt that follows:

They are all very different. They just are. And I think one of the things that surprises me is that I really can't tell what God is doing in the life of a person. So, there have been students who have been just so interested, and you just think that they are really tracking with you, but they just end up leaving for some reason or whatever. And then you've got this person you think they don't understand a thing that you are saying, but God starts doing the work in their heart and they change and they stay with it. So that always amazes me, who really gets it and who doesn't, and I see that's the work of God, and not really based on my teaching ability.

Time is central to Deleuzian philosophy, and its purpose is to erase God.

Substituting time for God forces Claire's statement above into strong resonance with Deleuze's notion that "time is the most radical form of change" (Deleuze, 1994, p. 89). What this means is that present ideas, values, bodies, languages, and behaviors will always be pushed to the breaking point by encounters with new ideas, values, bodies, languages, and behaviors. Deleuze: "The possible does not preexist, it is created by the event...The event creates a new existence, it produces a new subjectivity (new relations with the body, with time, sexuality, the immediate surroundings, with culture, work)..." (2006, p. 234).

Language teachers and others might take advantage of the power of time and the event by helping to bring into being counterculture study assemblages where people experiment with art, literature, philosophy, ways of coexisting, ways of feeling, and ways of perceiving. Beyond language learning and teaching, the purpose of these assemblage would be to continually differentiate participants and partially distance them from discriminations, hypocrisies, and myths of dominant culture. It seems to me that this purpose is similar to that of Bible study for internationals and the left can learn something about how to do the work from these morally-oriented subcultures. Moreover, the potential for secular left assemblages to serve and missionize through counterculture study assemblages is an intriguing area to explore. Indeed, another implication of this research is that these assemblages can be an answer to fundamentalist Christian engagement with adult language learners -e.g., through free Bible study on U.S. campuses and the more coercive free English classes that Mormons and other missionaries do abroad (Wiggin, 2010). The way I see it, the secular left has far more to offer language learning and teaching than conservative American evangelical Christianity.

The left scripture that is most vital to our future is against capitalism. I prefer Deleuze and Guattari's engagement with anti-capitalism which tells us not only that capitalism is to blame for much of the present world but here is what necessarily must be done about it. Capitalism is everywhere thanks to globalization, therefore, we cannot simply opt out, but according to Deleuze and Guattari (1987; 1983), some small departures do become habits and ways of life with the potential of creating left productive drive -confidence in oneself, becoming, and a non-capitalist world- and left anti-

productive drive -shame, disgust, and hatred for capitalist living. What we need are practices and habits of nurturance and constant reaffirmation that make new non-capitalist habits desirable and old capitalist habits intolerable. This is nothing new, for religions have always had practices that nurtured similar drives. Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is meant to be useful in creating knowledge communities for friends, like-minded folks, and allies in the trenches, not to be civil, rational, or persuasive, not to speak in the language of the polis. The reason for this is that the desire for capitalism is not the result of calculated decision making and there is no transcendent and fundamentally communitarian will to be reasoned with. Language does not primarily inform, it territorializes; that is, it shapes the social-material position/conditions mostly through appeals to affect rather than reason. Assemblages take our deep, intense, embodied, and visceral responses, and cultivate, nurture, and direct them toward particular work, which can be anti-capitalist practices and habits that push into retreat the assemblages in which desire for capitalism is normalized.

In response to liberal capitalist democracy and communism, both of which started as the greatest revolutions the world has ever known and then very quickly went very terribly wrong, Deleuze and Guattari (1994; 1987; 1983) enjoined leftists that to form the left war-machine or counter-hegemony necessary to finally dismantle capitalism and other forms of oppression, they must focus on protecting minority escapes and discourses. The question for the left is how to redistribute while not becoming a structure of normatively shaping communication, that is, how to have a revolution that does not work through family to tell us how to love, the church to tell us how to be faithful, the university to tell us how to be educated, the hospital to tell us how to age, the media to

tells us how to stay informed, and activist movements to tell us how to be aggrieved. Molar politics is necessary for collective action, but if national and international entities are to be brought into being there must be built-in prescriptions that make the agonistic perspectives of their constituting (social) bodies part of decision-making (Colebrook in Alliez et al., 2009). The most important reason for this is this: as people actually do rise up to occupy and disrupt en masse, we should expect no limits to the brutality of the response from the State-corporate complex; things can always get worse and those who suffer first and most are always minoritized groups. Moreover, minority protest is never a free, civil or an integral part of democracy in the eyes of the majority whom capitalism has nurtured to identify as aggrieved.

