Toward a Missiology of Migration and Transnationality

by Jonathan Bornman

I write this introduction sitting in the living room of a Mennonite pastor's home in the small village of Somanya, Ghana, forty-five minutes outside of Accra, the capital. The pastor, two friends, and I spent the morning in lively discussion about the church in its local context and its place in the world. The realities of migration and youth were a significant part of our conversation. We noticed the abundance of children and youth in Africa, where the median age is 19.7 years.[1] And beyond Africa, of the 70.8 million displaced people around the world (including 25.9 million refugees), over half are under the age of eighteen.[2] Transnationality, religion, migration, and youth: how might these realities inform and transform missiology?

One of the paramount needs of missiology in the twenty-first century is to articulate the *missio dei* in a world where, more than ever before, people are on the move. The largest Anabaptist communions in the world—in Congo and Ethiopia—are engaged in culture-crossing missions at the same time as many of their members live in North America and Europe. These Anabaptists from the Global South are planting churches, engaging in missional activities wherever they find themselves, and joining Mennonite church bodies. LMC—a fellowship of Anabaptist churches—for instance, has member congregations whose members are part of African, Caribbean, and Latino diasporas. What missiology will guide us toward this reality of a transnational church of Christ-followers fulfilling Christ's radical call to love God and neighbor?

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1 "Population of Africa (2020)—Worldometer," *Worldometer*, 2019, https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/.

2 "UNHCR—Figures at a Glance," UNHCR, June 19, 2019, https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html.

For typical white North American Anabaptists, a reflection on their history of migration read through the lens of growing transnationalism may help us develop such a missiology relevant for our time. In this vein, Matthew Krabill and Allison Norton call for missiology to "move beyond strategies that privilege western agency and action to engage with the complexities of changing global processes, acknowledging that Christianity in the west will be increasingly associated with diaspora populations."[3]

The challenges and opportunities presented by migration and transnationality—issues that touch all the nations of the world—affect youth disproportionately. Those of us meeting in the pastor's home knew of such stories firsthand. We noted, for instance, the story of one young man from the village of Somanya who acquired a tourist visa against the community's counsel and went to North America to attempt to find work, only to realize that without papers he could not succeed. Eventually, the church raised money to fly him home. He was one of the "fortunate" ones. Oppressive conditions of injustice and hopelessness cause some youth to risk all—for example, entering rubber rafts to cross the Mediterranean for an uncertain future in Europe. These realities have not yet received adequate attention from missiologists.

Jehu Hanciles lays the groundwork for a missiological look at migration and its potential to impact Western churches.[4] And Matthew Krabill's dissertation, "Menno Was a Migrant with No Headquarters: The Polycentric Ecclesial Existence of African Immigrant Mennonite Congregations in LA," describes African immigrant churches within the North American Mennonite church.[5] But by and large, the impact and changing realities of migration and transnationalism remain under-researched within missiology, with only a limited number of journal articles or monographs addressing these issues. The current context demands a fresh missiology informed by the wealth of material available in anthropological studies and the realities of a transnational world—a missiology that equips the church to fulfill Jesus's commission to make disciples.

In this article, I hope to contribute to research on such a missiology—focusing particularly on youth, who are disproportionately affected by migration and whose value is often overlooked—by refining the conceptualizations of "youth" and "transnationalism" and reviewing a selection of relevant literature. Conceptualizing youth and their religious commitments in a globalized world

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3 Mathew Krabill and Allison Norton, "New Wine in Old Wineskins: A Critical Appraisal of Diaspora Missiology," *Missiology: An International Review* 43, no. 4 (2015): 452.

4 Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2013).

5 Matthew Krabill, "Menno Was a Migrant with No Headquarters: The Polycentric Ecclesial Existence of African Immigrant Mennonite Congregations in LA" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2019).

where migration and transnationality are the experience of increasingly more significant portions of society is an important lens for missiology. This review focuses on African youth who, following multi-reasoned dreams, migrate to North America and Europe. It includes selected journal articles and chapters of edited volumes between 1996 and 2012 related to globalization, migration, religion in migration, transnational religious groups, conceptualizations of youth, youth in Africa, generations, intergenerational relations, diaspora, gender, and transformation of public spaces. The literature review divides into two major sections—youth and transnational religion—with many cross-linkages, since youth are the ones contesting the transnational religious space.

