Migrants and Mission: Understanding Issues of Culture and Identity in Migrant Communities

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Immigration is an issue in many nations, including the United Kingdom, with serious social, political and economic dimensions. As an immigrant myself, I am keenly aware of the complex sets of dynamics that impact my daily life and the lives of my family members as we attempt to navigate new places, build relationships with friends and institutions, retain what matters to us, and acquire new experiences and skills that help us negotiate the challenges of living in the United Kingdom. At the same time, we deal with the pressures of employment security, childcare, education, and changing Border Agency rules. Our identities are reshaped by our experiences and relationships, and by our feelings of vulnerability. We are also agents in that process of change. We are certainly not alone. The BBC reports that over the last decade the United Kingdom has annually received an average of 200,000 legal immigrants each year. Additionally, over 25% of births in the nation are to non-British mothers. Migration also presents complex opportunities and challenges for the Methodist Church in developing ministries that take into account the unique identities, experiences, ethnic/cultural backgrounds, needs, and gifts of different migrant groups.

Faith communities have historically played a significant role in the lives of immigrants and have served as centers for the preservation and reinterpretation of individual and collective identity. Denominations that engaged in mission to immigrants in the past benefitted in many ways from the influx of new members and more importantly from the gifts and perspectives they offered. They also encountered challenges because of the desire of immigrants to preserve elements of their ethnic and cultural identity, to be led by ministers from their own national or language group, and to hold on to certain theological or moral positions that were in tension with the larger denomination. All of these challenges and tensions were connected to issues of identity and they had an

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impact on how denominations and churches formed in immigrant communities related to each other. Perhaps similar tensions connected to identity are present in the contemporary British context.

In order to facilitate thinking around this topic, the paper combines historical perspectives on mission to immigrant[1] groups in the United States during the late nineteenth century with scholarship from contemporary transnational migration studies. The historical evidence depicts religious communities as key agents in the construction and maintenance of collective identities that had not existed prior to immigration and settlement in the United States and reveals patterns that inform our thinking about congregational and institutional relationships in the present.[2] Transnational analysis considers the current waves of migration. It gets underneath the economic forces and political structures that foster migration to look at the experiences and relationships of migrants and non-migrants in sending and host cultures. In a sense, transnational scholarship interprets what is unfolding around us, while the historical material point us to what happened under similar circumstances in the past. It is significant to our thinking about mission that scholarship on both past and present events highlight the powerful place faith and religious communities have in shaping the lives of transnational migrants and the equally powerful ways in which migrants shape the identities of the communities to which they belong.

Immigration and Transnationalism: Past and Present

Transnationalism is a term used to describe relationships that bridge at least two nations:

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[1] Please note that my tendency in the paper will be to use terms such as "immigrant" and "immigration" to refer to history and terms such as "migrant" or "migration" in reference to contemporary events. This is in keeping with the usage of terms by scholars writing about the history of immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and those studying the current trends in transnational migration.

[2] The end of the American Civil War in 1865 opened a new period of trans-oceanic immigration that closed with the outbreak of the First World War. Among the millions who immigrated during those decades were masses of non-English speakers with cultural traditions that challenged the social and political currents seeking to Anglicize the United States. This period of mass emigration from Europe and Asia ended with the outbreak of the First World War. Therefore, it presents historians with a closed period helpful for studying the settlement and integration of immigrants into a host country, particularly one that received people from many different cultures and language groups.

