

New religious immigrants in the Great Plains:
A study of mostly white congregations
receiving foreign-born pastors

by

Jan E. Todd

B.A., Southwestern College, 1991
M.Div. Saint Paul School of Theology, 1999

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

In 2019 in Kansas and Nebraska, 113 predominately white United Methodist churches were served by 84 foreign-born pastors, an increase of 223% since 2013. This is a new phenomenon in the region as the Great Plains Annual Conference has trained, vetted and deployed foreign-born pastors to mostly white locations at greater rates since 2013. I am interested in the relationships and level of trust that develops between the mostly white community and the foreign-born pastor, indicating their reception. I began my inquiry with the assumption that the immigrant-native relationship develops differently between foreign-born pastors and the mostly white communities as compared to other immigrant-native relationships and/or native and native-born pastor relationships in similar settings. This study was designed to observe, record, analyze and describe a baseline case for the purpose of future comparison to similar appointments in order to build theory that pertains to the explanation of how these relationships develop and their possible effects on society. Grounded in Georg Simmel's phenomenological theory utilizing "the Stranger" as ideal type and Nicolette-Manglos Weber's ideas on the role religion plays in the reception and assimilation of migrants, I used a qualitative mixed methods approach, acting as participant observer in both congregations in order to apply theory. Applying the aspects of the merchant/stranger and native community to the foreign-born pastor-mostly white community relationship under the social location of the local church, I gathered data through the tools of observation, artifact collection and in-depth interviews, to look for themes that might indicate what kind of relationships had developed. Finding three connecting themes between the two parties in two different locations, I was able to identify how the overarching values of faith, governance and family aided the development of relationships for some to the level of personal trust. Comparing these three themes, two mechanisms indicating how personal trust developed in this case were identified as *multiple mutual discoveries* and the development of the foreign-born pastor as a *non-threatening global-guide*.

Keywords: ethnography, immigration, phenomenological theory, religion, trust

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Matthew Sanderson

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Totals: 9

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Dedication

To Mitch, my love and to all those who build relationships that promote trust rather than fear.

Chapter 1 - White Congregations Receiving Foreign-Born Pastors on the Great Plains

In Kansas and Nebraska, several predominately white United Methodist congregations are receiving foreign born pastors as leaders and, anecdotally at least, seem to be receiving them well. The Great Plains Annual Conference Journal records from 2013-2019 indicate that the number of foreign-born pastors serving mostly white congregations increased from 26 to 84,ⁱ an increase of 223%. In conjunction, numbers of congregations served by foreign born pastors during that time rose from 47 to 113, an increase of 140%. Now, 11.28% of the 1,001 active UMC congregations in Kansas and Nebraska in 2019 are led by foreign-born pastors. For the purpose of this study I define a foreign-born pastor as: a person who was born and raised in their native country until the age of at least early teenage to early adulthood, but at some point, migrated to another country either to serve as a pastor or decided to enter the ministry while settling in the new country. For the most part, foreign-born pastors serving in the United States are non-white.

This study is motivated by practical/applied questions and scholarly/academic questions about this phenomenon. On the practical side, the infrastructure of a prominent religious organization is granting access to a limited but growing number of immigrants to serve as pastors in locations that, until recently, have had little experience with such relationships. As the Episcopal leadership of The Great Plains Annual Conference (GPAC), the formal employer of pastors and governing body of the region, endorses their placement in these new spaces, interest in their performance and reception continues to peak. The United Methodist process of appointment comes with the common expectation that pastors start with smaller appointments only to become upwardly mobile as a result of successful outcomes in each charge. Typically, that success is rewarded with appointments to larger, wealthier, multi-staffed congregations that require higher levels of trust in the leadership abilities of the Senior Pastor. These processes were developed at a time where the system reflected a more western patriarchal model when appointments were exclusively given to American white men. A more socially progressive denomination, the ordination of women, minorities and growing numbers of foreign-born pastors may reflect a more inclusive policy, yet it could also reveal a system that no longer attracts the

same level of white male candidates who would consider the pastorate a viable vocation. Either way, the clergy pool is diversifying.

Alongside this change, the quality of the match is increasingly part of the appointment equation, resulting in a lateral or even downward financial move for some. However, in most cases, each new appointment usually reflects upward mobility of the pastor in the system, both in salary package and status. In the last forty years, women have entered the ministry in the Great Plains through appointment and ordination with an overall experience of upward mobility. Today, several women occupy large church senior pastor positions and conference staff appointments indicating a positive reception from the conference and congregations in most cases. For foreign-born pastors, however, this journey of reception is just beginning. It may seem then, that the responsibility rests on the shoulders of the foreign-born pastor's ability to perform; that is, whether the pastor's performance level matches or exceeds that of fellow native-born pastors, both men and women, being considered for the same post. To a large degree this is true, and yet, the *reception* of these new immigrants by the mostly white congregations is equally as important. Chronicling the context, activity, narrative and underlying aspects of trust that exist in this particular reception is paramount to this research topic.

As a new type of immigrant-native relationship, I am fascinated with the possibility of the development of personal trust between two parties who seem like they would be the most distant of strangers. In general, trust is difficult to define let alone measure. Since the 1990's, theorists from various backgrounds have offered fresh insight concerning the role trust plays in the development of personal and social relationships (Möllering, 2001). I particularly like the realm of authors defining the aspects of trust through the exploration of Georg Simmel's work, whose ideal type characteristics I use later in this work to define the role of the foreign-born pastor. However minute, Simmel's writings are rich with thought concerning trust, often requiring a hermeneutical approach in order to unpack the "mystery" of his words (Möllering, 2001). I like Guido Möllering's exegesis of Simmel's views on trust as he presents them in "three elements :expectation, interpretation and suspension (Möllering, 2001). Of the three, the last involves a sense of "quasi-religious faith" that engages those involved in the relationship to "leap" from what is secure and known, to a place of imagined ground (Möllering, 2001). The discovery of themes and mechanisms that may point to the movement of trust from a generalized level of a "brokered" deal between the GPUMC, congregation and the foreign-born pastor to a

possible personal level through a kind of “suspension” of trust between the latter two parties is what this investigation was based on (Halevy, Halaliev and Cohen, 2020). It is from this perspective that my base ideas of reception of foreign-born pastors in mostly white congregations is building.

Congregations in the United Methodist Church are used to receiving new pastors every four to six years on average, and therefore practiced in receiving native-born strangers. However, a sense of familiarity still resides in this reception as most of the pastors are white men and women, many of whom grew up in Nebraska, Kansas or in other Plains states. On occasion, first- appointed females, persons of color, people from other regions of the country or even pastors with different political ideologies may alter the mechanisms of building trust within congregations due to unfamiliarity yet, even these relationships have some level of expected commonality through U.S. citizenship. A mostly white congregation receiving a foreign-born pastor as their religious leader seems to pose an even greater challenge of developing familiarity and trust as the respective cultures, at least perceptively, may appear farther apart.

Another comparative factor for white communities as they receive a foreign-born pastor is prior relationship with other immigrants in their communities and how they have developed. The question for many of these appointments is not whether these communities have dealt with and built relationships with immigrants ; there are locales across the Great Plains where industry and agriculture have attracted large enclaves of migrants among majority white populations. Yet in these sponsoring institutions, the likelihood of an immigrant receiving a position of power quickly, let alone developing a close personal relationship with a large white population seems rare at best. Because the GPAC relationship bestows power, leadership and a certain amount of expected intimacy to the assigned role of pastor, a new stage for this native-immigrant relationship is set. Thus, the way trust is acquired, and the quality of that trust may vary greatly as compared to other native-immigrant relationships. Trust in this case is multi-directional, including trust from the appointed foreign-born pastor, the receiving congregation, and to some extent the larger religious institution as all three hope the outcome will be a successful match despite the presumed differences. The idea is that trust will build from their common connection under the umbrella of shared religious beliefs and adherence to the Bible as well as the Book of Discipline which projects the general laws and guidelines of the denomination that expand beyond national borders and cultures. Quite possibly, the GPAC may not be aware of the

suspension of cultural rationality required of both parties as they engage their religious commonalities to begin the relationship. The thought of an immigrant leading a mostly white community in weekly religious rituals and activities of faith makes a degree of sense. It is from this place of agreement that I suspect the immigrant-native relationship develops into something more personal.

In general, all pastors come into a congregation from the position of being received by the authority of the institutional Church. Whether it be a large bureaucracy or a local “call committee” those, in charge decide whether a person is eligible and has the gifts to lead a particular religious community. In the United Methodist Church that authority comes from the General Conference. Because delegates at the quadrennial General Conference are the ones who decide the policies of The Book of Discipline, including who is eligible for ordination, i.e. women and people of color, the decision of what kinds of pastors a congregation may receive lies largely in the hands of that executive body. Written changes of the law from the top take time to enact at the local level, especially if it involves renegotiating power and authority between groups that have historically interacted from differing levels of equality. Additionally, those from the newly eligible groups may not be thrilled about the prospect of being a guinea pig appointment in a culture unaccustomed to welcoming someone different. In either case, the experiment of introducing these new groups of clergies to the field often takes places in the Annual Conferences that are less aesthetically attractive based on access to metropolitan or natural amenities. Even within those conferences, these clergy are typically given their first appointments as associates in larger congregations where they may blend in but wield less power or in communities where they may be granted more authority but stick out as different. The GPAC is such a conference where these types of trials and receptions occur.

One of the most recent demonstrations, relatively speaking, was the reception of women into full ordination in the precursor denominations of the United Methodist Church. The Evangelical United Brethren granted the rite in 1885 with the Methodist Church opening the order much later in 1956. The new denomination of the United Methodist Church, established in 1968, included female ordained elders, however it has taken decades for full reception across the global denomination. In the Great Plains, their reception has gone quite well. Currently, the GPAC deploys about as many women to churches as it does men. The demand for appointments in Kansas and Nebraska might be less competitive, causing the pool to be more diverse;

especially for those serving rural areas. This significant change also may indicate that the posting and receiving of women has been legitimized to the extent that most communities in the Great Plains consider this normal. If this normalization can happen for women under the jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church, it would seem quite possible for foreign-born clergy.

In 2019 where 10.4% of the 804 active clergy were foreign-born, serving 125 appointments, 113 of which (90%) were mostly white congregations it seems the reception of this group is following in the footsteps of female clergy. What adds more interest to the dynamic is the intersection of gender, race and immigrant status; this new cohort has added 16 females to the pool making up 19% of the foreign-born pastorate. The previous cultural work of employing women in ordained ministry may have sharpened the ability to become nimble in receiving new types of pastors including male and female foreign-born pastors. This, however, is not to say that The United Methodist Church is free of controversy concerning inclusion. Shared later in the introduction, a great debate is taking place about the legitimation of the ordination and marriage rights of the LGBTQ community in the global UMC. This argument involves the clash of cultural values in the global UMC. Churches outside of the United States are often perceived as “more conservative”, inciting worry about the settlement of foreign-born pastors in the local conferences from more liberal groups who want full inclusion of the LGBTQ community. Those in the U.S. who are more conservative, on the other hand, might welcome their presence assuming they would support more restrictive measures. I have found from my friendships with foreign-born pastors that this issue is much more complex than “siding” with one side or another. That said, it is clear that foreign-born pastors who take up residence in the GPAC add a new dynamic that not only involves their reception by local congregations, but also by their fellow clergy as they add their input to conversations on inclusion.

Although I’m interested in these operational outcomes their presence has on the larger religious systems, my project zeros in on the social interactions and reception of the foreign-born pastor in mostly white local congregations. First, I want to know how trust develops between the foreign-born pastor and the local congregation. Second, I explore the idea that the relationship between the foreign-born pastor and parishioners may develop differently than the native born pastor. Third, although more speculatively in this study, I consider that these new relationships are much different than the typical immigrant-native social exchange. With such a short history, it is exciting to not only consider how the reception of foreign-born pastors in the

local congregation might affect native-immigrant relationships in the United Methodist Church but also how the identification of this fresh field may create another venue to study how religious institutions act as a space of immigrant reception and assimilation. My work, then, focuses on a baseline theoretical investigation into the mechanisms of reception via the concepts of trust in communities experiencing this type of appointment.

My approach to this study involved a mixed methods model of participant observations, artifact analysis and in-depth interviews. Collectively, I identified underlying themes where the movement of generalized trust to personal trust presented itself in two communities with the appointment of the same foreign-born pastor at different times. Based on this core work, I am interested in using the outcomes of this study to examine similar cases to see if the same types of trust develop and what these anticipated results might say about the actions of the United Methodist Church as a change agent that might be developing a new kind of religious gateway for certain types of immigrants. Moreover, the organization may not only be equipping immigrant leaders with the possibility of developing personal trust with white communities, but unintentionally setting the groundwork for a type of moral change if congregant's worldviews shift due to new ideas brought about by these interactions. (Stolle, Dietlind, 2002).