Youth

Positionality of Youth

The position of African young people, whether in Africa or in the diaspora, is full of complexities, contradictions, and exceptions. The majority live in societies where the interaction of global and local pressures leads to the fragmentation, dissolution, and loss of local culture and memory in societies undergoing demographic, political, media, cultural, and religious transformations.[6] African young people are described as victims, marginalized, excluded, powerless, violent and subjected to violence,[7] positioning themselves in society,[8] leading counter-discourses,[9] using their bodies as weapon and text,[10] having escaped the control of government, familial, and social structures, and living in a new

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6 Mamadou Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures: African Youth and Public Space," *African Studies Review* 46, no. 2 (September 2003): 1–12, doi:10.2307/1514823; Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations* (Paris: Karthala, 2012).

7 Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures"; Mamadou Diouf, "Afterward," in *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana (Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press, 2005), 229–34; Tshikala K. Biaya, "Youth and Street Culture in Urban Africa: Addis Ababa, Dakar and Kinshasa," in *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana (Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press, 2005), 215–28; Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana, eds., *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press, 2005).

8 Catrine Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood: Social Becoming in an African Context* (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2006), http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:nai:diva-495.

9 Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations*.

10 Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures."

"geography."[11] This characterization of living in a new geography is particularly appropriate for many African youth in the diaspora who are elites, many with newly earned college degrees, well positioned to influence their transnational communities.[12]

Defining "Youth"

Common simplistic usage of the word "youth" must be called into question, beginning by asking, Who or what is "youth"? Because of social and cultural complexities, the term defies universal definition.[13] According to Jon Abbink, "the socially and culturally accepted initiation of the young into adult society—that in many societies used to be ritually marked by rites of transition and a period of seclusion and training—can no longer be properly accomplished in Africa."[14] Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana say that childhood and youth are best understood as socially situated and culturally constructed.[15] And Catrine Christiansen et al. state that the "common anthropological . . . definition of youth . . . [as] a developmental phase in a life course . . . anchored in the idea of life stages in which youth is defined in relation to the correspondence between social and physical developmental thresholds" is flawed. This definition, they point out, too simply "conflat[es] psychological, physical, and social maturation and the idea that lives can be compartmentalized into discrete stages."[16] Turning to biological age, Abbink "pragmatically limit[s] the category of 'youth' in Africa to the 14–35 age bracket. Under 14, they are children, usually dependent on older people and not accepted as adults, while over thirty-five they are, or were, more or less expected to be socially independent, have a family and have acquired some social status of their own."[17]

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11 Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures."

12 Afe Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare: The Public Face of Aladura in Diaspora," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 4 (December 2004): 493–522, doi:10.1163/1570066042564392; Hauke Dorsch, "Cosmopolitans, Diasporists, and Griots—the Role of Diasporic Elites," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005).

13 Deborah Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa: Introduction to Parts 1 and 2," *Anthropological Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2000): 113–20, doi:10.1353/anq.2000.0003.

14 Jon Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa: The Politics of Despair and Renewal," in *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*, vol. 4, African Dynamics (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 7, https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/14741.

15 Boeck and Honwana, *Makers and Breakers*.

16 Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*, 14.

17 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa," 6.

Concepts of youth in the literature are closely interrelated with generational and intergenerational conflict and cooperation.[18] Yet as Karl Mannheim points out in his seminal paper "The Problem of Generations," the concept of "generation" is problematic, potentially referring to social location, biological age group (very hard to define), or a cohort shaped by a shared historical event.[19] Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc critique the tendency to define youth in opposition to elders, saying other forces at work (political, social, economic) require strategies of cooperation, not only on the macro- but also on the micro-scale, the intimate relations within families. They call for renewed intergenerational research that concentrates on the relationships between generations. Abbink describes a struggle between "younger" and "older" generations (while cognizant of the complication of the terms), where traditional African societal systems for defining generations and expectations have broken down and seem only to be adhered to in the "breach rather than the keeping,"[20] where children are valued and youth are considered a menace.

Modern conceptions of youth seem to be inherently bipolar; on the one hand, youth signify "exclusion, impossibility, emasculation, denigration, and futility," and, on the other hand, they are considered "a constant source of creativity, ingenuity, possibility, empowerment," and "a source of alternative, yet-to-be-imagined futures."[21] The young are simultaneously portrayed as "the ter-

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18 Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations*; Alessandro Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise: Entre individualisme et formation de la 'new generation,'" in *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations*, eds. Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 469–93; Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*; Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa"; Murray Last, "Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria, 1750–2000," in *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa*, eds. G. J. Abbink and W. M. J. van Kessel, vol. 4, African Dynamics (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 37–54, https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/14741; Nathanlie Mondain et al., "Migration et responsabilités intergénérationnelles: Implications pour la transition à l'âge adulte des jeunes migrantes sénégalais," in *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations*, eds. Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 259–97; Bob White, "Pour l'amour du pays: Générations et genres dans les clips video à Kinshasa, R. D. Congo," in *L'Afrique des générations: Entre tensions et négociations*, eds. Muriel Gomez-Perez and Marie Nathalie LeBlanc (Paris: Karthala, 2012), 711–63; Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa."