Transnationalism describes a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding international borders (and all the laws, regulations, and national narratives they represent), certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified and now take place paradoxically in a planet-spanning yet common . . . arena of activity.[3]

Transnational migrants are people who live in a global network of relationships that spans their sending and receiving countries.[4]

Transnationals are not unlike immigrants who moved from one nation to another in past centuries. "Transnational life among immigrants is not a 'new' phenomenon, at least when seen in the perspective over the past one hundred years. Multilocal and transnational families with members scattered across borders have been a feature of most international migration. The documentary record from the nineteenth century tells us that, when possible, migrants built networks that kept them in direct relationship with people at home. These networks bear much resemblance to those built by migrants today. Among the similarities are:

- strong emotional ties with family members left in the sending countries
- communication networks
- financial remittances sent to the home country; used by recipients for consumables and investments
- social remittances (Peggy Levitt's term)[5]
- acts of imagination fostering the desire of people to migrate
- migration chains
- immigration as a business and in the service of business
- significance of immigrant social organizations/associations/faith communities
- return migration

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[3] Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 3.

[4] Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, p. 36-38. Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society," *International Migration Review*, 38:3 (2004), pp. 1002-1039.

[5] Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 54-55. Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, "Social Remittances Revisited," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37:1 (2011), pp. 1-22.

- involvement of governments in the migration process –either on the part of sending countries or receiving countries – to protect national interests
- participation in and use of migration networks on the part of denominations to assist their ministry to migrating members and to foster mission among immigrants
- the vulnerability of immigrants and migrants
- the vulnerability of migration networks – hostilities between nations, restrictive immigration laws[6], economic forces can cause the collapse of these networks

What is new is "the magnitude and nature of transnational opportunities available to migrants."[7] The ease of 'real-time' long-distance communication – cheap phone calls, texting, Facebook, and email – means migrants can have regular contact with non-migrants in the home country. As Vertovec states: "[T]he speed and intensity of communication between home and away has created in many contexts a 'normative transnationalism' in which migrants abroad are ever more closely aware of what is happening in the sending context and vice-versa. Research demonstrates how even those who have never themselves moved from the home context are powerfully affected by events, values and practices among their transnationally connected relatives and co-villagers abroad. . ."[8] Migrants make significant decisions about the daily lives of their children from great distances, keep abreast of important events in their families, and are often agents of change in their sending communities. At the same time, there are great tensions in such "normative transnationalism" around issues of childrearing, marriage, and general family life.[9] Such tensions add to the need migrants have for support in their receiving communities.

The sheer scale of financial remittances is also significantly greater than anything scholars can document in past migrations. Numerous countries rely on

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[6] An interesting examination of the development of restrictive immigration law is Dorothee Schneider, *Crossing Borders: Migration and Citizenship in the Twentieth Century United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Schneider's historical overview includes discussions of the proactive role taken by governments to protect or restrict migrants from their countries.

[7] Faist, *Volume and Dynamics*, p. 212.

[8] Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, p. 15.

[9] Levitt, *Transnational Villagers*, pp. 77-83.

remittances for a large share of their national economies.[10] "Migrant remittances and philanthropic transfers amount to US$338 billion a year globally – nearly twice the amount of official development assistance."[11] The governments of nations dependent on migrant remittances use different forms of outreach to nationals living abroad, including allowing them to hold dual citizenship, developing plans to attract foreign investment, and, as Germany did in the past, establishing government offices charged with looking after their nationals.[12]

At the same time, these remittances also have an impact on the daily lives of people in the sending communities. Material differentiation where it did not previously exist promotes migration as one of the few viable options for material advancement. This is true for both unskilled and skilled laborers.[13]

Religious groups play a role in creating and maintaining networks to serve the needs of migrants. It is certainly the case that Methodist leaders in West African countries and the Methodist Church in Britain have made use of such denominational connections to keep their members with the Methodist fold. Religious groups contribute to transnational networks and create social space in which new collective identities[14] are formed, particularly in the receiving culture. I have a pastoral concern for how Methodist churches might create these spaces in ministry with migrants.

Transnational Identity, Social Spaces, and Social Competence

A few years ago I had a brief conversation with a shopkeeper about the "new migrants" living in the UK. He expressed his perception that migrants who came before the 1980s assimilated into British society; however, newer migrants

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[10] Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, p. 15.