Because this relationship has, as far as I know, yet to be explained, I grounded the social interactions I observed on Georg Simmel's depiction of social interactions between natives and "the Stranger"(Levine, 1971). Prior to my field work, I sensed that a major contributing factor to the initial success of these relationships revolved around some fascination and draw between the itinerant foreign-born pastor and the indigenous groups who live in the community full-time. I wanted to compare those descriptions to see if that theoretical hunch held up. Additionally, borrowing from Nicolette Manglos-Weber's work, I strove to notice the ways in which the religious location of the event served as both backdrop and cultural connector as these relationships developed. The combined lens of studying possible immigrant-native fascination under the safe haven of religious membership and affiliation seemed like good bones for the structure of this study. This seems to transcend the immigrant/native status in different kinds of transnational relationships, opening the two parties to each other via mutual discovery under the arena of shared religious values and curiosity in a globalized connection.

The Rise of the Global and Decline of the American United Methodist Church

Before getting into the research and narrative of this study, it is important to know the history and the make-up of the United Methodist Church in the Great Plains region as a whole. Membership in the American United Methodist Church in the United States is decreasing while increasing worldwide. Additionally, the increase in foreign born UMC clergy serving mostly white populations in the United States is also increasing. Both of these issues contribute to the causation of increased volume in foreign-born pastor presence.

Like all U.S. mainline Protestant denominations, membership in UMC has been in decline since the 1970's. In 1970, the total professing membership of U.S. United Methodist Churches was 10,671,774, whereas by 2010, it had decreased to 7,679,850. (<http://www.gcah.org/history/united-methodist-membership-statistics>). 1970 is key as these numbers reflect the effects of a denominational merger between the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church, which occurred on April 23, 1968. Denominational mergers tend to inflate numbers for a short period of time as the "new" denomination settles into patterns of the larger of the two groups. Usually, mergers happen for survival, but they often fail because there is not a change in missional purpose (Bandy, 2006). This seems to be the case concerning the United Methodist Church as the larger bureaucracy's restructuring did not stop the decline of attendance and membership loss in the United States.

As a result, many of the Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church United States (UMCUS) are consolidating and reorganizing resources to survive the changes. The United Methodist Church in Nebraska and Kansas has gone through such a consolidation. After a three-year course of action, the former Kansas East, Kansas West and Nebraska Annual Conferences united in August 2014 to create the Great Plains Annual Conference (GPAC). Since unification, one bishop and cabinet now administer 1,001 churches and clergy in two states (greatplainsumc.org/fastfacts). Figure 1 depicts the current boundaries of the new conference.

Alongside these localized changes are global changes in The United Methodist Church. In 2015, Chief Financial Officer Scott Brewer from the United Methodist Board of Finance and Administration stated: "the Global membership in the United Methodist Church passed the 12.5 million mark in 2012. Despite continuing its decline in the United States, the UMC maintained a trend of growth in developing countries, which greatly contributed to reaching the record number"

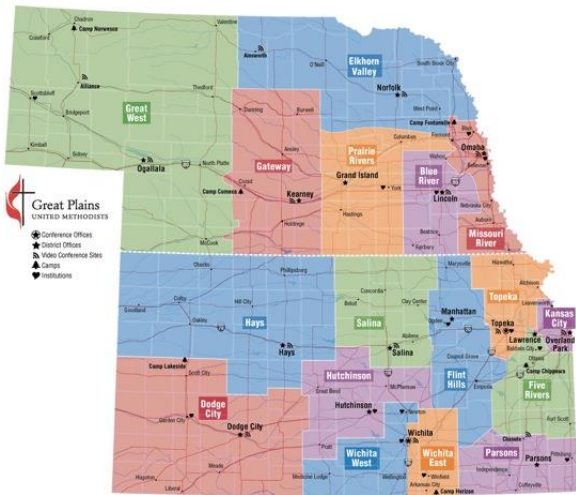


Figure 1 Great Plains Annual Conference → growth in the church is coming from the Global South, and especially from the continent of Africa, where 5,255,907 people claimed membership in 11 countries and 10 Annual Conferences in 2013, a 7.49% increase from 2012 (<https://juicyecumenism.com/2016/11/22/>). Furthermore, Methodist affiliates such as the Korean Methodist Church report a total membership of approximately 1,500,000 in 2017. These two growing bodies of Methodists have contributed new pools of clergy leadership to the United States and most importantly for this work, to the Great Plains Annual Conference.

It is important to note that these migrations are not due to sudden upturns in racial-ethnic minority constituents in the United Methodist churches. A study sponsored by the General Board of Finance and Administration revealed that minority populations in congregations across the United States have increased from 6.8% of the total congregations in 2000 to 8.6% in 2007, an increase of 1.8%. Yet, minority clergy increased from 9.1% of total clergy membership in 2000 to 11.8% in 2007, an increase of 2.7% (Combs, 2009). A follow-up study in 2008 found that the percentage increased even further to 12.3%. Thus, an average church-goer is more likely to experience the diversification of the UMCUS through a cross-cultural appointment than a major change in their congregation.

Table 1 illustrates the racial and ethnic composition of professing membership within the Great Plains conference UMC from 2013-2016 (ezra.gcfa.data.org/statistics). Three points stand out. First, it is clear from the data that the vast majority of United Methodist professing members in Kansas and Nebraska self-identify as white (94-95%) and this figure has remained stable. Second, although whites remained the predominant population in the Great Plains conference UMC, their population declined 4 percent (-8,629) from 2013-2016, or about 1 percent per year. Whites, therefore, represent the largest share of a declining total population. Third, there is small, but potentially meaningful growth in non-white groups over this period. Demographic change is a potential challenge to the GPAC as it learns to navigate not only a changing culture as an institution, but also how to serve the changing nature of UMC communities.

Table 1: Accumulated Kansas and Nebraska Conference 2013-2016 Great Plains Conference Totals:

Race	2013	% of Pop	2014	% of Pop	2015	% of Pop	2016	% of Pop	Total gain/loss
Asian	552	.2%	558	.2%	601	.2%	644	.3%	(+) 92
Afr. Am./Black	6133	2.8%	6081	2.8%	6168	2.8%	5771	2.7%	(-) 362
Hispanic/Latino	1121	.5%	1158	.5%	1267	.5%	1102	.5%	(-) 19
Native Am.	195	.08%	199	.09%	211	.09%	210	.09%	(+) 15
Pacific Islander	80	.03%	85	.03%	81	.03%	74	.03%	(-) 6
White	207069	95%	204728	94.8%	202859	94.7%	200875	94%	(-)6994
Multi-Racial	2790	1.3%	2922	1.4%	3003	1.4%	2987	1.4%	(+)197
Total Prof. Membership	217940	100%	215731	100%	214190	100%	210863	100%	(-)7,077

These relatively modest changes in the congregations are contrasted by much larger change among the pastorate. Indeed, existing data on racial/ethnic composition among members does not capture a key dimension of racial/ethnic change in the United Methodist Church; growth in the non-native, or foreign-born population of pastors in this religious institution.

Very little is known about the foreign-born pastorate in the United Methodist Church and even less is known about the relationships they have developed while serving their

congregations. The Great Plains Annual Conference collects data on place of birth for members of the pastorate, but other than yearly church reports, this new group's impact on the communities they serve has not been analyzed methodically. The Great Plains UMC, despite much interest in this new phenomenon, is just beginning to consider the changes foreign-born pastors bring to the entire system. Will they be accepted by mostly white congregations and be able to rise through the ranks of the institution? Will congregations and communities "give them a chance" to make an impression? Will they be well received or even more received differently than native-born pastors? Indeed, could this "fresh cohort" of non-natives present a possible advantage over and against native born pastors in dealing with attitudes towards immigrants due to their capacity to build relationships from a different vantage point than most pastors, let alone other immigrant groups?

Although I cannot make this presumption now, I would expect that if the GPAC, the largest organized Protestant body in Kansas and Nebraska does effectively receive these new religious immigrants both institutionally and at grassroots levels, social change concerning immigration should present on the societal level at some point in the future. However, the reception of foreign-born pastors is not happening in the isolation of social problems associated with immigration, intersectional social problems such as gender equality and racism still affect the institution of the United Methodist Church and its place in society. One of these issues must be discussed as it is the social problem that shows up in the newsfeed most often: the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in Global UMC.

The Great Divide

As the organization begins to adapt a nimbler system to absorb more immigrant pastors in mostly white areas, the denomination has also been engaged in a global debate for some time about the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in membership, including ordination. Of course, in the field of Queer Theory, there are even broader definitions of sex and gender identity that reach far beyond the scope of what the United Methodist Church defines as "the issue of human sexuality". This being said, the dialogue that is currently on the table focuses on the social roles of marriage and leadership rather than the full scope of gender and sexuality. Many of the regions where foreign-born pastors are coming from do not condone same-sex marriage, relationship and/or gendering other than the binary "male-female" distinction. Additionally, as

Central Conferences of Africa are highly influenced by these cultural binary attitudes and prohibitions, the United States and Europe are influenced by the opposite effect of growing acceptance of the LGBTQ community in all aspects of social life. Not all UMC conferences in the United States are fully supportive, but the majority are. However, when delegates from the Central Conferences, US Southeastern Jurisdiction and parts of the South Central Jurisdiction pool their efforts they become a voting powerhouse at the quadrennial General Conference where church discipline is set. This conservative cohort has consistently defeated the legislation to change the Book of Discipline to include LGBTQ into ordained leadership while affirming same sex intimate relationships and marriages. Without Central Conference votes, the support for legislation to support full inclusion of LGBTQ in the work and social life of the UMC would be ratified. This legislation has been introduced on the floor of General Conference since 1972 without passing. There is, however, a solution that has been proposed that might quell the bitter battle; quite interestingly, the protocol was initiated by an African Bishop.

A Protocol to Move Beyond Division

In 1968 the United Methodist Church came into existence from the work of two Wesleyan denominations, The Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodist Church to form a new denomination. One of the greatest acts of this union was the abolishment of segregation based on race, something already practiced by the EUB. This small victory however would not mask larger divisions that remained such as, racism, sexism, views on abortion and the inclusion of the LGBTQ to name a few. In some cases, much progress has been made concerning these social problems. Yet, as women and minorities gained full access to ordination in the church throughout the last half of the 20th century, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and queer people struggled for that same recognition. Support for full inclusion of LGBTQ members and clergy has increased in the United States and Europe (Pew Research,2019) but coincidingly the African Central Conferences' growing numbers and representation cancel these votes when presented on the floor. Subsequently, heated arguments ensue at each General Conference with more divisive group-affiliated conservatives and progressives battling without resolve.

A Special Session of General Conference set in 2019 was designed to finalize the debate but failed to create cohesion as the international body legislated even more restrictive language regarding LGBTQ inclusion. The US and European progressives and centrists were devastated.

Recognizing the exorbitant amount of costs, both financial and psychological, in sustaining this never-ending argument, a new protocol was presented suggesting that the more conservative faction which had actually “won” the last round of the debate leave and form a new denomination. Bishop John Yambusa from the Sierra Leone Episcopal Area acted quickly after the results of Special Conference failed to dampen the flames of outrage and disagreement. Drawing several key leaders from the multiple positions while employing a mediator to guide the process, the group constructed a proposal to make pathways for maintaining the United Methodist Church as a denomination while exiting certain groups with resources and funding to start other denominations.

The cohort of leaders, who were not formally commissioned by the larger legislative body, composed, signed and vowed to support the protocol above all other plans. In short, the protocol suggested that The United Methodist Church retain its status and strike all language restricting LGBTQ inclusion from the Book of Discipline, thus allowing full inclusion, while Annual Conferences and local churches would vote by (2024) whether to remain in the United Methodist Church or disaffiliate. (Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation, 2019) This proposal was to be presented in May of 2020 at General Conference in Minneapolis, MN however due to the Covid19 pandemic, is being rescheduled for 2021 in the same location. No matter when and if this protocol is adopted the disunity caused by this issue might have some potential impact on growing number of immigrant pastors serving mostly white congregations; whether it has a negative or positive impact, however, is not yet known.

Some speculate that foreign-born pastors would leave in mass to join the more traditionalist denomination; I am not so sure about that anecdotal assessment. I contend that though *some* may leave the United Methodist Church, the greater draw to maintain close ties with a system of opportunity that connects foreign-born pastors to a larger professional gateway of appointment may supersede the debate on human sexuality. Much lies ahead in understanding the reception of foreign-born pastors in The United Methodist and/or the possible newly formed branches depending on the outcome of the May 2021 rescheduled General Conference. Either way, the field will still be ripe for study as their presence as religious leaders in mostly white congregations in any denomination creates new immigrant-native relationships that have not been previously experienced or examined in the United States.

A New Reception of Immigrants in White Communities

Another goal of this study is the introduction of a vantage point that gives a different narrative when studying immigrant reception into white communities. There is much prior research on immigrant assimilation into established religious groups of similar ethnic ties (Cabell, 2007; López-Sanders, 2008; Min, and Jang, 2015; Vásquez, 2008). There is also research on the more specific question of how religious immigrant laity are welcomed by mostly white congregations who decide to host and support new immigrants as they adjust to new forms of life (Cabell, 2007; Rehwaldt, 2015). In their studies, the power of the reception lies in the native-born communities' willingness to serve the lower status group. However, there is very little, if any, research on foreign-born *pastors* who migrate to the United States in order to *serve* mostly white congregations. Here, the power of acceptance would seem to still rest with the majority white population, but there is reason to expect that the processes of integration may be different due to the level of intimacy and trust inherent in the pastor-congregation relationship.