19 Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Karl Mannheim: Essays*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (Routledge, 1972), 276–322.

20 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa," 5.

21 Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth from the Past to the Postcolony," in *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa*, eds. Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana (Asmara (Eritrea): Africa World Press, 2005), 29.

rors of the present, the errors of the past, the prospect of the future."[22] African societies increasingly look to young people as instruments of change uniquely positioned to speak in a changing world, yet at the same time construe them as a threat.[23] Are youth "makers" or "breakers" of society? An emerging influence or submerged by power? Combatants or healers? Onlookers or activists?[24]

Perspectives on Youth

Within the literature, there are five major perspectives from which to analyze youth: 1) "lost generation," 2) street culture, 3) agency, 4) integrated, and 5) social shifters. I explore each of these perspectives below. In the end, I find the idea of youth as "social shifters" most helpful for understanding youth in transnational diaspora communities.

1. Lost Generation

In my research in Harlem among the youth of the Senegalese diaspora, I have heard the term "lost youth" in a variety of formulations, from both older and younger persons. Deborah Durham states that "claims to the position of youth, claims about the nature of youth, and moral claims about youth are centrally involved in the reinvention of political and social space."[25] This helps me understand what is going on when the elders in the community are characterizing the youth hanging out on 116th street as "lost," getting into trouble, fighting, and so on. And the protestation of those same youth saying they are true Muslims. The fact that both younger and older members of the community talk about the "lost youth" must be interrogated. According to Durham:

> In the wake of World War I, the discourse of youth, and of the "lost generation" (a term also often used for youth in Africa at the end of the twentieth century, see Cruise O'Brien 1996), was part of the grounds of fascism, communism, and the political struggles leading to the second world war. The discourse of youth is just as critical across Africa today—indeed the recurrence of the term "lost generation" is not insignificant—and the consequences just as great. Youth enter political space as saboteurs—as political actors whose politics is to open up discourses on the nature of society in its broadest and most specific terms.[26]

In Uganda, the *Balokole* (the "born again") construction of the world represents an opposition between generations—the "born again" youth and the

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22 Comaroff and Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth," 20.

23 Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures," 2–3.

24 Boeck and Honwana, *Makers and Breakers*, 2–3.

25 Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa," 118.

26 Durham, 118.

"lost" elders. The past is presented in this vision as the age of darkness and contrasted with the idea of a moral revolution that will guarantee a shining future for Uganda.[27] In the social situation of four "power inversions," or *jihads*, where youth took control in Northern Nigeria, at certain junctures "the old are considered to have failed the societies they led. Hence the failure of the old can be as significant an issue as the success of the young."[28] The idea of a "lost generation" is commonplace in discourse about youth, but these examples from Ugandan Pentecostals and Nigerian Muslims question who is lost—the youth or their elders?

2. Street Culture

The emergence of street cultures among postcolonial youth living on the margins of urban society has prompted some to look at the phenomenon from the perspective of youth cultures.[29] From this viewpoint, African youth create their own, often violent, culture on the street as a result of an epistemological rupture they live within and the appearance of the localized global that they negotiate by cultural borrowing.[30] Youth culture is "uniquely able to link locals across transnational space"[31] and creatively engage the margins, finding new opportunities. However, this perspective is challenged by those who consider studies focused on "youth culture" as subcultures to be in error in their projection of youth as an entity detached from the surrounding world.[32] Another critique against focusing on "youth culture" is the reality that in some settings youth are so dominated and marginalized that they are unable to participate in the creation of youth cultures, even to the point of speaking of "non-place."[33]

3. Agency

In their review of literature from 1990 to 2000,[34] Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc identify a focus on roles and conditions of life—the misery, violence, and dysfunctionality of society. After 2000, however, they see a shift toward understanding youth to have significant agency. They connect this to keen interest in globalization and the idea that youth had privileged access to new cultural

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27 Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise," 479.

28 Last, "Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria," 37–38.

29 Biaya, "Youth and Street Culture in Urban Africa"; Diouf, "Engaging Postcolonial Cultures"; Comaroff and Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth."

30 Biaya, "Youth and Street Culture in Urban Africa."

31 Comaroff and Comaroff, "Reflections on Youth," 29.

32 Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*.