[11] Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, "Social Remittances Revisited," p. 2. Levitt cites World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, 2009.

[12] Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, p. 15.

[13] Amadu Jacky Kaba, "Africa's Migration Brain Drain: Factors Contributing to the Mass Emigration of Africa's Elite to the West," in Isidore Okpewho and Nkiru Nzegwu, eds. *The New African Diaspora* (Bloomington: IUP, 2009), pp. 109-112, notes that West African migrants, for example, tend to have higher levels of education on average than the population in their receiving countries.

[14] According to Faist, *Volume and Dynamics*, p. 225: "Collective identity denotes two dimensions: first, a common core of shared beliefs, ideas, the memory of a common history, aspirations, the identification with certain projects – in short, a core of collective representations – and second, ascription by others concerning the collective character, certain dispositions and memories. Identity can refer to roles, ties, groups, and organizations."

seemed to settle en masse in certain neighborhoods and refused to integrate. Are his impressions correct? Scholarship suggests that developing transnational identities helps migrants cope with their new settings.   At the same time, observers might note that migrants, whose identities are reinforced by ties with their home countries and by being connected to an ethnic community in their receiving country, do not seem to integrate with the host society. Can both perceptions be true? Levitt and Glick Schiller suggest the term 'simultaneity,' to describe the dual orientation of migrants toward home and host cultures at the same time.[15] "While some migrants identify more with one society than the other, the majority seem to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation." [16]   When migrants develop transnational identities they are developing competences that help them manage in a new culture. In essence, they forge new identities simultaneously drawing together what they have brought with them and what they are learning in their new surroundings. They learn to reframe their self-understanding, worldview, and even daily habits, while at the same time retaining the elements of their identity connected to their home culture.

The framing process in new settings may involve adjustment of what Bourdieu labels *habitus*.[17] We have all internalized through our life experiences certain habits that generate our social interactions.   Indeed, these are so internalized that we don't think about them; instead they 'derive from the thoughtlessness of habit and habituation, rather than consciously learned rules and principles. Socially competent performances are produced as a matter of routine, without explicit reference to a body of codified knowledge, and without the actors "necessarily knowing what they are doing. . ."[18]

Indeed, culturally formed and informed habits affect the way people of different backgrounds perceive their interactions with each other, even around

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[15] Levitt and Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity," p. 1012.

[16] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration," in *Toward a Transnational Perspective on Migration*, eds. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1992), p. 11.

[17] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

[18] Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 76. Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, p. 66 also gives a summary of both Bourdieu and Jenkins.

small matters. (We might also consider very significant matters for the Church and theological education like models of ministerial authority, views of sexuality, issues around childrearing and safeguarding, and gender relationships.)

When migrants perceive the differences between their understanding of how they behave and the norms of the receiving culture they may become more calculated in their social interactions.[19] Such adjustment may not happen as quickly when migrants are relating primarily with other new migrants from their own cultural backgrounds, when they are not regularly relating to people from their own background who have well-developed skills for social interaction in the host culture, or when their contact with people outside their community is limited.

Competences develop more quickly when migrants have contacts either with people from the host culture or with others in their migrant community who are more advanced in the development of their own competences. Similarly, those who are from the host culture are more likely to develop competences for social interactions with people of other cultures when they have regular contact with them.

As migrants develop transnational identities and cope with living across different cultures, they acquire "competence to behave appropriately in a number of different arenas, and to switch codes as appropriate."[20] Just as becoming bilingual requires conversations with those who are fluent in the language one is attempting to acquire, the skills for multicultural engagement require contact with people from different cultures. Multicultural competency does not negate, however, a migrant's sense of identification with a cultural or ethnic group. Migrants who find themselves as isolated minority may be forced into adapting to the host culture more quickly, but this can be painful and result in feelings of discrimination that reinforce a sense of isolation.[21] If transnational identity bridges two cultures, then finding spaces for maintaining a sense of

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[20] Roger Ballard, "Introduction: The Emergence of Desh Pardesh," in *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain*, ed. Roger Ballard (London: C. Hurst, 1994), p. 31; also quoted in Vertovec, *Transnationalism*, p. 73.
[21] Faist, *Volume and Dynamics*, 211. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that people who are radicalized by religious groups have experienced intense feelings of being in a minority group or of experiencing discrimination because of their status as migrants, though usually they are second generation migrants.

ongoing contact with what is culturally familiar can be both comforting and healthy.