Most immigrants in the United States don't typically baptize, perform marriages and officiate funerals for mostly white populations. Yet, in Kansas and Nebraska, growing numbers do. This provides an opportunity to look at an under-studied dimension of immigrant incorporation. Again, how does receptivity work? What factors shape more 'successful' receptions? How do pastors' characteristics interact with congregational characteristics to influence receptivity? Are congregations receptive because they are expected to "receive the foreigner" as a kind of Christian altruistic practice? Or, are foreign-born pastors performing at levels that satisfy congregants enough that their ideas about immigration play second fiddle, so to speak, in the relationship?

Up to this point, an important factor concerning my interest in this subject has gone unnamed; I am an Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church and a sociologist. I have been interested in the phenomenon of the foreign-born pastorate entering the ministerial field in the Great Plains for approximately 10 years. My early curiosity which centered on how these new pastors would "fit in" and perform has been replaced by greater interest in how they, from their varied backgrounds and cultures, will shape The United Methodist Church in the United States. It is almost commonplace knowledge that white religious Americans are declining in number while also shifting politically more towards the right, conservative end of the political spectrum. The Public Religion Research Institute presented a report in 2016 that "white

Christians now account for fewer than half of the public” whereas white Christian Democrats have become a minority in their party as Protestant Evangelical Christians dominate the Republican party (Jones, Cox 2016, pg. 7). Comparatively, only 29% of Democrats are white Christians whereas 73% of the Republican Party are white Christians (Reinhart, 2018; Rehwaldt, 2015). This shrinkage and shift are certainly happening in the United Methodist Church today as presented earlier. Yet, the juxtaposition of what is happening across a good portion of mostly white United Methodist congregations as they experience immigrant leaders in majority Republican Kansas and Nebraska against the landscape of changes in the United States concerning immigration and religion is yet another reason I want to study this relationship; especially if the reception of these pastors eventually yields enough trust to influence parishioner’s worldviews.

Turning to the impact this might have on communities in the Great Plains, Methodists are still a relatively large religious population influencing Kansas and Nebraska culture and politics. In a 2017 Pew Research report, 9% of all adults in Kansas and 8% of Nebraskans were still claiming to be Methodist (<http://www.pewforum.org/>). As the United States grapples with the issues of immigrant reception and immigration policy, it seems interesting that at the same time, the United Methodist Church in the Plains region is actively sending immigrants as leaders to congregations that might struggle with these issues. Most United Methodists, 45%, lean Republican and 45% of those lean Conservative according to Pew Research. (Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, May 11, 2015) In a recent Gallop poll, concerns about immigration “rose to 14% from 10% in June 2018” with 21% of Republicans deeming it the number one issue (Reinhart, R.J. June 19, 2018). With this landscape, another question arose concerning this particular study; how does a receiving congregation with expected Republican majorities receive immigrant pastors whose very presence might represent a contentious social problem? Furthermore, how is power experienced in this new relationship? Do the normalized conditions of welcoming the immigrant into a mostly white community change because the immigrant comes with a certain level of authority? That is, by flipping the role of the immigrant from *receptor* of mission assimilation by mostly white religious populations to *leader and possible guide* of religious white communities, does a distinctive relationship develop between the immigrant and the native that has not yet been thoroughly explored?

Historically, American white religious organizations often socialize their members to think of cultures outside the U.S. as the *receiver* of missionary aid associated with missionary development and evangelism that promoted the spread of democracy to receiving peripheral countries in the last century (Woodberry, 2012). That same attitude carries over into the receiving of immigrant cultures into the United States using this script. Does the introduction of this new relationship and its social location in the church affect that white missionary script? In some cases, does it transform the perspective altogether, altering the scripts to be more culturally relative rather than ethnocentric? Again, I cannot answer these questions as of now, but hope to address them in the future as I accumulate more information from case studies.

Before heading into the field to examine these relationships, however, I found it necessary to explore the relationship from the practical standpoint i.e. the evaluative levels of success applied to every appointive pastor as found in comparing year-end reports. I call this my .5 step before I conducted my qualitative mixed methods portion of the research. I spent several months exploring conference numbers, compiling a database in order to run simple regressions that might reveal an underlying numerical relationship between foreign-born pastors and their congregations. Although these numbers can vary based on “accurate reporting” and padding, I found it important to compare them just in case they revealed some variation concerning success of the churches that had foreign born pastors assigned to them as compared to native born pastors. Measuring standard “indicators” that are often used to determine the integration of *any* pastor, regardless of origin of birth, lie in the effects of an appointment on *annual income*, *worship attendance* and *church membership*. From my own experience as an ordained pastor, congregations initially react to new appointments through their checkbook and their presence i.e. numbers fluctuate based on first impressions. To analyze this data, I used simple regressions to compare congregations led by foreign-born pastors and congregations led by native-born pastors on indicators of *annual income*, *worship attendance* and *membership* between the years 2013-2016. This data didn’t produce any valid results pointing to the success of foreign-born pastors over and above native born pastors during that span of time. This was not unexpected as their presence in mass is fairly new. However, the numbers did verify that ordained elders serving a congregation for more than six years yielded higher annual income, worship attendance and membership (Appendix A). This is important as the majority of foreign-born pastors are seeking

full ordination which places them in the clergy pool that expects larger appointments in the long run (Appendix C).

Satisfied that the quantitative work was not the route in which I would discover indications of growing trust and reception of foreign-born pastors, I turned my sights to finding a foreign-born pastor who was willing to let me observe, participate, analyze and interview them and the congregation they were appointed to. I understood that not all foreign-born pastors' experience serving the Great Plains UMC was uniform, nor so was each congregation that had received a foreign-born pastor. This fledgling research was not designed to answer the entirety of my questions and the scope I intend to take this research, but create a groundwork setting from which to explore the posed questions and begin developing theory. The way I got at this was to keep in mind Simmel's analysis of "the Stranger" as an ideal type situation, placing the foreign-born pastor and congregations I observed into the larger representative characterizations of the ideal types presented in this famous work (Levine, 1972). Although the original types were composed in late 19th century rendering the hypothetical social interactions of the traveling "stranger/merchant" and the native population they take residence with, the substitution of the foreign-born pastor as stranger and local congregation as native community seemed like a great way to test Simmel's theory while creating an updated version of the ideal type situation. This does not close the gap of experience but helps to ground it. My work starts to answer the larger question knowing that future comparison of this baseline will involve differing conditions including the pastor's country of origin, gender, type of congregation and location among other things. With the definitions of my distinctive model of the "stranger" relationship set as the one of the major theoretical backdrops for this study, the search began for the second theoretical stage, the religious location where a foreign-born pastor was assigned to a local, mostly whited congregation.

The three largest regions represented in the foreign-born pastorate in the Great Plains Annual Conference are South Korea, the Central Conferences of Africa (see Appendix B) and Central America. I came to the conclusion that I wanted to find a pastor either from South Korea or one born in the Central Conferences of Africa because there are looser ties to enclaves of ethnic communities from their regions, whereas there are strong ties of Latinx pastors serving mostly Hispanic communities that have migrated to the region. This does not mean that there are no Korean or African congregations in the conference, in fact they too are growing in number.

We have more Hispanic communities and ministries, however, that have garnered heavy recruitment of bilingual pastors to specifically serve these larger communities of immigrants and thus might introduce a different focus that drives the aim of this study off course. With this in mind, I began to deduce who to study at this time and place.

I began looking then, for a pastor who had been born in either South Korea or the continent of Africa, specifically those connected to the Central Conferences of the United Methodist Church. Another aspect that I considered was my own accessibility to the congregation I would study. The ability to attend worship services weekly and have access to the communities through a short drive would ensure closer contact throughout the study. I then narrowed the pool of pastors to pick from within the United Methodist District that I reside in which is the Wichita Area District. I also wanted to choose a pastor who had been in the congregation that they had been assigned to for more than a year, preferably more. The reason for this is that the “first year” is considered a “honeymoon” period which could yield false impressions. After narrowing the field, there were at least 8 pastors who fit the description in my District. After a few asks, Pastor Tazoon Jacob Maforo who was serving Caldwell United Methodist Church in Caldwell, Kansas agreed to the process.

Pastor Maforo, or Pastor Jacob as I came to feel comfortable addressing him, had been born in Zimbabwe, grown up in the United Methodist mission community there and had migrated to the United States in the 1990’s. He was in his sixth year as pastor to a two-point charge of Caldwell UMC and Corbin UMC. He was an ideal candidate. I did have a concern that he might be appointed to a new congregation because he had been there for so long and was increasing in status in the United Methodist Church. The time period that I had planned to observe Pastor Jacob was through the Spring and Summer of 2019, which straddles the appointment season that moves pastors in July. We decided it was worth the risk as he, too, was excited about the study. Yet, in June of the observation, indications that Pastor Jacob would move to another appointment began to arise. I asked if he would be willing to let me continue my observations, participation and interviews in one of two new communities that he was appointed to. Thankfully, he agreed, and the study was expanded. After approval from the IRB to change the research design, I ended up observing Pastor Jacob in Caldwell, where he served for six years, then followed him to Belle Plaine UMC, where I was able to observe the new appointment after its first 6 months. As mentioned, this was the “honeymoon” period but with

regard to my observations and interviews, this phase seemed to affect the validity of my work there very little. In fact, it ended up being a fortunate conundrum giving breadth to the study.

Belonging to a community, even if the community presents itself as welcoming, involves more than being present and known by the members; it involves trust. Initially people tend to assign pastors in the United Methodist Church a certain level of generalized trust that travels with them from the authorities of appointive cabinet; over time this may develop into personal trust if the pastor cultivates close relationships with them. Of course, with each member or family, the levels of intimacy will vary; often, some come to adopt the pastor as family, others may come to respect their role, and some will not receive the pastor at all. This experience is not limited to foreign-born pastors but at some degree is experienced by all pastors receiving a new appointment. My observations of Pastor Jacob at both Caldwell and Belle Plaine United Methodist churches gave indication that he was good at building relationships with the goal of earning trust not for trust's sake; but to effectively lead people to grow in their faith through genuine, intimate connection. The charge to impress the congregations and their communities did not rest solely on his impression as an immigrant who was black but as a Pastor and spokesperson for God. However, Pastor Jacob did not ignore the fact that he, too, represented the role of "being different" in the midst of homogenous cultures and embraced the opportunity to share his perspective as he learned to understand theirs. Intuitively, it made sense to capture the intersection of these relationships and how this approach may have helped Pastor Jacob's reception in both congregations.

My Field of Research

My research studying the mechanisms of reception of a foreign-born pastor revolved around the reception of Pastor Jacob as spiritual leader in two mostly white congregations where this type of appointment had never occurred. A short description of both congregations and the dates of my work with them is described below.

Congregation 1: Observation April 2019 to July 2019 Caldwell United Methodist Church, established in 1881, with a congregation that is majority white with a few mixed-race children. Located in Sumner County about 2 miles from the Oklahoma border. Self-sustaining farming and ranching community that serves a larger rural community. Almost all members are employed in the area with some commuting to Wichita. Access to Wichita via 12 miles to turnpike and 50 miles to Wichita. Census 2010: Population: 996 Median Income: \$39, 479 Poverty: 21.8% White: 92% next largest group Hispanic: 4%
(<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2009900-caldwell-ks/>)

Congregation 2: Observation October to January 2020 Belle Plaine United Methodist Church, established in 1871 with a congregation that is majority white with mixed race members and children. History of a self-sustaining farming and ranching town that eventually became a bedroom community to Wichita Metro. Mostly employed in Wichita with access via 6 miles to Kansas turnpike and 11 miles to Wichita Metro. Census 2010 Population: 1,585 Median Income: \$56,750 Poverty: 8.2% White: 91% next largest group Hispanic: 7%. (<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2005500-belle-plaine-ks/>)

This initial investigation seeks to understand the underlying processes of reception of a foreign-born pastor by two mostly white congregations at different stages of the relationship; one long-term and one in its infancy. By observing social interactions, practices, symbols, artifacts, verbal cues and in-depth narratives of the experience, I began the work of developing a base theory of reception based on the movement of types of trust exhibited, documented and analyzed in this case. My hope is to continue to build my theory by comparing this baseline case to similar congregations who also are mostly white and have been appointed a pastor who was born outside of the United States.

For this stage of my investigation, I used qualitative tools that complement each other by revealing aspects of trust through participant observation, artifact collection and in-depth interviews in order to understand and develop a narrative of what was going on. After this work, I collected themes that helped me identify characteristics that indicated the presence of personal trust between the foreign-born pastor and their congregations and communities. In this case, I have identified that the generalized trust and power invested in the foreign-born pastor by the UMC as well as certain components brought to the table by Pastor Jacob are possible pre-conditions of a good reception. Because the main groups of study and Pastor Jacob were united under the “sacred canopy” (Berger, 1967) of Christianity and the understood United Methodist appointment process, a new space for an immigrant leader was created that without this structural support, might not have been possible. Conversely, most congregations are on their best behavior raising levels of hospitable welcome because they, too, are expected to give a pastor a chance in an altruistic way. After the introduction, however, developing personal trust to a level where a sense of familiarity and kinship occurred in some cases relied on the continued interactive work of Pastor Jacob and the mostly white communities he served.