33 Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise."

34 Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations*.

products. They note that research on music gave proof of this agency[35] as did the strategic use of violence in some contexts. However, others[36] note that this was critiqued by those who saw that agency varies greatly by context, remaining an aspiration of youth, most of whom are excluded from opportunity to exercise their agency.[37] The "agency" perspective shows that youth are neither universally manipulated nor passive actors but individuals attempting to chart their course.[38]

4. Calls for Integrated Perspectives

Additional perspectives also exist, such as the "interventionist" response, which calls for remedial programs; "rights discourse," which develops normative approaches, yet conditions on the ground are unfavorable; and "descriptive-analytic" reactions, which develop historical and sociologically grounded explanations.[39]

In the midst of all the perspectives, there are general calls for more integrated proposals. For example, Abbink states that "three perspectives . . . —the agency, the interventionist and the analytic—must come together in a realist understanding of the experiences of youth in Africa,"[40] and Christiansen et al. focus on the "intersection between agency and social forces."[41]

5. Social Shifters

In my review of this literature, the perspective on youth that seems most directly relevant to how I view the Senegalese youth in Harlem is the idea of youth as "shifters" or "social shifters."

> A shifter is a special kind of deictic or indexical term, a term that works not through absolute referentiality to a fixed context, but one that relates the speaker to a relational, or indexical, context ("here" or "us" are such terms). A shifter has the capability of sometimes going further and bringing into discursive awareness the metalinguistic features of the conversation—that is, it can go beyond immediate relationships being negotiated and draw attention to the structure and its categories that produce or enable the encounter. As people bring the concept of youth to bear on situations, they situate

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35 White, "Pour l'amour du pays."

36 Gomez-Perez and LeBlanc, *L'Afrique des générations*.

37 Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa"; Boeck and Honwana, *Makers and Breakers*.

38 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa."

39 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa."

40 Abbink, ed., 25.

41 Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*, 16.

themselves in a social landscape of power, rights, expectations, and relationships—indexing both themselves and the topology of that social landscape. They do so not necessarily . . . in a static manner, but in a dynamic, contestive, and imaginative way. Shifters work metalinguistically, drawing attention to specific relations within a structure of relations, to the structure itself. This seems to be particularly the case with the mobilization of the idea of "youth" in social life.[42]

Considering the goals, vision, and discourse of Senegalese youth in Harlem, the concept of shifters fits. These youth are aware of the power difference between themselves and older members of their community, between themselves and religious leaders, and with regard to the larger American society. And they are creating ways to tip that imbalance a bit in their favor. By being the best Muslims in their community and by serving within their community more than others, they win agency. Their youth movement has gained enough momentum that they draw attention from rival religious leaders, thus moving from undesirable to desired members of the community. Their uniforms, worn at public events, have moved them from invisible to visible. As Durham observes, this "situates them in the social landscape,"[43] and the community must now reckon with them.

Researchers in the field have also adopted this idea of youth as social shifters. The term is understood to denote the relational concept of youth as situated in a dynamic context. "Social shifters" describes the way youth are positioned and are positioning themselves within society, with the capacity to create social configurations.[44] Rejecting all simplistic definitions of children and youth, we should regard them as "beings-in-the-present and as social actors."[45]

Regardless of how African youth are defined, however, they are marginalized and excluded, liminal and interstitial subjects. Their ability to cross boundaries and inhabit multiple worlds often is both vulnerable and violent. On the flip side, young people's ability to mediate these contradictions in African society places them "squarely in the centre and generates tremendous power."[46]

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42 Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa," 116.

43 Durham, 116.

44 Christiansen et al., *Navigating Youth, Generating Adulthood*, 12.

45 Boeck and Honwana, *Makers and Breakers*, 2.

46 Boeck and Honwana, 10.

Youth as Transnational Religious Actors

Discourse about morality and youth is essential for understanding youth. The conversion of large numbers of Ugandan youth to Pentecostalism, for example, has modified the understandings and practices surrounding intergenerational relations in the country[47] "by assigning to the youth the role of moral revolution guides."[48] Youth use language of deliverance and sexual abstinence as tools for liberation from the past, finding in the Pentecostal message the possibility of distancing themselves from the moral and economic obligations of their families. There is also evidence of Sufi Muslim youth who describe conversion experiences in ways similar to Pentecostal use of the term "born-again" as they speak of being made clean and "the counter being set to zero."[49]

Summary of Learnings about Youth

All conceptualizations of youth are socially and culturally constructed, influenced by historical, geographical, political, religious, and educational contexts. Inherent in these conceptualizations, whether imposed or appropriated, are dynamics of power and control, rights, worldview, access to resources, and means of communication. The idea of youth as social shifters—pointing out imbalances and bringing into awareness hidden things; socially situated in a dynamic context; and able to see opportunity in the margins, cross boundaries, and mediate contradictions—offers a powerful analytical tool to interrogate the ways Africans in the diaspora conceptualize youth.