Social Spaces and Identity

Social spaces and social fields are important in the development of individual and collective identity. Faist writes, ". . . we find phenomena connecting organizations, groups, and networks in and between nation-states by bridges. . .Pre-migration linages and ties fostered by migration congeal in emergent economic, political, and cultural patterns – transnational social spaces."[22] Social spaces are dynamic, are often fueled by continuing flows of migrants, and take on new dimensions in the lives of second and third generation migrants. They are also key elements in the formation of ethnic identity across national borders.[23]

Conceptualizing social spaces depends also on the human imagination. Transnational social spaces exist when people take the imaginative step of connecting themselves to a community of people because of shared memory of place, shared history, language, culture, national origins, and/or religious belief.[24] Migrants whose language, nationality or cultural identity, race, or ethnicity differ from what is perceived to be the norm of the host country may conceive and then work with others toward forming a collective identity. The collective identity gives them a sense of belonging to a larger group amidst their minority status. Attachment to religious belief can be particularly powerful for identity formation and in the process of drawing others into the community. Identification through religious belief often joins with ethnic or national identity as migrants remember how they worshipped in their homeland. Religion can also be the basis of identity transcending ethnicity as people imagine that they practice their religion in line with the earliest founders of their faith. They may

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[22] ibid, p. 199.

[23] ibid, p. 201.

[24] Peggy Levitt, "Transnational Migration," *Global Networks* 1:3, p. 202. See also, Carol Brettell, "Introduction: Global Spaces/Local Places: Transnationalism, Diaspora, and the Meaning of Home," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 13:3 (2006): 329. Levitt writes: "Transnational communities are building blocks of potential diasporas that may or may not take shape. Diasporas form out of the transnational communities spanning sending and receiving countries and out of the real or imagined connections between migrants from a particular homeland who are scattered throughout the world. If a fiction of congregation takes hold, then a diaspora emerges."

construct a pared down 'global' version of their religion distilled from texts and the lives of founders that is largely devoid of distinctive and divisive local customs.[25]

If transnational social spaces begin with an imaginative act, their effects are evident in the lives of people who form transnational identities and structures to support those identities. Social contact in specific localities shapes a sense of group identity and provides tangible support for people navigating the difficulties of living across cultures.   It also provides opportunities for development of social and multicultural competencies as newer migrants interact with people of similar cultural background who act as mentors because of their higher levels of multicultural competency.

Historical Evidence: The "Ethnic" Churches and Identity Construction

There is an overwhelming body of historical evidence demonstrating the significance of religious groups, to the lives of immigrants in nineteenth-century North America. This was true not only for those who were deeply devout before their migration, but also for many who expressed only minimal faith before their arrival in the United States.   The trauma of social and cultural dislocation, separation from family and local community, difficulties with housing and employment, and unfamiliar practices often moved those who had little interest in religion toward faith in God.[26] Ethnic churches eventually formed such a significant part of the American religious landscape that in 1929, H. Richard Niebuhr highlighted ethnicity as one of the primary social factors in the intractable division of American Christianity into denominations.[27]

Churches were often the communities in which ethnic identity was formed and maintained. "The sense of displacement and suffering . . .brought a desire for the familiar in a social, cultural, and religious environment that was

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[25] One might think here of Muslims identifying with a global *umma* based on the Quran and the teachings of Muhammad and particular early jurists. Another pertinent example would be Methodists conceiving a global Methodist identity with the sermons of John Wesley and the hymns of Charles Wesley forming the core.