I also explore the possibility that the mechanisms of reception and developing personal trust were further sparked within the receiving communities by the challenge of receiving a

stranger, someone unlike them, causing interactions and reactions with this particular person to be different than those who are not considered “strangers” i.e. native born pastors, at the same level. Additionally, because these relationships were maintained due to customary weekly worship practices and church work, the discovery of similarities amidst the strangeness may have played a role in receiving Pastor Jacob more closely due to the emotion of surprise. This element often aids a sense of closeness between strangers as it is a delight and often a learned insight into our common humanity. (Levine, 1972) One would hope the dynamics of this new relationship, whether presenting as positive, negative or neutral, will be evaluated as a new space from which to study immigrant-native relationships where the set-up of power and reception between the two parties looks much different than receptions in other settings and climates.

Chapter 2 - A Different Kind of Gateway: A Different Kind of Relationship

In a Meet the Press interview on April 17th, 1960 Martin Luther King Jr. said, “it is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o’clock on Sunday morning” (King, 1960). Sixty years later, this still seems to be the case in Mainline denominations of which the United Methodist Church is a part. The Religious Landscape Study from Pew research indicates that 86% of Mainline congregations identify as White, which seems a far cry from an integrated system. (Pew Forum: America’s Changing Religious Landscape, 2015). Manglos-Weber states that “mixed-race congregations remain rare and difficult to sustain, even though many Christian leaders and laypeople consider such churches beneficial (Manglos-Weber, 2018). The problem suggested here, then, is not that Christians do not want to be integrated but that people do not know *how* to become integrated with a large history of racism and shame to overcome. Integration is more than a religious problem in the United States as education systems, cities, and all walks of life still show signs of segregation. The introduction of foreign-born pastors into mostly white congregations may be one way to come at this problem, creating space, at least, for Christian communities to face their fears and prejudices on a different platform. It may be grand to suggest that such a grass-roots movement could have an effect on the national issues, but I still believe that those involved in the practice of religion, even in the declining Mainline church, still have the power to positively influence the public sphere on issues such as this. To add to that thought, I think the act of one system experimenting with a new way of doing things, especially when it involves integrative work, is a reflection of larger changes going on in the United States and around the globe. The institution is not dying, it is adapting.

The most famous work of Max Weber identifies such an influential adaption from the religious sector as he documented the historical religious practices adopted by French and German Huguenots that eventually aided the development of capitalism as it replaced the dying feudal monarchy (Weber [1908] , 2002). The core capitalist system from which the United States and the larger western world operate still echoes their religious influence, including how labor is seen as a sign of productive piety and our tendency to view vocation as a calling (*Beruf*), a term associated with divine guidance (Weber [1908], 2002). Their initial changes developed

attractive base components and values that shaped the infrastructure and superstructures of the early colonialist as they abandoned the old systems, both economic and religious, through their fight for independence and the establishment of a new country. Durkheim points out that in times like this, the hold of *anomie* on society, the sense of normlessness, catches people in the wake as systems that dysfunction enter an adjustment period where the practices of the larger power structures no longer meet the needs of society (Durkheim, 1951). It is from that kind of place where the ideas of salvation and calling developed out of such disassociation with the larger systems of religion and government that transformation took place. My work places the introduction of foreign-born pastors in such a realm as I believe our society and its institutions are once again undergoing a major transformation from nation-state market systems to globalization. This echoes the vantage point several classical theorists hold that social institutions, as they change, often introduce new groups to the mix that may have been under the radar and gone unnoticed until the trace evidence of their social influence on attitudes is investigated, often centuries later. This is where the importance of ethnographic studies play a part in capturing these shifts earlier.

To begin to investigate how the UMC might be influencing the larger picture of integration and immigrant-native relationships, I believe a deeper micro-level approach is necessary in locating and observing religious locations where new groups are being introduced as transformation of society occurs. My case study is about this kind of adaption, both at the micro-level as practiced through the receiving of a foreign-born pastor in mostly white local churches and on the macro-level as the UMC welcomes and deploys these new religious immigrants, aiding to their validation with society. My thought is that this adaption might have a larger impact on the local community first as foreign-born pastors are introduced as someone new who represents a different culture or viewpoint of the world. It would not surprise me if the congregations receiving a foreign-born pastor gain some attention from their surrounding community as they adapt to this new relationship while remaining steady in their evangelism. The sponsoring body, i.e. the UMC, both institutionally and locally, promotes these interactions with an immigrant as they send them as a pastor to an entire community. This type of social action concerning the impact of religious institutions on the integration of immigrants and native populations appears to be a different approach to the social problem of segregation.

Most research on the subject of racial and ethnic integration involves whole religious institutions and congregations receiving immigrants as a missionary call. My investigation follows a slightly different route. Although the reception of foreign-born pastors by mostly white congregations may actually be a form of mission as it grants the opportunity for an immigrant and their family to settle with fairly strong ties, the idea that this is an act of charity seems far from the process. This dynamic of equal integration as it occurs on two religious' planes, both local and institutional, appears new enough, at least on the sociological front, that research on this topic is minimal. Studies I have come across concerning integration often focus on either the role of religious groups as they assist immigrant populations into new spaces or how minority groups settle into well-known migrant gateways such as "Los Angeles, New York, Miami, San Francisco, Chicago, Dallas and Houston" through religious connections (Waters and Jimenez, 2005). Although some of the congregations I will eventually research may lie in cities, most of them are situated in more rural or suburban areas. There has been growing interest in researching the impact of immigration to new gateways, especially in the Midwest (López-Sanders, 2012; Rehwaldt, 2015, Waters, and Jiménez, 2005). Many of these studies concentrate on Hispanic populations migrating to gain low-wage, low skill jobs in agriculture and the meatpacking industry, which also brings problems to my comparison as the "group" I am studying comes from across the globe. I do like the thought, though, that some kind of gateway is developing through the institution of the Church, a kind of religious gateway.

I struggle with limiting the traditional use of the term "gateway" to only apply to the spatially bordered metropolitan areas that receive large groups of immigrants through labor and vocation. What if the UMC, a religious organization that locates itself across the globe with its famous founder John Wesley's line "the world is my parish", acts as a religious gateway for certain immigrants who are also being received through their labor and vocation? Would not the term "gateway" apply? This could be especially true when considering how World Systems and Global Networking camps challenge the idea that borders and nation states are the only spaces that define us and our labor. To this point, I believe that Peggy Levitt, who supports the defining of "new borders" states it best: "if transnational belonging is the wave of the future, religion is likely to be its principal stage" (Levitt, 2007). I could not agree more. I know the definition of immigrant gateways is fairly solid. I do offer the possibility that expanding the spatiality of the term to include spaces where immigrants are received by institutions and organizations that reach

beyond borders adds more robust explanation of certain types of assimilation. Furthermore, I think this expansion would add a different viewpoint of how these “institutional” or “religious” gateways depict the way in which the native populations receive immigrants.

I suggest that entry into these new base locations, like the ones I am studying, might supply a different kind of native-immigrant interaction to observe; one that appears more intimate as it *draws* white populations *into* the leadership space of a foreign-born pastor where they are expected to interact weekly and often for several years. My research of these interactions varies from traditional immigrant reception studies as my approach observes the reception of the foreign-born pastor as religious leader of the mostly white population, analyzing the level of trust and relationship that develops between the two parties. In this case, 11:00 a.m. on Sunday may be the most *integrated* hour of the week for certain United Methodist congregants whose pastor has migrated from outside of the U.S. and assumed a position of religious authority in their lives.

Another reason my research differs from traditional immigrant assimilation studies is inquiry into the role of this “new gateway institution”, so to speak, i.e. the UMC as it legitimates this new relationship as a rational choice. This validation comes through top-down communication from the highest authorities with assumed mutual agreement from local churches. United Methodist memberships require vows of support for the church system, therefore theoretically agreeing to a level of generalized trust in those who make appointments; even if that appointment might not appear like a “rational choice” at first glance to local congregation. The institution and those involved in maintaining it, including seminaries, Boards of Ordained Ministry and the Episcopal leadership tend to make the rational choice to include and recruit these new groups. Foreign-born pastors are the most recent group to be received, as conferences such as the GPAC continue to replicate their validation through increased appointments each year. Even though some of these appointments fail, the success rate is satisfactory enough for the GPAC and many local congregations to legitimate the increase of foreign-born pastors by 223% since 2013. I find Jürgen Habermas’ definition of rationality especially helpful in describing how this new relationship is legitimized, stating “rationality is understood by the disposition of speaking and acting subjects that is expressed in modes of behavior for which are good reasons or grounds” (Habermas, 1984). What undergirds this rationality is the right of argumentation, or the ability for that which is being suggested to be

refuted by the group, meaning that if rejection was high enough, this avenue of adaptation would cease. This does not seem to be happening in the GPAC. Instead, the reception seems more “peaceable” with each new year, a reaction Simmel also applies to eventual reception of the stranger as native communities rationalize them as a type of member (Levine, 1971).

Keeping with the idea that institutional gateways might exist, one might think that corporations hiring immigrants might be a probable comparison point for my work. I agree that certain industries do legitimate the employment and residence of immigrant workers in mostly white communities from the top down, which is similar to the UMC. I would even say they provide some space for relationships to develop with native born co-workers but that the type of relationship is much different than the type I am studying. First, the pastoral role and almost instant status that accompanies the foreign-born pastor’s assignment grants a different kind of intimate access to congregants and the local community that some white residents might not even have access to after living there for years. Sunday worship, funerals, hospital visits, marriages, personal counseling; all these interactions plus many others are immediately possible the minute the foreign-born pastor arrives. I cannot envision this kind of intimate access being granted at the same level by local white residents to immigrants, even if they have worked with each other for years. Second, congregants and community members are not in competition with pastors for their jobs. In contrast to the typical “Latino threat” identified by researchers studying mostly white populations reacting to Hispanic populations moving into their communities, this position is specialized and professional, much like hospital or educational administration. In the case of the foreign-born pastor, their presence may be deemed “saving grace” if the pastor is highly qualified, performs well, raises the status and profile of the church thus creating benefits for the parishioners in the process (Rehwaldt, 2015). Because the foreign-born pastor comes with a package, per se, of institutionally-supported social capital and generalized trust, vetted by the conference ordination process (see Index B), they start from a place in their relations with congregants and community members that would seem to be much stronger than the relationships studied under the corporate institution. My assumption would be that the “reasons or grounds” developing these relationships under the possible corporate “institutional gateway” might not require the same level of rationale.

Another possible contribution to the likelihood of personal reception of foreign-born pastors in mostly white communities is the investment in assimilation processes as they prepare

for their clerical role. As mentioned earlier, the vetting process, including mastery of English, sermon preparation, the ability to articulate theology and full knowledge of the Disciplinary guidelines they will be responsible for all must be met before they move forward in the ordination process. Additionally, the continued mastering of these components helps them rise through the ranks, gaining higher status, salary and responsibility in the organization. These skills are similar to Mary C. Water and Tomás R. Jiménez's "core measurable aspects" of successful integration of immigrants into new communities: 1) socio-economic status 2) spatial concentration 3) language assimilation and 4) intermarriage (Waters and Jiménez, 2015). Based on studies of mostly European immigrants who arrived 100+ years ago in traditional gateways, these aspects provide a base comparison of successful assimilation, but do not exhaustively describe what makes successful integration. For example, newer destinations, or gateways, offer potentially new forms of integration because these locations are smaller, allowing more interaction between immigrants and native-born residents. Additionally, the power of religious belief as a grounding device may give even greater access to integration at an earlier stage, including the four core measurable aspects because of continued interactions with the same people with a common "religious" language (Waters, Jiménez, 2015).

I noticed a kind of grounding and improved assimilation while observing Pastor Jacob and his family as they interacted with their communities in ways that encouraged the development of these core aspects. The acquisition of better language skills often came directly from Pastor Jacob's leadership and developed friendships as he allowed for critique of his phrasing and pronunciation. Other times this skill development came through his family, especially his children, who had a grasp of American English because they were raised here. The Maforo's socio-economic status in the community was already established with the vocational status and set salary package that included housing and health insurance; benefits other community members could only dream of. The family's spatial concentration was something noted in the personal interviews as community members attested the Maforo's were regulars at school functions, including participation in sports and arts programs. Even the possibility of intermarriage presented itself as the children interacted with their peers, going to dances and social events as potential partners. In comparing the Maforo family to secular immigration assimilation processes, they appeared not only assimilated, but integrated. But what of research that takes into account the religious influence of receiving immigrants based on assimilating

them into the host congregations and communities through membership and participation? They exist, albeit located more on the missionary front of the white population rather than institutional integration of immigrant leadership. It is in this arena that I find several conversation points in relationship to my work.

Laura López-Sander's research comparing two types Catholic and Protestant congregations in the south as they worked to assimilate Latinx communities into their membership revealed the rational choices immigrant communities used to decide where to belong (Lopez-Sanders, 2012). Common attractions occurred in both institutions such as Spanish-speaking worship, social services, and advocacy programs. Her study showed that Latinx gained higher levels of social capital in Protestant congregations as compared to Catholic congregations, especially if they were mostly Hispanic. In fact, "(s)ome moved out of Hispanic Catholic congregations to join white Protestant churches" increasing their "social and cultural capital by virtue of the religious ties with white southerners" (López-Sanders, 2012, pg. 150). Her proposition that Hispanic immigrants' benefits chose the benefits of social capital among whites over and above the familiarity of worshipping with like ethnic groups resonates with other theorists who study the connections of religion and immigrant assimilation. Manglos-Weber, who I rely on heavily for much of my theory, found that some of those she interviewed, especially professionals, felt more comfortable in mostly white congregations compared to worshipping with fellow Ghanaian immigrants (Manglos-Weber, 2018). She found that the social and cultural capital gained from white religious ties often outweighed the need to be among and with Ghanaians; at least in church. I will delve into her work in more detail later in this chapter.