Religion in Migration, Diaspora, Transnationalism

Issues of religion and migration are neither new nor modern.[50] Christian faith has been from its inception multilingual and transnational. Consider the Old Testament Daniel, a young Hebrew elite taken into slavery in Babylon, where he rose to a high position in government yet still prayed three times a day in front of a window facing Jerusalem.[51] He also—along with his three friends Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael—negotiated not eating the king's food because it would make them unclean.[52] Or consider the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2,

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47 Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise," 483.

48 Gusman, 471.

49 Audrain Xavier, "Du « 'Ndigël' Avorté » Au Parti de La Vérité," *Politique Africaine*, no. 4 (2004): 99.

50 Ulrich Berner, "Mission and Migration in the Roman Empire," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 43–56.

51 Daniel 6:10

52 Daniel 1:8

where "Jews from every nation under heaven" (fifteen nations are listed) were gathered. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Peter's sermon, three thousand were baptized. As Jews, they had traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost and were now returning home baptized into the Way of Jesus the Messiah.

Many of the authors in this literature review, in their research of the Pentecostal movement and its transnational nature, assume the readers' familiarity with these stories.

Defining Transnationalism

The simplest definition of religious transnationalism is, when "people move, they take their religions with them."[53] Bertrand Badie and Mane-Claude Smouts provide a more formal definition: "Any relation which, deliberately or by its nature, constructs itself within a global space beyond the context of the nation-state, and which escapes, at least partially, the control or mediating action of States."[54] Bruno Riccio defines the term from a person-centered perspective, stating, "Migrants, it is argued, now tend to live their lives simultaneously across different nation-states, being both 'here' and 'there,' crossing geographical and political boundaries. 'Transnationalism' is the term commonly used to contextualize and define such migrants' cultural, economic, political and social experience."[55]

Numerous authors criticize the older Ellis Island straight-line model of immigration and assimilation[56] and propose new patterns of religious transnation-

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53 Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 7–8, https://brill.com/view/title/16411.

54 Bertrand Badie and Mane-Claude Smouts, "Le retournement du monde: Sociologie de la scène international," (Paris: Presses de la Foundation National des Sciences Politiques/Dalloz, 1992), cited in Ruth Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 80.

55 Bruno Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'? Senegalese Migrants' Ambivalent Experiences and Multiple Trajectories," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27, no. 4 (2001): 583, doi:10.1080/13691830120090395.

56 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Mary C. Waters et al., "Segmented Assimilation Revisited: Types of Acculturation and Socioeconomic Mobility in Young Adulthood," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 7 (July 1, 2010): 1168–93, doi:10.1080/01419871003624076; James V. Spickard, "Networks, Homes, or Congregations? Exploring the Locus of Immigrant Religiosity," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African

alism, such as religious bi-localism,[57] religious cacophony,[58] reverse missions,[59] South-South religious trade,[60] transnational organization theory, and deterritorialized religious identity.[61]

Factors Driving Religious Transnationalism

Religion is becoming increasingly important in a globalized world, where it is difficult to separate the local from the global. The rebirth of religion[62] is attributed to many factors, including changing demographics,[63] "the crisis in the old mechanisms of identification [giving] back to the 'sacred realm' an importance and a social function,"[64] and, similarly, the "disenchantment" of the West producing powerful religious movements expressing a strong desire to "globalize" by taking advantage of spaces opened by globalization.[65]

The main factors in transnationalism are the mass media explosion and the movements of people leading to deterritorialization of culture and the delocalization of identity and community.[66] The forces and factors of globalization and the concomitant need to emphasize difference lead to a search for identity[67]

Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 23–41; Dorsch, "Cosmopolitans, Diasporists, and Griots."

57 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'?"

58 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*.

59 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, eds., *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005); Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare."

60 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Spickard, "Networks, Homes, or Congregations?"; Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa."

61 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism"; Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2005).

62 Waldo César, "From Babel to Pentecost: A Social-Historical Study of the Growth of Pentecostalism," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 37.

63 Adogame and Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration*.

64 Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism."

65 Ed van Hoven, "Saint Mediation in the Era of Transnationalism: The Da'ira of the Jakhanke Marabouts," *Africa (Edinburgh University Press)* 73, no. 2 (June 2003): 290.