[26] See the work of Jay Dolan, "The Immigrants and Their Gods: New Perspectives in American Religious History," *Church History* 57:1 (1988): 61-72. Dolan uses letters from immigrants to demonstrate their expression of faith and sense of dependence on God amidst their isolation.

[27] H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1957) (originally published in 1929).

alien to them. The church became a center for the experience of familiar patterns of worship and ceremony, and for the marking of significant life events."[28]

Many Protestant denominations, such as Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, supported non-English speaking congregations as part of their home mission activities. These congregations usually consisted of people who were converts to Christianity and to that particular brand of Protestantism. Ethnic congregations were spaces in which new identities were forged that spanned the particularities of national affiliations and instead centered on language, shared cultural traditions and theological commitments. They provided both a sense of belonging and communal support. It was often because of involvement in ethnic churches that immigrants were able to resist social, political, and denominational pressures toward cultural and linguistic assimilation. Ethnic congregations became spaces for resistance within those larger Anglo-American denominational institutions. A dynamic of patronage and resistance developed that proved a barrier to genuine cooperative mission and to recognizing that each body could make significant contributions to the other. Anglo-American denominations struggled to expand their sense of "American" denominational identity to include the "other," in this case non-English-speaking congregations. Some leaders within ethnic churches argued that ethnic, non-English-speaking congregations helped new immigrants integrate into society.[29] Others expressed genuine theological concerns, asserting that the older Anglo-American congregations lacked the same vitality, theology, proper church discipline, and piety as the non-English-speaking ones. By the beginning of the First World War, certain ethnic populations in the United States identified themselves first by their religious affiliation and then by their ethnic identity. Religion and ethnic identity were wrapped up in each other, even among American born members of these immigrant groups.

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[28] Cindy Wesley, *The Role of Pietism and Ethnicity in the Formation of the General Conference of German Baptists, 1851-1920* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), p. 193.

[29] Walter Rauschenbusch, "What Shall We Do with the Germans," *The Examiner*, Jan. 10, 1895, 13.

Transnational Religion: "God needs no passport."[30]

In the midst of contemporary Western multicultural societies, especially those where there is also tension around immigration and diversity, faith communities are oases. [31] Much as in the nineteenth century, they allow migrants to reframe their experiences in terms of their faith and relationship with God. In this sense, faith, identity, and culture are intertwined. Levitt points out that it is a mistake to treat religion and culture "as more distinct than they actually are. . .many newcomers come from places where religion and culture go hand in hand."[32] As the historical material demonstrates, migrant identities within their receiving cultures are both maintained and reframed in churches that offer worship in a mother tongue and include elements that resonate migrants' memories of home.

These congregations, whatever religion they represent, also become communities in which new identities are constructed. Migrants who are from different places but share similar languages, traditions, race, ethnic background may find enough commonalities to construct a new collective identity that becomes another layer of their transnational identity. There are some good examples of Methodist churches in London whose congregations consist primarily of first, second, and third generation migrants. Worship with these congregations and conversations with church members have given me living examples of the relationship between local congregations and the processes of identity formation described in histories of ethnic mission churches and in the stack of journal articles about transnationalism. They represent significant missional work with migrants led by migrants both to those who are "cradle" Methodists, to those nominally Christian, and to those who have no prior commitment to Christianity.

On a Sunday morning in the late spring, I took the train from Cambridge to London Kings Cross for worship at the Chinese-speaking Methodist Church.

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[30] Levitt, *God Needs No Passport*, p. 12.
[31] Helena Anin-Boateng, "Migration and Bereavement: How Ghanaian Migrants Cope in the United Kingdom," in The New African Diaspora, eds. Isidore Okpehwo and Nkiru Nzegwu (Bloomington, IN: IUP, 2009), p. 147. 'The proliferation of ethnic associations, village organizations, past student associations, church groups, and professional association in the UK is a testimony to the desire of migrants to recreate a sense of community that would both link them to communities back home and root them more positively in their new place.'
[32] ibid., p. 15.