Universities are useful social laboratories for experimenting with how left assemblages help people to continuously question presumptions and expectations and invent new political bodies less defined, not as fully formed as old ones, and with the potential of becoming something else entirely (Alliez et al., 2010). If we are going to accept that Christian witnessing is genuine and noncoercive performance, and I think we must in the context of voluntary Bible study groups for adult professionals and students, then the same holds for those who desire left witnessing even if there is inherent cultural bias in left content. Ethically, what is most important is following Bible study leaders' forthrightness when it comes to the abstract machine of a left assemblage: attendees need to be instructed that 1) they are studying with true believers, 2) they are encouraged to ask questions about those beliefs, but 3) underlying assumptions are not open to debate. For those on the left who believe in such things, left assemblages provide a subterranean

means of infusing second or foreign language curriculum and instruction with their theories and politics.

Conclusion

In the end, educated adult international visa holders continued to attend campus Bible studies because they found something in these groups that other arrangements did not provide. An essential part of this was much needed spaces of kindness, patience and friendship for lonely and isolated people and for those who were just curious to know more about Christian thinking and practices. It would seem that group Bible study can persist even if groups do not win over many converts and some attendees treat it mostly as free English lessons. In other words, Christian self-examination, identity, and internalization are modeled and desired by Bible study leaders and some Christian attendees, but it is not necessary to having strong social binding for atheist and non-Christians attendees to temporarily take up some Christian practices.

If this dissertation has shown anything it is that extracurricular education for enhancing literacy of adult language learners can be sustained on a small scale and with relatively little preparation or teacher training but there must also be faith in the power of chance and intuition. As Deleuze puts it:

We never know in advance how someone will learn: by means of what loves someone becomes good at Latin, what encounters make them a philosopher, or what dictionaries they learn to think...[It] is an involuntary adventure, the movement of learning which links a sensibility, a memory and then a thought,

with all the cruelties and violence necessary, as Nietzsche said, precisely in order to ‘train a “nation of thinkers”’ or to ‘provide a training for the mind’. (1994, p. 165-66)

Bible study for internationals was one, albeit the most important, activity within these university-recognized student religious groups, which were constellations of assemblages -e.g., free meals and group trips- forming Christian moral subcultures on secular university campuses. Internationals sometimes decided to include themselves into these subcultures which were in turn part of larger conservative projects to reform the socius. Bible study for internationals itself was a long-term process in which attendees read the Bible repetitively line-by-line and engaged in guided dialogue to develop enough content knowledge and oral and aural fluency to participate more equally in *authentic* Bible study. The Bible study leaders believed in the potentiality of months or years of Christian witnessing to internationals, but had no expectations of converting every atheist or non-Christian who sat down with them, or of making every Christian into a missionary. Considering the practices of Bible study for internationals as spatial repertoires, I have concluded that the negotiation of communication and meaning within these assemblages is as much about creating Christian affect as Christian knowledge, and that the process is wrapped up in conditions of middle-to-upper class privilege and a glocalized conservative American evangelical agenda. The various elements of this Christian pedagogy include the way bodies are positioned, the way the group returns to the text to attend to particular details, and the way Christians perform the importance of the Bible and Christian relations in their lives. The two Bible study groups that I researched were situations in which “people accommodate, construct, and negotiate

scales strategically, as relevant to their social interests and activities” (Canagarajah, 2018b, p. 821). So for Hannah, a non-Christian, group Bible study was mostly a free English class and an opportunity to learn about the Christian imagination. For Rebekah, a Christian believer and already Bible literate, Bible study was mostly an excuse take a break from academic studies and work on what she perceived to be American pronunciation. For Claire and Joseph, leading Bible studies and teaching the Bible and English through the Bible had been part of decades-long careers. In interviews, all of the Bible study leaders expressed that part of what they loved about their lives was being needed by international students and scholars, even if that need was not for spirituality but for patient English speakers and a friendly and welcoming community.