66 Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism."

67 Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani, eds., *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana Uni-

that takes on new "significance in the context where nation-states and nationalism no longer necessarily constitute the primary physical and ideological contexts in which identity and community are imagined and political allegiance expressed."[68] Other factors include the desire to escape or exit one's situation to embrace opportunity elsewhere.[69]

Political and socioeconomic discourses on migration and diaspora often ignore religious factors driving transnationalism, but religion can be viewed as the "motor" of African diaspora formation and identity construction.[70] The rise of "reverse-mission" religious movements, both Christian and Islamic, engaged in transmitting their tradition beyond their "geo-ethnic" contexts, illustrates how Africans have instrumentalized globalization for religious purposes.[71] Four themes emerge for the study of religion in African migration:[72] 1) the globalizing effects of local religious units in the migration process,[73] 2) the religious

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68 Marshall-Fratani, "Mediating the Global and Local in Nigerian Pentecostalism," 81.

69 Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise"; Ebenezer Obadare and Wale Adebanwi, "The Visa God: Would-Be Migrants and the Instramentalization of Religion," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 31–48, https://brill.com/view/title/16411.

70 Adogame and Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration*; Dorsch, "Cosmopolitans, Diasporists, and Griots"; Michelle Johnson, "'The Proof Is on My Palm': Debating Ethnicity, Islam and Ritual in a New African Diaspora," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 50–77, doi:10.1163/157006606775569604; Monika Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space through Religious and Political Events: How Senegalese Migrants Became a Part of Harlem, New York," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 4 (2004): 468–92, doi:10.1163/1570066042564428.

71 Adogame and Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration*; Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*; Dorsch, "Cosmopolitans, Diasporists, and Griots."

72 Adogame and Weissköppel, *Religion in the Context of African Migration*.

73 van Hoven, "Saint Mediation in the Era of Transnationalism"; Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'?"; Obadare and Adebanwi, "The Visa God"; Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost*; Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise."

motives for migration,[74] 3) religious vitality as a result of migration,[75] and 4) the dynamics of religious networking in the diaspora.[76] African transnational religious actors rely on diverse social structures and networks operating on both local and global scales.[77]

A Shift toward Religious Identities

Africans face stigmatization and racism in the cities of Europe and America. Religious communities, churches and mosques, *dahiras*,[78] and small group meetings offer places of refuge, consolation, and belonging.[79] Many African youths find recourse in Pentecostal and other Christian and Islamic revivalism, all of which often share a repulsion for "traditional African culture." The youth are "attracted by the new religious movements and are joining (in large numbers) a discourse of morality and identity that holds out the promise of regeneration and collective power with transnational resonance."[80]

These religious networks offer frameworks for youth to create new networks promoting joint economic action and new work ethics, creating what Abbink

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74 Géraldine Mossière, "Mobility and Belonging among Transnational Congolese Pentecostal Congregations: Modernity and the Emergence of Socioeconomic Differences," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), https://brill.com/view/title/16411; Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare."

75 César, "From Babel to Pentecost"; Gusman, "Pentecôtisme ougandaise"; Andre Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 41–61; Damaris Seleina Parsitau and Philomena Njeri Mwaura, "Gospel without Borders: Gender Dynamics of Transnational Religious Movements in Kenya and the Kenyan Diaspora," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 185–209, https://brill.com/view/title/16411; Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

76 Parsitau and Mwaura, "Gospel without Borders: Gender Dynamics of Transnational Religious Movements in Kenya and the Kenyan Diaspora"; Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'?"; Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

77 Mossière, "Mobility and Belonging among Transnational Congolese Pentecostal Congregations: Modernity and the Emergence of Socioeconomic Differences."

78 From Arabic for "circle"; refers to Sufi religious organizations.

79 Benjamin F. Soares, "An African Muslim Saint and His Followers in France," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, no. 5 (September 2004): 913–27, doi:10.1 080/1369183042000245615; Adogame, "Engaging the Rhetoric of Spiritual Warfare."