What I find interesting in both studies was the apparent rational choice these immigrants made to risk rejection from mostly white religious groups. The initial expected discomfort of "sticking out" or "being different" is worth the possible gain of being received, bringing with it leverage for assimilation that could aid social mobility. Reflexively, the receiving congregation's risk of changing the dynamics of their congregation by inviting "the other" seems rationalized by possible gains that diversifying brings, such as cultural capital, exposure to different viewpoints and increased membership. I see similar social exchanges happening with Pastor Jacob and his congregations where the risk to rise the ranks of a mostly white religious organization seemed more beneficial than staying with religious groups who are not as well known in the U.S. Along

those lines, the GPAC's decision to diversify its pastorate brings similar benefits of cultural capital both in the clergy pool and trickling down into local congregations. At first glance, the risks both are taking look to be more normalized over time, even to the point of possible attitude change within the mostly white populations these foreign-born pastors serve. The contrast from Lopez-Sander's and Manglos-Weber's work is that it is one thing to observe immigrants shifting their religious affiliation to white Protestant spaces in order to gain social and cultural capital from the group with the most power. It is quite another to see white groups shift their attitudes toward the reception of foreign-born pastors. This may be the most difficult variable to qualify in my overall study. My attempt at getting a grasp on how this is happening involved asking open-ended questions toward the end of the personal interviews that probed that possible shift. They were basically asked in this way:

- Has your relationship with Pastor Jacob given you a new opportunity to experience an immigrant relationship in your life? Have you ever had a relationship with a person who was born outside the United States?
 - If so, is this relationship with Pastor Jacob different? How? Has this relationship influenced your ideas about immigrants as they work and settle in United States?
 - If not, has this relationship influenced your idea about immigrants in the United States?
- Do you feel like you've had the opportunity to learn new things from Pastor Jacob as compared to pastors from the United States?
 - If so, what have you learned?

In closing, what impact do you think the appointment of Pastor Jacob to Caldwell United/Belle Plaine Methodist Church has had on the community? Do you think the presence of his family has influenced community member's ideas about immigrants? If so, how? If not, why?

These questions yielded interesting responses that at least hinted that this shift was occurring for some. In fact, most of the parishioners interviewed pondered their answers in a manner of wonder rather than discomfort. Talking about an immigrant from the standpoint of a relationship developed in the context of the church seemed to produce answers from a loving or respectful tone rather than a strange or foreign experience. Alongside most of their answers that, "yes" he had made an impact on the community, was the answer that he had made an impact on them! This relationship, forged in church, had become very personal for some. This was reflected in the interest that people in both congregations exhibited as they were happy to help with interviews and eager to answer questions about this new relationship. From experience, I find that most parishioners really do want to live by moral codes that accept the outsider and the stranger. That act is symbolically connected to many core scriptures attributed to Jesus such as

“love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39b) and “I was a stranger and you invited me in.” (Matthew 25: 35b). These ideals are often shared by those in the community who do not attend or have membership in a church; they are some of those spillover values that ground civil care of each other. Yet, these skills are being stretched to new distances under the safety of the church as the presence of foreign-born pastors and their families engage with strangers that they are not familiar with. The United Methodist Church, whether aware or not of the space it is creating, furnishes the opportunity for the moral values one claims for a neighbor to be tested or tried on an international relationship right in their hometown.

Jeremy Rehwaldt affirms this sentiment in his research, although applying it to the reception of Latinx populations by mostly white communities: “Anglo Christians seek to reconcile the moral claims of their faith communities with the prejudices and the fears they have of Latino immigrants” (Rehwaldt, 2015). The act of reconciliation is a theological practice that most Christian doctrines uplift. Racism and Xenophobia are often the subject of religious confession associated with reconciling, especially when trying to alter inherited or socialized attitudes that promoted segregation and oppression of “others”. Investigating several Catholic and Protestant groups in Nebraskan communities that had experienced a surge in Hispanic populations migrating for jobs, Rehwaldt focused on interviewing white church leaders from 2008-2010 in order to understand their response to the social changes occurring in their communities. Primarily he found different outcomes associated to the reasons people accepted new immigrants into their worship spaces which he deemed “survival embracing”, “neighborhood embracing” and “mandated embracing” (Rehwaldt, 2015, pg. 688). His work seemed important to consider as he identified certain responses that I needed to take into consideration when evaluating the two congregations in my study.

Survival embracing often involved maintaining some form of cultural segregation, where a church would rent their space to Latinx communities to have their own worship with little interaction. *Neighborhood embracing* revolved around missional outreach to communities, creating Spanish speaking worship services and social services that invited the Latino populations to feel welcome. This model still yielded little integration as white populations continued to worship in English during traditional times and Spanish Speakers migrated to the time allotted for their service. It did, however, present a “good feeling”, which acts as a reward, to those who saw this as their mission. This is important as it calls into question the location of

power as the white group's seemingly altruistic act operationalizes as an act of charity to the group with little or no power. Lastly, *mandated embracing* comes from the institution or denomination itself desiring ethnic populations to be evangelized that were "unchurched". Again, this enacts hierarchal chains of command and power, this time upon the mostly white community to perform as agents of the larger bureaucracy without feeling much agency themselves. In the study, this often resulted in resentment towards the bureaucracy as a bilingual pastor was often sent for the specific purpose of building these new worshipping communities rather than attending to the needs of the current group. Rehwaldt's three identified motivations of congregational "integration" clearly come from the traditional location of power between natives and migrants which appears to maintain the statuses of "in" and "out" groups. From his results, then, there appear to be no real forms of integration where the immigrant-native relationship develops on equal footing.

The contrasts by comparison to my study start with assumption that foreign-born pastors and their families are truly embraced into largely integrated relationships with the goal of this reception to not only be included in the "in" group; but lead it. Therefore, their reactions to arrival of the foreign-born pastor do not much reflect Rehwaldt's discoveries. The congregations that I studied were not embracing groups of immigrants to survive or to reach ethnic minorities in their neighborhood. Although some amount of mandate came from the Bishop and Cabinet via an introduction anticipating appointment, the placement involved more mutual agreement as the pastor was assigned to take care of everyone's needs, not just attract a certain group. As compared to the influence of immigrant presence in communities that Rehwaldt studied, the foreign-born pastor serving mostly white communities arrives with a charge to give the entire community attention due in this integrative relationship by serving with the authority to instigate reconciling work. Seemingly, fear and resentment in this relationship appears to be suspended in the expectations that this new association between immigrant and community is not only considered optimal, but desired. So, with this sense of suspension, does a form of altruism occur as both parties accept that each have needs that the other can provide even though this new relationship may cause each possible discomfort that often accompanies immigrant-native relationships?

Altruism is the act of putting another's needs ahead of one's own without expectation of repayment or benefit to the actor. Of course, in the social exchange between conference,

congregation and pastor the rewards of roles and services rendered are anticipated. Yet, the latent reward, namely a relationship that expands worldviews, is not an expected need to fulfill; but in Caldwell and Belle Plaine it seems to have happened. Mingling with the congregations and asking about first impressions I often heard phrases like “as long as the pastor was Biblically-grounded I didn’t care where they come from”. The act of the exchange didn’t hinge on the pastor’s immigrant status and or race; it rested on the role fulfilled. Yet, in this reception, a type of altruistic effect appeared to present in some of the relationships that developed more trust and intimacy. As the expected needs were met an unrequired introspective gaze remained in focus as both groups, over time, shared their history and experience. Whereas congregations tend to get to know the new native-born pastors within a year, often labeled “the honeymoon period”, learning about the experience and history of a foreign-born pastor may unfold in endless curiosity. I believe the strangeness of this new association created more depth to their inquiries about each other, maybe never fully satisfying the discovery. Additionally, this curiosity seemed to keep the overall relationships fresh for new conversation, including ones that challenged the other to consider vastly different worldviews. This is why I predict, but cannot yet confirm, that the foreign-born pastor may have a greater chance of influencing native worldviews as their stories provide the opportunity to explore world issues with a person who may have greater knowledge and insight because they have experienced these social problems firsthand. If they come to trust this experience and insight enough it could change how they think about social policy.

Robert Wuthnow describes what the larger effect of a congregation’s involvement in developing an altruistic attitude might look like when leadership encourages congregants to engage their faith in considering social policy change. Using the Global Issues Survey, Robert Wuthnow and Valerie Lewis hypothesized “that religious *involvement* is positively associated with *foreign policy altruism*. They coined this term to describe benevolent support to benefit people in other countries” (Wuthnow, Lewis 2008). One of the primary arenas they explored to support their hypothesis was the influence of congregational *interventions*, such as special programming and activities that educated members about foreign policy and the congregant’s interpretation of their expected response. Clergy leadership and their teaching intervention which promoted altruistic attitudes and actions based on religious beliefs were also included in this variable (Wuthnow, Lewis 2008). Of the various Ordered Logistic Regression models conducted, the variable *congregation interventions* supported their hypothesis concerning the

impact of altruism on foreign policy as constituents reported support for worldwide human rights, fighting world hunger and increasing lower developed countries standard of living. (Wuthnow, Lewis 2008). Interestingly, this support did not hinder strong support of a strong military and protecting American jobs. Where did these respondents learn to adopt attitudes about foreign policy issues that, in some respect, affected attitudes toward self-preservation and well-being? Wuthnow and Lewis suggest these answers derived from interventions that occurred from their involvement in church communities as well as belief in what their pastor's taught.

What then if the intervention *is the presence* of a foreign-born pastor who physically engages their space on a relational level of influence around similar policies? Could an even stronger *foreign policy altruism* develop because the relationship is personal? Wuthnow and Lewis initially point out that *social policy altruism* also correlates with another hypothesis that the grassroots identity expected of a religious person, especially the inclination to be good Christians exhibiting good morals not just to some, but to everyone (Wuthnow, Lewis 2008). This is somewhat supported by Rehwaldt's work with a more reluctant crowd whose motivations to be good Christians and alter their practices to include immigrants were entangled with survival, missionary work and a direct mandate. Wuthnow and Lewis surmise that the two competing hypotheses discovered in their study explain the seemingly altruistic response more.

They first postulate that "grassroots identities are constructed by religious leaders who successfully court publicity and thus establish the perception that their constituencies are particularly influential in supporting policy initiatives. This perception may be self-fulfilling policy; as constituents actually do adopt particular attitudes" (Wuthnow, Lewis 2008). The alternative hypothesis is "that grassroots religious identities though constructed, are shaped less by media statements and more by perceptions of values, grounded in enduring traditions, teachings and activities" (Wuthnow, Lewis 2008). They title these two hypothetical actions as *interventions*; meaning that the presence of influential religious leaders who promote social policy change and/or congregational values and educational programs that do the same may intervene in congregant's decisions concerning social policy, even at their own expense.

So, what happens if grass-roots identities in congregations start to change due to the fact that the foreign-born pastor embodies the essence of these interventions? Hypothetically, then, the foreign-born pastor is not only part of an intervention but may *be* the intervention. If

worldviews change and possible actions towards global issues such as immigration policy start to be considered by the congregation from the vantage point of the foreign-born pastor, or even more, traveling with the foreign-born pastor to places that parishioners could not imagine, could foreign policy altruism develop in some cases? This would be a massive undertaking to discover on a larger scale; but at this base level of my investigation shows some promise of validating Wuthnow and Lewis's survey analysis. If nothing more, it is interesting to consider as they end their article by challenging qualitative researchers to investigate their hypothesis with more in depth methods.

Another form of altruism that might be present in the reception of foreign-born pastors is the embedded expectations of the of the United Methodist Church which seeps into local congregational identity. Religious institutions can be important mediators of the relationship between immigrants and destination communities (Cabell 2007). In Meredith Glenn Cabell's study of new gateway city Owensboro, Kentucky she studied the impact of faith-based institutions on the ability of immigrant communities to assimilate (Cabell, 2007). What she found was that the coordinated actions of multiple institutions, including religious bodies, aiding the integration of larger groups of international migrants was vital and necessary for them to be accepted by local residents. Noting their unique societal status and perceived practices of hospitality to those migrating here, she stresses that religious agencies can offer immigrants warmer receptions, even to those undocumented, with fewer negative sanctions from the broader society (Cabell, 2007). Similarly, the attitudes and expected warmth extended toward the immigrant, especially pastors, is the expectation the GPAC places on its members while also validating their presence to non-members as the institution deploys them. As representatives of the United Methodist Church as a whole, the image of the institution rests on matching the actions of the organization to the claims it makes about itself. For example, the media tagline used in Global UMC advertisements is "Open hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors: The People of the United Methodist Church." This public "presentation of self" (that is not always realized) sends an outward impression that the organization wishes the public to associate with it. With global debates over human sexuality harming the interpretation of this phrase, the picture of diversity that the foreign-born pastor provides projects a hopeful sign that at least some forms of this phrase are true.