How better to get an idea of what it must be like for migrants to try to worship God in an unfamiliar place, language, and cultural setting than to take that step myself? When I explained my presence at the Cantonese service to one congregation member, she thoughtfully replied with a reflection on her own experience of migration. When she first arrived in London she went to an English-speaking church even though she wasn't Christian and didn't speak much English. Then, someone told her about the Kings Cross Church where they spoke Cantonese. Being able to worship and study about God in her own language meant a great deal to her. She became a Christian through her relationship with the Chinese-speaking and was baptized. She now travels quite a long distance on Sundays to attend the church, and she is not the only one who does so. Many members of the congregation travel from well outside the London ring to worship in a community where they feel a sense of belonging.

In a separate conversation the same day, another congregation member emphasized the importance of people worshiping in their mother tongue. "People need to praise God in their mother tongue," he told me more than once. As we've seen, the historical record certainly supports him.

The first time I attended Kings Cross I was struck by the strong sense of community among the people attending the Cantonese service. The service was just over an hour in length. The congregation members, however, often stay for an extended period after the service to spend time with each other. This sense of community was further reinforced when I attended the international service, led by youth and young adults in English, a few weeks later. Most of the congregation of close to fifty people was under the age of 25. It appeared that they were there to worship God and to be with one another. Identity in the context of this congregation cannot be based solely on national origins. The members at Kings Cross migrated from Hong Kong, Mainland (PRC) China, and Malaysia. Their ministers are recruited from the Methodist Church in Malaysia. Some members speak Mandarin, others speak Cantonese, and still others understand both very well. Additionally, there are many British-born children, teenagers, and young adults who take the leadership of their own services in English, yet join in with some parts of the Chinese worship services. Most of the young people are completely fluent in one form of Chinese and English. Although

one might say that Kings Cross Methodist Church is a Chinese congregation, it is actually the crucible in which Chinese and British-born Chinese identities might be formed with the Christian faith as a key component of those identities.[33]

Unlike the cool spring afternoon at Kings Cross, my worship experience at Walworth Methodist Church (Clubland) took place during the early July heat wave. The sanctuary was completely packed (I would estimate between 400 and 500). The worship service, led by the Ghanaian Fellowship in celebration of their 24th Anniversary, was joyous and centered on the theme "Unity in Diversity."[34] This church, the largest in the British Methodist Connexion, hosts a membership that is entirely West African and Caribbean. Diversity in this context refers to the number of nationalities and language groups represented in the congregation. Their commonly shared language is English. They also share the common experience of being racial minorities in the United Kingdom. Together the church members are continuing to work out a collective identity as Methodists, while recognizing their sense of belonging to particular national groups (there are several National Fellowships connected to the church) and being a church within the British Connexion. A congregation member expressed to me the sentiment that even though there are some differences between Methodists, the core is the same. John Wesley and Charles Wesley - that is the core. In order to form a unifying identity, they are emphasizing the common denominator – their Methodist identity. Religion is a unifying factor that crosses national, linguistic, and cultural differences.

Although scholarship on identity among second and third generation migrants is just is still in the early stages, there are some interesting concepts emerging around the development of social competencies. What is evident at Kings Cross and Walworth is the high level of social competence among the British-born young people. Even brief interactions with youth in both congregations revealed evidence of cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitan

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[33] These are early observations from brief contact with the congregation members at Kings Cross. I am most grateful to the congregation members who willingly shared their stories with me to help me in my research.