80 Abbink, ed., "Being Young in Africa," 21.

calls networks of opportunity. Transnational Africans carry with them their sensitivity to spiritual power dynamics and a worldview influenced by African Traditional Religion; Muslims and Christians find ways, from within their respective traditions, to respond to and capitalize on the fears, needs, and understandings related to spiritual powers (good and evil) that make sense from within their perspective.[81]

The Pentecostal "Fit"

Pentecostalism has benefited from and adapted to globalization. Instead of attempting to reduce the religious to the nonreligious by explaining the rapid growth of Pentecostalism in terms of social theory, we may do better to link its success to its "fit" with globalization.[82] Common characteristics of global Pentecostalism include the presence of the Holy Spirit (evidenced by speaking in tongues), a conversion experience, the Prosperity Gospel, and a dualistic worldview; these facilitate access to a "message adapted to the global scale and experienced at the recognizable level of the human body."[83] Pentecostals appropriate the objects, signs, and discourses of salvation and transformation expressed in a global war on Satan, where personal suffering is linked to global conversion. This universal framework helps Pentecostals respond to the transnational problematic, aiding their movements between the individual and the collective, the sacred and the profane, the particular and the general.[84]

Pentecostalism offers an ethical framework that fits the challenges of the global and the local; it also offers ways to creatively balance outside forces with local knowledge.[85] Pentecostal churches help migrants process one of the great

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81 J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, "Mediating Spiritual Power: African Christianity, Transnationalism and the Media," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 87–103, https://brill.com/view/title/16411.

82 Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success"; Edlyne E. Anugwom, "The Bonnke Effect: Encounters with Transnational Evangelism in Southeastern Nigeria," in *Religion Crossing Boundaries: Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora*, eds. Afe Adogame and James V. Spickard (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 211–26, https://brill.com/view/title/16411.

83 Droogers, "Globalisation and Pentecostal Success," 57; Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost*; Anugwom, "The Bonnke Effect: Encounters with Transnational Evangelism in Southeastern Nigeria."

84 Corten and Marshall-Fratani, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 12.

85 Paul Gifford, "The Complex Provenance of Some Elements of African Pentecostal Theology," in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, eds. Andre Corten and Ruth R. Marshall-Fratani (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 62–79.

paradoxes of migration—that of living in two status systems, where "the gaining of status in one context is achieved by a loss of status in the other context."[86] In Pentecostalism, migrants find solutions to this paradox in two ways: 1) the church provides a social space for performing positive social status, and 2) "the essential embodied experience of charismatic religious experience is empowerment, with which migrants hope to overcome all obstacles hindering" them.[87] Young Muslims in the diaspora seek similar solutions.

Muslim Religious Identities

"Contemporary transnational migration can create people who find themselves unconnected with particular places, states or ethnic groups, but still faced with a burning question of who they are."[88] These deterrritorialized migrants may create "transnational imagined communities" united by religious identities. Muslims in the diaspora, for example, find and negotiate new ways of being Muslim.[89] Groups like the Muriddiya have learned to inhabit new local space in a way that results in a local rooting of the transnational network.[90] The Sufi experience of the *dahira* offers Muslims a communal space of belonging and solidarity, a place to perform social status, similar to what the church offers Pentecostals.[91] The *dahira* and other Muslim experiences of a close, ethnic diaspora community are contested.

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86 Boris Nieswand, "Charismatic Christianity in the Context of Migration: Social Status, the Experience of Migration and the Construction of Selves among Ghanaian Migrants in Berlin," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 255.

87 Boris Nieswand, "Charismatic Christianity in the Context of Migration," 255.

88 Adogame and Spickard, *Religion Crossing Boundaries*, 19.

89 Soares, "An African Muslim Saint and His Followers in France"; Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space"; JoAnn D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography: Sierra Leonean Muslims in America, Contemporary Ethnography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), http://www.ebrary.com/landing/site/bodleian/index-bodleian.jsp?Docid=10748744; Victoria Ebin, "Making Room versus Creating Space: The Construction of Spatial Categories by Itinerant Mouride Traders," in *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, eds. Barbara Daly Metcalf, Comparative Studies on Muslim Societies 22 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 92–109.

90 Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

91 Asamoah-Gyadu, "Mediating Spititual Power: African Christianity, Transnationalism and the Media"; D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography*; Johnson, "'The Proof Is on My Palm'"; Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

Strategies and Paradigms of Pre-migrants

A critique of existing research on transnationalism and religion reveals studies to be a bit lopsided, concerned only with the way migrants use religion *after* they have migrated. But the way would-be migrants instrumentalize religion only makes sense if that principle is already part of their everyday social relations. This critique looks at how transnational migration is imagined and treated as a spiritual phenomenon before people migrate.[92] This helps explain the intense spiritual activity of pre-migrants who consult African traditional practitioners, participate in Pentecostal visa prayer camps,[93] or seek the aid of a marabout or Muslim saint.[94]