Curiously, this slogan is aimed more at the work of drawing diverse constituents, not clergy, which, as presented in the demographics of chapter 1, represents a slow gain. The institution remains steady in touting this evangelistic work, however. Looking at the GPAC website there are entire pages dedicated to immigrant enclaves as they settle into new locations in the conference in search of a church. What I find interesting is that there is very little dedicated to the successful integration of foreign-born pastors as they come from across the globe to settle as religious leaders. This may point to a broader expectation that these leaders are protected by the institutional organization and thus able to integrate with more ease than other types of immigrants, i.e. “the doors of the church are open to them” with clear paths of assimilation. Even so, there are social factors of integration expected of foreign-born pastors that require conformity to the institution, the communities they serve and indeed society as a whole. If then, the United Methodist Church, and specifically the GPAC believes that the foreign-born pastor’s probability of integration and conformity to the system is likely, a certain “religious based trust” is placed upon them, even though their appointment involves some level of risk due to its unfamiliar nature (Manglos-Weber, 2018).

We know that the United Methodist Church in the Great Plains is betting on increased deployment of foreign-born pastors. The outcome of that bet is relatively unknown. I also know that I am not the first to identify how fresh this development is; the institution is abuzz with anecdotal stories about this phenomenon. I might be, however, one of the first to document, analyze and make inferences about how this new relationship not only works, but what indications these actions may have on society. With only vaguely comparative research, this work is a first attempt to develop theory that both describes the mechanisms of trust through a case study and postulate some possible effects.

I could not do this without some guiding theory. Being a fan of ideal types, while also inspired by studies on how religious membership aids immigrant integration into society, I chose to use classical founder Georg Simmel and a fresh voice in immigration and religion, Nicolette Manglos-Weber as grounding theorists. As mentioned earlier, I am fascinated by Simmel’s short revelatory description of how the “stranger” engages the society in which they settle for capital exchange and the interactions that ensue with the native populations that host them. As a founding member of the field, sharing space with Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and close friends Max and Marianne Weber, Simmel’s perspective was shaped by post-industrial revolution

development and expansion and how society developed in reaction to it. Unlike the wide-scope lens used by his fellow counterparts, he tended to opt for a micro-lens that placed ideal-type personalities into the societal picture and describing the interactions as “phenomenon”. Offering this phenomenological approach, which presents as quite abstract, he examined the social order through self and society. In his famous work *How is Society Possible?* he postulated that individuals did not recognize themselves based on independent definitions but in relationality to others (Levine, 1971). His theory rests on the premise that this relationality binds groups together. It is this kind of relationality, as described in his narrative of interactions between the merchant/stranger and the native population that provides the framework of my comparison between foreign-born pastors and native mostly white communities. Of course, this is an updated version as the world looked much different in his lifetime as compared to ours. Yet, the strikingly compatible descriptions I found in my analysis seemed eerily close to his narrative at times, giving strength to my argument while also adding yet one more account that his theory about this ideal-type and society still holds up.

Using Simmel’s characterizations of how interactions between stranger and native work, I place them in a social location that Manglos-Weber identifies as a key component in a migrant’s ability to develop personal trust and gain a social foothold: the religious congregation. Her work focuses on how personal trust develops from generalized trust through “imaginative and symbolic activity” that occurs in religious spaces of belonging. Driving the imagination of how the stranger/immigrant interactions with society further than speculation, her theory actually gives a concrete backdrop of comparing how these types of interaction operate, in her case studies of Ghanaians settling in Chicago. Although my use of the *stranger* is not an outsider merchant, nor is my religious migrant merely seeking membership in an ethnically similar church in a foreign country in order to belong, I find that the religious canopy of the United Methodist Church creates a space where elements of both theories come to life.

By superimposing the expected interactions of the “stranger” on the foreign-born pastor, while also presenting their integration from a position of power through religious membership as compared to the migrants who join Christian churches, I believe this new presentation offers a fresh perspective of how *aspirational migrants*, as Manglos-Weber defines her subjects, finds purchase of that social status through the role of religious leader in a mostly white institution (Manglos-Weber, 2018). Because the foreign-born pastor often comes to the United States

seeking this position by way of a trusted religious institutional gateway, their role as immigrant shifts as seemingly does the receiving group's interpretation of how they are to receive them. Both may not even be aware of the representational power flip from the ethnocentric stance of white missionary church receiving immigrants to the cultural relativist mutual discovery of two parties who were matched for effectiveness in ministry together; but indeed, I believe that they find identity in it.

Manglos-Weber's helpful label of *aspirational migrants*, much needed in a world that tends to negatively depict the immigrant experience, identifies this group as those who move to the United States in order to assimilate and socially integrate with prospects of upward mobility (Manglos-Weber 2018). I like this distinction as it seems to fit the descriptors of Pastor Jacob and foreign-born pastors in the Great Plains Annual Conference collectively. Manglos-Weber's work investigates the mechanisms of developing personal trust between aspirational migrants and members of host societies by way of religious affiliation. Studying the congregational connections that her subjects foster in order to find a sense of belonging she unveils the possible effects of gaining social capital that secures stronger assimilation with native communities. Manglos-Weber found different approaches of how to navigate this transnational settlement. Sometimes, these types of associations serve beyond simple religious adherence, namely maintaining connections to one's ethnicity. I found Pyong Gap Min and Sou Hyun Jang's perspective supportive of this presumption as they suggest that "the majority of ethnographic studies have shown that immigrant religious institutions have contributed to the maintenance of immigrants' ethnicity and provision of social services. (Min and Jang, 2015).

Manglos-Weber agrees that this certainly happens but argues that maintaining ethnic ties is not the only reason people participate in religious institutions when they migrate. (Manglos-Weber, 2018). In her study, some settled in religious enclaves that were connected to the larger Ghanaian "Mother Church" Evangel Ministries, while others chose to affiliate with mostly white communities and churches. In either case, the importance of maintaining Ghanaian traditions in their new setting was met with different levels of adherence. The congregation Manglos-Weber investigates is very small but hoping to grow, not only in Ghanaian membership, but also attracting native-born persons.

In a conversation with the pastor, she discovered some concern about the congregation's ability to assimilate into the community and attract outsiders due to the cultured structure that

reflected the practices of the “home church” rather than looking like churches in the U.S. Whereas Evangel Ministries has recognized authority in Ghana and several regions throughout Africa, the church struggled to gain rapport with the Chicago base, even having trouble with renters accepting their application, giving indication they were perceived as an “out-group” (Manglos-Weber, 2018). This did not reflect the experience of all Ghanaians in the area who were assimilating; Manglos-Weber found several young, educated professional Ghanaians who had integrated quite well. The difference was that they assimilated into the “in-groups” of mostly white or multi-cultural settings based on their socio-economic status and profession. These affiliations included participating in well-known Christian institutions, entering under the assumption that common practices in these places were uniform or at least similar. For both groups, the umbrella of religion became an important place of developing trust and relationships that ensured connection, successful integration and belonging.

The amount of social capital gained, based on religious affiliation selection, varied. Although under any of these canopies aspirational migrants gained access to opportunities that boosted their social capital, for those who associated with the Ghanaian church, the gain was mostly with Ghanaians, while for others it came from joining American based congregations giving access to white native associations and connections. In reflection she points out that “religion matters, therefore, because for many migrants the choices about where to practice religion are choices about how they want to locate themselves on the social landscape of the host country” (Manglos-Weber, 2018). I believe this same type of rational choice was exhibited by Pastor Jacob’s decision to affiliate with the UMC in the United States, which is mostly white despite its global reach. Ultimately this work involves who to trust, the types of trust an aspirational migrant is desiring and their access to those desired levels of trust among native communities.

Trust between like religious communities creates a level of stability for the aspirational migrant to gain footing in the new location through like groups, whereas trust developed between natives and non-natives required another level of access; often socio-economically determined. Manglos-Weber offered that status, however, can be bridged through religious affiliation and found this to be true in some cases. This is important to my research as I assert that the foreign-born pastor’s access to developing stronger ties of personal trust in mostly white communities in the United States stems from their choice to affiliate through a trusted religious institution.

Additionally, the willingness of the greater, established mostly white institution to grant that access is a huge step given to foreign-born pastors that other aspirational migrants might not be privy to through membership alone. There are greater levels of expertise and education required to participate, including being vetted through seminary and the ordination processes; but the risk appears to be worth it.

Taking a risk involves trust, generalized, personal or otherwise; Simmel likens this to the act of “leaping” i.e. “taking a leap of faith” (Simmel, 1990). This phrase was originally used to describe who to trust one’s money with but has been incorporated extensively in studies about trust in general. Manglos-Weber offers explanation of the concept, stating that “the act is almost willful, resistance to contrary arguments or evidence, and based in the emotional power of deeply meaningful symbols” (Manglos-Weber, 2018). Even though Simmel was applying the idea to the exchange of money and trust between parties, the act of making a “leap of faith” to settle into a new region or country is something many migrants bank on when trusting a network to land them safely and with connection (Simmel, 1990). The act of “leaping” was very noticeable in Pastor Jacob’s decisions as he continued to align himself with the religious institutions that had a global reach and a supportive base for integration. Manglos-Weber and I agree, then, that this phrase seems meaningfully apt when considering a religious institution’s role to serve as the primary reception partner to aspirational migrants as they settle in a new country, supporting them take a “leap of faith”. To make that point she states that “religion is thus more than a comforting, enclave-like setting where migrants can reminiscence about home and cope with the strains of migration. It is a context of reception, as well as a context of connection, imagination and agency”(Manglos-Weber, 2018) I whole heartedly agree. Though levels of trust in the religious agencies may vary depending on the initial strength of social ties, the hope is that trust will strengthen through involvement in a way that establishes the migrant as a member. So when defining the movement of that trust, what constitutes the different levels?

As mentioned in the introduction, trust and levels of trust are hard to define and measure. The connecting aspects of Simmel’s framework of the “Stranger” and Manglos-Weber’s social location of religious membership in detecting levels of personal trust fit well to investigate this phenomenon and case study not by coincidence, but through the growing interest in understanding Simmel’s influence on other theorists’ viewpoints of trust. In *The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectations, Interpretation And Suspension*, Guido

Möllering explores Simmel's abstract theories on their own merit and how his concepts were depicted in the literature of profound theorists such as Anthony Giddens, Niklas Luhman and Barbara Misztal (Möllering, 2001). Although Simmel's gauge of trust often involved the social exchange and interactions of trusting others with money and eventual credit, the underlying mechanisms of how that trust developed were interpreted and applied to other venues of trust by multiple disciplines. In evaluating Simmel's work to create a more grounded picture of how Simmel's influence spreads across a spectrum of research, Möllering extracts three elements of trust that appear in the characterizations of trust relationships which include expectation, interpretation and suspension. By his own definition of trust as "a state of favorable expectation regarding other people's actions and intentions", Möllering depicts each element by comparing the use of Simmel in trust research (Möllering, 2001). Although my use of Simmel is involving the superimposed characteristics of an ideal type interaction upon the situation I am examining, these three trust elements of Simmel's theory identified by Möllering surfaced in the development of common themes. Of the three elements, the most prevalent tended to be suspension due to the nature of this unique immigrant-native relationship. Because the foreign-born pastor is put into a position of generalized trust through the brokering of a contract, the entire relationship starts from a place of suspension and, in my estimation, stays there (Halevy, Halalie and Cohen, 2020). It is in those spaces of suspension that I focused my eye on levels of trust and their representation.

Manglos-Weber defines levels of trust as 1) "impersonal trust occurring between strangers who are nevertheless part of larger social groups" and 2) "personal trust which occurs between people who have a more or less enduring social tie and some degree of knowledge of or experience of each other" (Manglos-Weber, 2018). Although I tend to exchange the term generalized trust for impersonal, something that Misztal chose to do as well in interpreting Simmel, I agree with her definitions (Möllering, 2001). Studying the mechanisms of how trust is established, both in and outside these religious sanctuaries, she concludes that "through religious practice, the foreign becomes familiar; but it also *transforms* familiar social contexts in turn" (Manglos-Weber, 2018). These mechanisms of transformation sound similarly close to what happens in Simmel's description of the "stranger"; in fact she goes on to make her point that the "strange religious man" is also demythologized as the "collective religious practice has historically made newcomers *less* strange; integrating them through a voluntary membership that

is and has long been quintessentially American” (Manglos-Weber, 2018). Again, in my case, the practice of integration is coming from a different place both in status and institutional space; namely the office of pastor in a mostly white American faction of a global denomination that was founded in America. Yet, the combination of Manglos-Weber’s ideas that the “foundations of...religion’s integrative potential” for aspirational migrants to gain trust through the safe-haven of the institution matches my conviction that this same act of gaining trust is intensified when the aspirational migrant is integrated through role of pastoral leader. Furthermore, I believe these developments may challenge naysayers who contend that religion, especially Christianity, is losing a grip on societal influence and how individuals use their religious experience to engage society. This could be extraordinarily true when considering the role religion is playing in the arena of immigration. If the institution is developing a religious gateway granting religious authority to the foreign-born pastor, The United Methodist Church becomes a space where integration of a particular type of aspirational migrant happens through a different kind and quite possibly more powerful form of reception.