[34] According to the posters and banners adorning the public areas in the church, as well as the informational brochure given to me with a warm invitation to attend some special events, Walworth Methodist Church is celebrating its bicentenary this year. In October they will have "Cultural Day Celebrations" on a Saturday afternoon with the services the following day centered on the theme "Beauty-in-diversity."

sociability.[35] "Cosmopolitan sociability can arise from the human competencies that create social relations of inclusiveness."[36] The young people at Kings Cross, for example, moved just as fluently between social interactions with people of different backgrounds as they did between speaking English and Chinese. Faist suggests that people characterized as cosmopolitan can draw together elements from multiple cultures. "For example, migrants might combine cultural practices from both or even additional countries, such as special brands of hip-hop among Turkish youth raised in Germany, or those of Algerian descent in France."[37] Faist's comments bring to mind British-born Chinese young people leading a well-constructed English-language worship service for a predominantly Chinese congregation. The service includes a Caribbean-British local preacher, a praise band, and worship songs written Matt Redmon (American) and Hillsong (Australian). Being part of a community of faith provides space for forming and expressing identities that draw from a cosmopolitan mix of resources and that help them relate very fluently with people of different national and cultural backgrounds. At the same time, they may be shaping the future of the congregation. The generations of migrants born in the host culture have historically pushed for worship and collective congregational identity that resonates with their strong sense of connection to the host country.

The Methodist Church in Britain's *One Mission* statement, echoing the position of the World Council of Churches, sees the Methodist Church working in relationships of equality and mutual respect across all that might otherwise divide us. This is an important viewpoint to embody because mission alongside transnational migrants involves relationships with Methodist churches throughout the world, and it entails relationships with the people who – quite literally – live next door. Several of my neighbors and students are transnational migrants whose children are now growing up in Britain as the second generation. The person who delivered my appliances, the young man who makes my latte at Pret a Manger, and my own childen are all transnationals.

[35] Nina Glick Schiller, Tsypylma Darieva and Sandra Gruner-Domic, "Defining Cosmopolitan Sociability," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34:3 (2011), 399ff. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[36] Glick Schiller, Darieva, Gruner-Domic, "Cosmopolitan Sociability," p. 399.

[37] Faist, *Volume and Dynamics*, p. 202.

Transnational migrants are having a dynamic impact on society in general, the religious landscape of the United Kingdom, and on Methodism. While this is obvious in places like London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Bradford, migration affects even smaller cities and rural areas. Eastern European migrants are living on the edge of the Fens of East Anglia. In Kings Lynn people from various national backgrounds gather for a Burns Night at their International Club meeting in the Methodist church and try to work out what 'Haggis' really is. Predominantly white Methodist circuits in Yorkshire encounter neighbours quite unlike themselves and receive ministers from West African backgrounds. As much as this paper is about faith communities and the transnational identities of migrants, it also begs larger questions how we understand Methodist identity and how we move proactively to continue engaging potential opportunities, conflicts, and tensions that might arise in this dynamic mission. Therefore, instead of closing with a summary, I would instead offer some questions and invite you to raise some questions that might point to further avenues for research.

- How might understanding some of the dimensions of transnational identity and the significance of religious communities help us engage with migrants who are not Christians?
- What tensions around theology, relationships, leadership, and/or practice are deriving from our engagement with migrant communities?
- How is the cooperative mission relationship with migrant communities affecting our understanding of what it means to be Methodist?
- What is happening among the British-born generations in migrant communities? How do they understand their identities? How might their self-understanding affect the ministry of congregations in their communities and of the Methodist Church as a whole?
- How are the transnational practices of the Methodist Church affecting communities that send migrants and receive returning migrants, including ministers who have served abroad? Likewise, what impact are the remittances, both social and financial, of migrant Methodists having on their sending communities and churches?

- In light of the lecture on the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe this morning, what might be the implications for returning migrants. Migrants who are cradle Methodists tend to develop an ossified picture of what the church at home is like. If the church at home is changing, then they are returning to something less familiar.
- What issues might it raise for those of you who are not part of British Methodism but are living in countries affected by migration?

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