In the Senegalese context, the social community is partly responsible for creating bias toward transnational networks and migration, where travel becomes a rite of passage and a social norm. Pre-migrants grow up with an *imaginaire migratoire* anchored in a transnational migration process where a culture of migration is maintained and constructed by observing the experience of migrants—a culture that permits entire generations to find meaning in a translocal experience. These patterns of migration can be viewed from two perspectives: 1) as a rite of passage, a transition from young person to adult; and 2) as a phenomenon that is redefining intergenerational relations linked to a growing individualization on the part of the youth.[95]

Cautions about Oversimplifying Transnationalism

Ricco believes it is vital to "dis-aggregate the so-called 'transnational community' by recognizing and analyzing its internal tensions and the plurality of trajectories emerging from the transnational spaces."[96] He is concerned that older conceptualizations of "ethnic group" not be substituted by "transnational community." He describes Senegalese transnational migration as people engaging in economic transactions across borders and living for extended periods away from their place of origin yet returning frequently as they seek to create a whole life economically, spiritually, and socially. "Transmigrants," Riccio observes, interact with the new society in complex ways, with multiple trajectories in the diaspora. Some transmigrants participate in the host culture and seek a place for themselves in the structure of society, while others primarily identify with the

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92 Obadare and Adebanwi, "The Visa God."

93 Obadare and Adebanwi, "The Visa God."

94 van Hoven, "Saint Mediation in the Era of Transnationalism"; Soares, "An African Muslim Saint and His Followers in France."

95 Mondain et al., "Migration et responsabilités intergénérationnelles."

96 Riccio, "From 'Ethnic Group' to 'Transnational Community'?," 585.

dahira life, emphasizing solidarity with other co-transmigrants even as some members secretly pursue autonomy and individuality.[97]

Additionally, researchers need to avoid homogenizing transmigrants and transnationality, to pay attention to gender and sexuality.[98] Consideration must also be paid to conflicts between diaspora groups—such as the conflict between various Islamic expressions—and how transmigrant Muslims view each other.[99]

Summary of Learnings about Transnationalism

Transnationalism is neither binational nor bipolar but an imagined translocal space inhabited in the local, with a constant awareness of the global.[100] People find ways to "write" this transnational community into the spaces wherever they live.[101] They take their religion with them when they move, adapting to the new location yet tightly connected to their community of origin. The back-and-forth flow of information, ideas, and relationships that happens as they adapt to the new local creates a translocal space that invigorates and renews religious communities at the same time as the participants are empowered and sustained. The new translocal space is neither completely here nor there; it inhabits an alternative space in between. This is not new in the history of people's experience of religious communities; what *is* new is the growing pace and pervasiveness of this experience for more and more people in the world.

Conclusion

One of the central issues of our time is the ever-increasing number of displaced people and refugees, a significant number of whom are youth. Conceptualizing these youth and their religious commitments in a globalized world—where migration and transnationality are the experience of increasingly greater portions of society—is an important lens for missiology. Young transmigrants have gifts for the communities where they settle. But will those communities receive the gifts? Can churches embrace these "social shifters," who may point out imbalances and bring hidden things into awareness? Could it be that God has "sum-

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97 Riccio, 597.

98 Ezra Chitando, "The Insider/Outsider Problem in Research on Religion and Migration," in *Religion in the Context of African Migration*, eds. Afeosemime U. Adogame and Cordula Weissköppel, Bayreuth African Studies Series, no. 75 (Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitinger, 2005), 79–94.

99 D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography*; Johnson, "'The Proof Is on My Palm.'"

100 Salzbrunn, "The Occupation of Public Space."

101 D'Alisera, *An Imagined Geography*.

moned from the margin"[102] these people to renew the church and to achieve his purposes in the world?

Churches and communities who are willing to have their eyes opened may find that the transnational vision of newcomers enables them to see opportunity in the margins, cross boundaries, and mediate contradictions. The flow of information, ideas, and relationships that happens in the creation of new translocal spaces has potential to invigorate and renew religious communities.

This potential warrants a call for further study of transnationality and missiology, including a review of the literature from 2012 to 2020 and additional analyses of migration patterns, taking into account the global refugee crisis that continues to reshape populations and the global church. Future research might also pair analysis of increased global migration with evidence[103] that in the United States, and potentially other locations, geographic mobility has declined for economic reasons and may be part of emerging rural-urban cultural and political divides.

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102 Lamin Sanneh, *Summoned from the Margin: Homecoming of an African* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

103 Richard Florida, "Why Some Americans Won't Move, Even for a Higher Salary," CityLab, May 30, 2019, https://www.citylab.com/life/2019/05/moving-location-new-city-how-much-cost-mobile-rooted-stuck/590521/.