The power of the reception of a foreign-born pastor, however, does not lie only their reception as an immigrant but also in their reception as compared to native-born pastors; the only group that they might actually be in competition with. Additionally, comparisons to low-wage immigrant groups or immigrant professionals in other fields may produce a different kind of reception as well. Utilizing Simmel, I claim that the foreign-born pastor as stranger is “an element of the group itself” bearing objectivity “because he is not bound by roots to the particular constituents and partisan dispositions of the group, he confronts all of these with a distinctly ‘objective attitude’, an attitude that does not signify mere detachment and nonparticipation, but is a distinct structure composed of remoteness and nearness, indifference and involvement”(Simmel, 1904). It is from this lens, in combination with Manglos-Weber’s approach to detecting levels of trust that I peered into the social interactions of two communities with the same foreign-born pastor to better understand the mechanisms of the reception in order to develop a baseline case to develop theory in future study of the entire phenomenon.

Chapter 3 - The Process of Understanding Reception

As an ordained elder seeking her doctorate, I have been analyzing congregational statistics and collecting stories in Great Plains United Methodist congregations for twenty years now. In-depth conversations and interviews have been a part of the pastoral method I used in getting to know the congregations to which I was assigned. I formalized a process in my first solo pastorate called Walk with the Pastor (See Appendix E.) The way the process worked involved congregants signing up to meet with me in their normal week for no less than two hours, with the premise that the more time you spend with someone, the more they open up. Most members were excited to engage in the process as it was not the typical “house meeting” where the pastor meets a group of people; but a real, in depth conversation with individuals and families that created the basis of our developing relationships. I would schedule two to three “walks” a week for the first three months of my appointment. I promoted the meetings by inviting congregants to “capture me” and show me their favorite places, homes or work lives to familiarize me with their world. I knew that this was an unconventional proposition, but I was a “stranger” of some sorts appointed to a congregation whose culture was somewhat foreign to me. I felt like this method would close the stranger-native chasm and get us off to a good start. The two churches where I lead this process loved it. Not every interview produced a close, personal tie, but most of them did. These relationships, from my perspective, not only developed trust in a female stranger as pastor, but also as leader as both congregations made important decisions about their future.

In the first congregation, in my second year of five, a decision to sell their church building and relocate was voted on and approved. This heavily divisive choice that had been weighing on them for eleven years created new vision motivating a capital campaign that raised \$350,000 and physical donations of concrete and glass. Although a few families did leave, signs that they did not trust the process and/or me, no mass exodus happened. In fact, the church is growing in its new space and is currently shepherded by a foreign-born pastor who has been there five years and counting. I have received word that they are close to burning their mortgage on this project, possibly moving into phase two of construction. I think it would be interesting if the two major “leaps of faith” this congregation takes concerning fundraising and vision for their

building were to be tied to two types of strangers that represent the new groups of clergy recognized by the conference; female and foreign-born pastors.

The second church in which I used this technique yielded similar results of trust, this time investing their money in their own facility. Within three years, after raising around \$250,000, they remodeled the sanctuary, parking lot, bathrooms and increased outside ministry to the community. Many noted that the in-depth interviews set the groundwork for building trust to a level that felt personal. Both churches, in my opinion, took “leaps of faith” concerning their financial investment. Looking back, I wonder if my presence as a capable female pastor acted as a sort of “intervention”, stretching their imaginations about gender and leadership? This type of initiative has often been attributed as “maleness” and yet, in reality, this type of initiative is expected of every type of pastor; male, female, foreign-born or native. However, the success of clergy who are representing new groups might have a greater chance of changing attitudes as their relationships with the congregants may serve as a reference when engaging with similar types. The success in both congregations seemed to derive from the initial engagement of building trust through the process of *Walk with the Pastor*.

It made sense then to incorporate aspects of this method in my sociological work, moving from beneficiary as religious leader to outside researcher investigating cross-cultural appointments between foreign-born pastors and white congregations. The complex answers I wanted to capture required more than mere surveys and hidden observation; it required knowing the congregations and gaining their trust with the hopes that they would trust me enough to not only be interviewed, but to share honestly about the experience. Knowing that their trust in a foreign-born stranger might even be a greater leap than I had experienced in my own congregations, I wanted to aim for a level of comfort with this project that fostered candid responses. To gain that type of access I needed to spend time with the members of the congregations not only observing their norms, rituals and interactions, but participating in them. Most of my research design rested on the use of qualitative mixed methods with the aim of describing phenomenological occurrences through multiple forms of data, collection techniques and analysis that involved participant observation, artifact collection and in-depth interviews, all of which took place after a quantitative analysis comparing foreign-born pastors to native-born through simple regressions (Small, 2011).

Extended Qualitative Methods as Applied to Mostly White Congregations Served By Foreign Born Pastors

Before I began to fully develop my qualitative model, I ran simple quantitative data regressions because I wanted to get a picture of the performance of foreign-born pastors as compared to native-born pastors in the GPAC. Common variables used to determine church health on the bureaucratic end are *income*, *membership* and *attendance* although they are not exclusive. I knew this unique relationship may not have had time to develop many cases to compare. The upward trend of mostly white congregations with foreign-born pastors between the years 2013-2016 was significant enough jumping from 47 to 84 that I decided to go ahead with regressions .

There were a few complications to overcome in order to run the numbers. Mainly, the dataset needed to be created from nominal numbers found in Annual Conference reports that had not been organized into an Excel-like format. This took a considerable amount of time which yielded results that were less than revelatory concerning the performance of foreign-born pastors. They simply had not served long enough in the same place as compared to successful native-born pastors who had longevity on their side. However, compiling yearly report information from this four-year period did give me a clearer picture of overall positive characteristics of a successful appointment, the most significant factors being the *length of appointment* and *ordination*. The results of these regressions did remind me that most of our foreign-born pastors are seeking ordination which grants them guaranteed appointments, longer possible tenures in larger churches and greater authority. If this is the case and we continue to see an increase in foreign-born pastors in the Great Plains region then it would not be foolish to consider that their effect may start to show up in quantitative variables such as *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership*. It became clear then that a qualitative method was the route to take for the inquiry. Desiring to reach beyond anecdotal surface stories about the phenomenon, I began developing an approach to gather data and narratives to assess the interactions and attitudes happening in this cross-cultural relationship in mostly white middle-America.

Drawing from several sources of qualitative data, I used Mario Luis Small’s classifications based on “types of data, data collection and data analysis” to organize my collection (Small, 2011). The types of data utilized were administrative records, notes and recordings from participant observations, gathering of weekly worship bulletins, taking multiple pictures and recordings, transcripts and notes from in-depth interviews from two mostly white congregations. I collected the data weekly, organizing notes into files. *data analysis* identifying common themes from in-depth interviews, coding artifact information, comparing observational notes and integrating all into a common narrative of how reception works when receiving a foreign-born pastor in a mostly white congregation. The operationalization of this model (see figure 2) was constructed to build on complimentary data that alone does not fully explain mostly white congregation’s reception of foreign- born pastors.

My study included four major components:

1. Quantitative analysis of **all** congregations in the Great Plains between the formative years of the Great Plains Annual Conference to validate numerical definitions of success
2. 3 Month Participant Observation, artifact collection and In-Depth Interviews of the Pastor, Caldwell United Methodist Church members and Community leaders
3. 3 Month Participant Observation, artifact collection and In-Depth Interviews of the Pastor and Belle Plaine United Methodist Church members
4. Analysis of Data Collection, Transcriptions of Interviews and Theme development in order to construct a baseline case to compare the reception of foreign-born pastors in mostly white congregations in order to develop theory

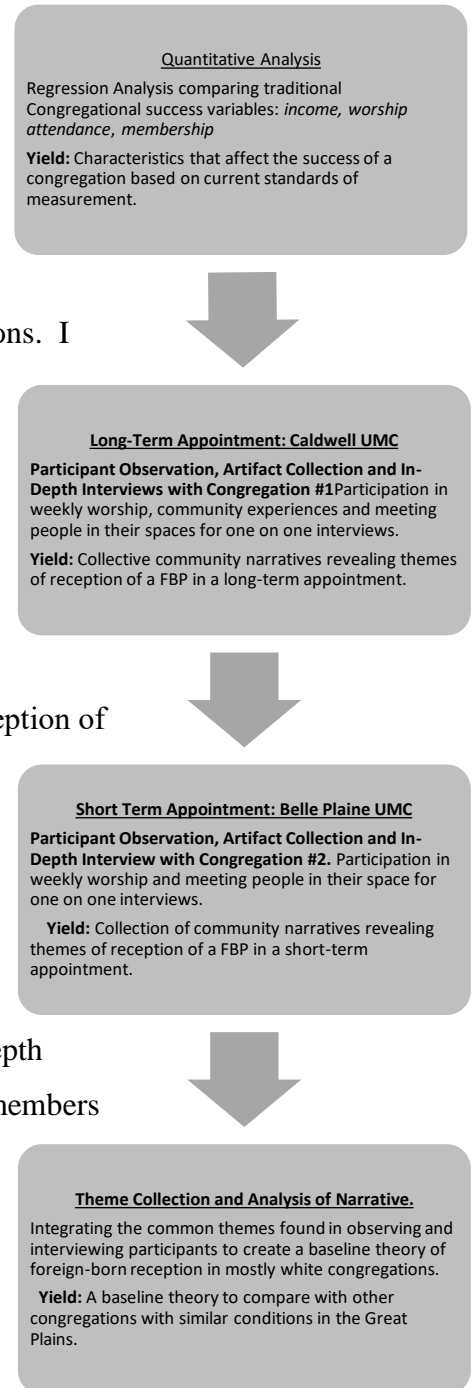


Figure 2 Timeline of Methods Research Design

An Extended Methods Experience of Two Congregations and One Pastor

My initial research design involved working with one congregation, Caldwell United Methodist Church and Pastor Jacob Maforo to observe, participate and interview both pastor, congregants and some members of the community about their relationship. They were in their sixth year of appointment; therefore I assumed the relationship to be normalized. However, in the middle of my research the introduction of a new pastoral appointment for Pastor Jacob created some disruption, and indeed feelings of unrest and sadness in the congregation, which I was able to observe and record. This news did, however, create a second setting to observe. After approval from Pastor Jacob and the IRB, I extended my research a few more months to include Belle Plaine UMC. This could have been a major wrench in work as the scope of the appointment region is the entirety of Nebraska and Kansas, but fortunately it became an advantage since the congregation that he was being appointed to was even closer to my home. This offered a different stage of reception for me to observe and investigate, creating a comparative longitudinal study over six to nine months rather than a single-setting study. What I came to observe then were not the effects of receiving Pastor Jacob in the just one setting but two mostly white congregations, capturing the essence of the end and the beginning of a relationship. From the beginning, I wanted to make sure that Pastor Jacob felt that he was much more than a mere variable in this research; I respected him as a colleague, and through this process became a friend. We communicated well throughout, including during the move. One thing that helped was our clear understanding of our social roles from the very beginning of the study, including how I would be introduced to the congregations.

Establishing Social Roles

The core of this work involved the observation of white believers in the presence of a control variable, namely Pastor Jacob. Ethnographic work, especially when describing the impact one person has on another requires a sense of social location and perspective that needs to be immersive. Entering the field knowing that the quantitative evidence of foreign-born reception did not yield substantive results, elevated the importance of describing the environment that would provide information to the narrative about this phenomenon; this included checking my own bias as a pastor who has much in common *with* Pastor Jacob.

Even though Pastor Jacob was not yet ordained, a sense of comradeship and belonging to the same social groups pervaded the conversations; including those with the parishioners. Awareness is the first key to combatting possible transference in these situations. The first steps of setting up the process was to first describe the process of my method with Pastor Jacob and then to the congregations so that we clearly understood the reason for my presence. I shared that I was defining my role as a sociologist first, fully aware that my ordination in the UMC played a part in my identity. I explained to Pastor Jacob that I wanted to interview him several times and participate in their worship and social events with the goal of gathering names for personal interviews from the congregation. He agreed to the process and was enthused to help.

On the first Sunday of observation at each church we made space for my introduction from the front of the congregation. There I explained my purpose but also my connection to their communities as a fellow United Methodist and leader in the Great Plains Conference. I explained that along with my weekly worship attendance and occasional event participation, I would collect artifacts from the congregation including bulletins, pictures and directories to analyze the symbols of the church while looking for “clues” of their reception of Jacob and the impression he had made. While those sitting near me might catch me marking the bulletins on occasion to “make note of specific action” my main mode of chronicling worship and social gatherings involved digital recordings prior to and after so that I could be fully present. When returning home, I would upload the recordings to a professional transcription site, reading and correcting them later in the week to compare and note patterns.

Overall, I wanted to observe both congregations in “normal” settings yet setting up the project in a timely manner required some overlapping of seasons. In the first church, Caldwell UMC, Holy Week and Easter were observed the week of April 14th, 2019, in which I expected higher congregational attendance. To avoid the high holy days, I chose to abstain from services that week. Granted, Lent began in late-February, but attendance tends to not increase until Holy Week. After adding Belle Plaine UMC as an additional observation site, the timing of the IRB approval came at a time that landed a large portion of the observation around Advent and Christmas, another high holy season. Following the same guidelines, I chose to observe the first few weeks of Advent but again, did not attend the high holy service of Christmas Eve which tends to bring a different crowd. I can understand someone’s critique of “skipping” these ritually important events, but from experience these services are not about the pastoral connection as

much as they are a public Christian tradition. By placing observations and interviews mostly in ordinary time, I observed normal behaviors of congregants who attend regularly as they represent steady, typical life in the church.