The evidence for transformative pedagogy within group Bible study is anecdotal. And to put it bluntly, as an atheist and critical pedagogue, I do not think I could recognize the ah-ha moment or light bulbs going off that Bible study leaders talk about as transformations or becomings. Rather, what my research has shown is that people with a little language teaching skill ought to be able to bring into being extracurricular secular text study for language learners at universities and in university communities because the desire is there, just as it is also there for conservative Christian Bible study. The concept of the left study group is presented as an alternatives to conservative Christian groups, but this does not mean that leftists are any more likely to convert internationals or keep them faithful to their causes.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although valuable data was obtained from Hannah and Rebekah, doubtlessly there were attendees with very different perspectives. Future research might include interviews from as many attendees as possible in a group. I was only able to get permission to observe groups for a relatively short period of time, 4 and 8 weeks. Future research might observe groups from beginning to end of a semester or a year to uncover change in the assemblages and members. Researchers might get permission to audio record group dialogue for linguistic analysis or video record groups to investigate spatial practices and how participants perform belonging and resistance. The Bible study sessions at the homes of the leaders are not a part of this research because I was most interested in sites that were situated in a secular institutional setting, easily accessible to students and scholars, and designed specifically with language learning and teaching in mind. However, interviews and limited observations strongly suggest that dialogue about the content is far deeper at home sessions. Therefore, it would be interesting to look at the difference between two or more home groups with attendees who are mostly proficient language users. I have come to know western converts to Islam and Buddhism, and it would be interesting to compare group Bible study with Quran or Buddhist text study groups that include people not born into the religion. But what I am personally most curious about is how atheist pedagogues can steal and adapt the practices of religions to sustain, nourish and cherish curiosity and desire for political bodies-yet-to-come.

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Appendix

Interview questions for Bible study leaders

To begin with, could you tell me a little about your background and how you came to be teaching Bible study (Bible literacy) to non-native English speakers?

Next, what I'd like to ask you to do is talk to me about what being a Christian means.

What do you understand about being a Christian and the impact it has?

How is reading and discussing the Bible useful for someone living in the 21st century?

There are some parts of the Bible which I imagine must be difficult to discuss. For example, Abraham having two wives. I wonder how you have come to think about and come to think about teaching parts of the Bible which may not fit life in the US in 2019?

Can you use another language? If so, can you tell me about yourself as a language learner?

How has your teaching of Bible study changed since you began? Particularly with non-native English speakers.

Please tell me about the non-native English speakers who come to your Bible study and other activities. What, if anything, makes it different or difficult or interesting trying to help them? What, if anything, stands out to you about them?

What, in your experience as a Christian, is a good Bible study lesson like? What are the people doing and saying and feeling?

How close does this experience describe your Bible study with non-Native English speakers? How do you usually choose the stories, quotes, verses, proverbs or sayings that you will cover during your Bible study sessions?

Interview questions for Bible study attendees

To begin with, could you tell me about your background and what brought you to this university?

How did you find out about the Bible study group and what were your original reasons for coming?

Please tell me about group Bible study. What makes it different, difficult and interesting for you?

What, in your experience, is a good group Bible study lesson like? What are the people doing and saying and feeling?

If you did group Bible study before you came to this university, how closely does your experience of good group Bible study describe that?

How close does the experience of good group Bible study describe the group Bible study you have done here?

If you studied the Bible at home, how does that compare with group Bible study?

There are a lot of other activities that are plugged into group Bible study, for example, Please tell me about yourself as a language learner. How do you learn language? What works and what does not work for you?

How would you describe your religious belief? If you are a Christian, what does that mean to you?

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