The in-depth observations were used to gain a better understanding of the environment of each setting, but they also acted as introduction sites for potential interview candidates. I also used the observational stage to shape the questions for the in-depth interviews providing more accessible language that reflected the cultural aspects of each congregation (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). My interaction with the congregation was designed to create a safe space as they got used to me “watching and attending events” hopefully gaining trust through the contact. (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013)

Interactions in churches do not always occur face-to-face but through other forms of communication such as bulletins, sermons, and the overall setting. Even the architecture can be interactive. With each worship, Sunday school, potluck, interview and community activity I would balance conversations with the collection of artifacts that helped me describe the congregation in more detail as well their relationship with their pastor. The printed or composed artifacts play an important role in detecting receptivity because they indicate the work presented by the office of the Pastor. Although parishioners may help enact worship, the design and thematic presentation are in the pastor’s court for final approval. This includes the weekly oversight of what goes in the bulletin, the content of the sermon and the atmosphere of the worship space. Not all pastors give the same level of attention to this work, but it is common knowledge that they are in charge of setting the stage for religious education and spiritual growth. Additionally, announcements of events, special projects and community engagement listed in the bulletin run through the pastor’s office. The listing of these “beyond worship” experiences are good indicators of how much and how often the church, and quite possibly the pastor, encounter the larger community.

As I became a more familiar fixture each Sunday, I began to ask people for personal interviews. Using the snowball method, I started with people who seemed receptive to me. The location for setting up the interviews varied, happening before or after worship, at a potluck or through a phone call after they shared their number with me. I explained to each person the purpose of my interview and my interest in their experience and relationship with Pastor Jacob. I asked knowing full well that I was a guest asking for their cooperation on a project that was not

necessarily comfortable to talk about as it involved talking about their pastor without his presence. Each time a new interview possibility came up I made sure to offer to pay for a beverage or lunch or meet them at their homes if they felt more comfortable, mimicking the practice of two church members just deciding to get together for a visit. This kept the atmosphere more relaxed and even fun in some cases (Curtis, Bruce and Cate Curtis, 2018). During the interview stage I didn't give up participation in weekly activities, generating more cohesion with my presence (Kawulich, 2005). All in all, I interviewed 25 different people from both congregations 16 of which were from Caldwell and 9 from Belle Plaine. All of the parishioners identified as white, with the median age being 60 in Caldwell and 71 at Belle Plaine. I did interview a few community leaders in Caldwell who had close interactions with Jacob, namely the Funeral Home director and the Catholic Priest. I sometimes met one on one in homes, other times I met people for lunch, and one interview happened with an entire group as we served the soup kitchen in Wichita and then grabbed lunch and discussion afterwards. In every instance I felt welcomed as I spent hours with people gleaning understanding about their experience of having a foreign born pastor. All of those interviewed were heavily involved in the church or community, what I would consider "the regulars". Two minors were also part of the group, one of which was a full member and one who was still in preparatory membership.

To reduce possible anxiety of the experience, I developed interview guides that reflected my visit-like model of *Walk with the Pastor*, except this time it was more like *Walk with the Sociologist* (Appendix G). Leading the interviews with personal, non-formal language also helped with the reception as I was welcomed into their spaces. Some of the interviews lasted hours; as if I was truly a visiting neighbor. Even though I asked the same questions to interviewees, only changing slightly based on whether they were a church member or community member, I didn't have a standard format of where the interviews took place or how many were involved. Sometimes I interviewed individuals, sometimes households, sometimes groups using a semi-structured interview style that tended to become less structured as the conversation yielded deeper levels of trust (Curtis, Curtis, 2018). Often this was an extension of shorter conversations held prior to the interview in the church settings establishing a form of communication that we could count on when the interview occurred. By the time I had gotten past my first few interviews, I had memorized most of the questions, able to keep the discussions on point but reflective of the "visiting" style of my method. (Curtis, Curtis 2017). This style also

eased the fact that a digital recorder was capturing every word for later transcription and analysis.

The interview guides for parishioners included questions about personal history, connection to the church, what it means to belong to the communities and to the church, the importance of the role of the pastor in the church and in the community, the initial perceptions of receiving a foreign-born pastor, changes in perception after receiving foreign-born pastor, ideas about race, ethnicity and immigration, personal reflections on whether this relationship has shaped new ideas about immigration, reception of a foreign-born pastor in the future and motivations for their receptivity. The answers to these questions, many of which were rich with receptive language and personal stories, helped me identify levels of trust and put together a picture of what the relationship with Pastor Jacob looked like from the parishioner's standpoint. I was aware that some of the topics were very difficult to engage in, yet I hoped that my continued presence in their churches mixed with an attitude of gratitude for their partnership in the project would convince them that I was trustworthy with their story.

I also developed four interview guides to use when conversing with Pastor Jacob, which we conducted periodically during the six months to gain a better understanding of his story and perspective. These interviews were even more personal than those conducted with parishioners as I wanted to know his whole journey. They were designed to gather perceptions about his experience in the multiple roles he has engaged at different times in his: Life in Zimbabwe, Migrating to the United States, Choosing to Become a Pastor and His Experience as an Appointed Pastor to Mostly White Congregations. These, too, were bountiful with stories, emotions and approaches to life. The goal of all the interviews was to compare narratives and perceptions, looking for themes of trust, reception and possible change and how they legitimized the relationship.

Before each interview, I had each interviewee sign a consent form outlining the scope of the study, the process of the session, use of the information, maintenance of privacy and their right to stop the interview at any time (Index F). I assigned numbers to each congregation and letters to each interviewee in order to maintain anonymity. Information about my process was also shared at the time of their recruitment to ensure disclosure before they decide to participate, and again before we started the interview. I asked each interviewee for permission to use my digital recorder to capture dialogue which was received without exception. This freed up the

interview letting the conversation flow as I did not have to “hand-write” answers, making eye-contact, laughing at times and being present in a way which made the act of being recorded less obvious.

Afterward, I recorded perceptions about the interview, taking voice notes in the car on the way home. This “digital journal” documented the whole setting such as weather, time of day, the level of reception level of trust I felt with the interviewee and the level of comfort they seemed to emit in sharing their stories (Guest, Namey, Mitchell 2013). After each interview I would upload the recording to an automatic transcription site, checking the transcription once it was finished. This was expensive, but worth it as the majority of the transcript would be correct. I revisited all of the interviews at a later date, listened to each recording with transcript in hand to fix mistakes and refamiliarize myself with the narrative in continuous form. Qualitative researchers often emphasize transcribing right away, but the length of the interviews created energy loss; thus uploading and checking them at a later date brought a fresher perspective when reviewing.

Once my data was collected, I dissected the interviews, photos, bulletins and personal notes in order to find themes that pointed to the mechanisms of trust and reception. Comparing Pastor Jacob’s responses to his interviews to those recorded from parishioners and community members, I grouped answers into fifteen total themes of trust that that appeared to occur in both sets of interviews. My goal was to find common areas of trust that seemed to move beyond the generalized, contractual level. Again, this was not easy to do as levels of trust are difficult to discern and people often react by presenting a positive response, especially when talking about someone they know. This where I used the element of time to discover the most “honest” responses. As shared in my method *Walk with the Pastor* method and trusting its results, being with people for longer periods of time tends to wear the patina and reveal more thought and comfortability. Therefore, I tended to focus on the end of the interviews, knowing that the more difficult questions were purposefully place there. By focusing on common answers in those sections, I was able to narrow the pool of themes that showed commonalities and personal connections , and then for manageability to three that not only were prevalent in interviews but were also observed and present in the artifacts. I decided on these three themes because they seemed to present an element of suspension that reflected both Simmilian theory and Möller’s definitions (Möller, 2001). As Möller identifies in his discussion on Simmel, suspension is a

reflexive act, occurring between both parties resulting in a type of trust that is “quasi-religious” in faith (Möller, 2001). Because the congregation is receiving the foreign-born pastor voluntarily, and vice versa, the expected rejection of a foreign-born leading a community from the beginning of the relationship seemed to be suspended and replaced by curiosity and mutual discovery (Möller, 2001). The three themes, then, that continually presented elements of suspension that could indicate personal trust in these newly connected relationships were 1) the importance of Preaching “the Word” 2) the role authentic, honest leadership from the pastor played in developing trust and 3) that the Maforo’s felt like family. In these three expressions of the relationship lay the essence of personal trust and indeed indicated that this was a different kind of immigrant-native relationship they had not experienced before, developing on a new platform. After analyzing all of the data, I was able to identify possible mechanisms of personal trust between the two parties that seemed to explain their relationship and might set the stage of how to study other relationships between foreign-born pastors and white congregations in other contexts.

What I found interesting about these three themes was their connectional roots to three commonly articulated American values that shape our public institutions: faith, fair governance and family. Whether studying the vast vault of Pew Research or tapping the General Sociological Survey for information, these three values of public life in America continually appear in the question banks, indicating their perceived importance in shaping attitudes and actions. In an environment where trust in leadership of any kind appears to be suspect due to political divisions, public unrest and doubt of institutions, these three themes also point to the importance of where these responses are coming from: those involved in the institution of Religion. In recent years, Americans have “lost faith in” their religious leadership, even though, as our current political climate demonstrates, they still wield power over values and norms.

In a recent Pew Research survey titled *Why Americans Don’t Fully Trust Many Who Hold Positions of Responsibility and Power*, for example, 10% of the respondents said they believed religious leaders engaged in unethical activity most of the time while 59% answered this happened only some of the time, 25% very little, and 4% none of the time (Pew, 2019). Basically, in this assessment, respondents thought that 69% of the time, unethical behavior was highly probable at least ½ of the time. Religious leaders scored better with these same respondents than Congress (17%), Journalists (15%) and Leaders of Technology

Companies(12%) who are perceived to participate in unethical behavior more often(Pew, 2019). Yet they were not at the top of the pack most trust which was held by K-12 Principals (19%), military leaders (17%), police officers (17%) and local elected officials(9%) who tied with religious leaders. The reason these leaders garnered higher scores according to this study was the belief that those in these positions actually “care” about people (Pew, 2019). Lack of care, then, is associated with lack of trust.

What I notice most about this data is first, that trust in clergy landed in the middle of the pack, indicating that those who responded did not associate “care” with this role as much as other roles in the community. Second, the more local the role, the less one perceives unethical behavior. Not only is Pastor Jacob having to fight against immigrant status, he has to overcome the partially tarnished reputation of his calling. Authentic care comes through faith, fair governance and family. This is important to note as both churches and community members, even in passing, described Pastor Jacob as engaged with local leaders, developing relationships, and caring about the community and its members. It would appear from this depiction that his care made an impression that he was not only representative of the church, but also as a leader in the community.

I find this point most interesting against the backdrop of a growing divide in the United States when it comes to immigration policy, most significantly so between the Democrats and Republicans. (Daniller,2019). As mentioned in the introduction, Kansas and Nebraska are Republican majority states. Most disagreement over immigration policy applies to security of the southern border and the “Latino threat” when considering jobs and safety in the United States. Still, as I witnessed this possible new platform of interaction between an immigrant and native populations, I could not stop thinking about the intersectional impact this new space, sponsored by the United Methodist Church, could have on building trust in immigrants and religious leaders. In this case at least, Pastor Jacob’s role as reference could possibly legitimate several value changes in constituency, including but not limited to immigration and trust in religious leadership. In no way am I suggesting that the United Methodist Church, through the deployment of foreign-born pastors, is deliberately trying to change attitudes about immigration policy in the churches where they serve. Instead I would say the religious institution and those that represent it, including Pastor Jacob, are trying to live up to the mission of “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” and the motto, “Open hearts, Open Minds, Open

Doors.” Yet, a latent effect of this rational choice on the part of the conference, the foreign-born pastor and congregation could influence such changes. Looking more closely at these three themes and the values they represent of faith, fair governance and family as applied to a foreign-born pastor, this relationship presents a base idea of what kind of trust is developed in this new space of interaction with two mostly white congregations.

Chapter 4 - Pastor Jacob

My method relies heavily on perceptions expressed by congregants, some community members and the pastor. Before I gained enough generalized trust from the congregational communities, I needed to gain the trust of Pastor Jacob. When he agreed to the study, we both knew that he was the control variable in my research. It was important to me to make this role as comfortable as possible which meant developing a relationship between the two of us. Before I knew who would be subjects of my theoretical research, I knew that the pastor of the locale would be interviewed extensively. In any research it is important to know as much as possible about the variables you are studying to give a fair assessment; this is no different in ethnographic work. The major difference when working with human populations is the amount of care taken to prevent harm and fairly represent their perspective with as little bias as possible. To make sure I did this with Pastor Jacob, I initially planned interview him in three in-depth sessions, but added another when we found out about his new appointment.

We both noticed a difference between the first interview and our last; our level of trust grew exponentially with each interaction. Where I was somewhat awkward at first setting up the conversation along with the equipment in our first interview, I was completely at ease and comfortable by the last. I noticed our dialogue carried deeper meaning as I aimed to glean as much as I could from his story and experience in order to compare it to the stories and experiences of his mostly white parishioners. As I share this, it seems fitting that I describe his story from our personal interviews before getting into the theoretical and methodological aspects of my work.

Life in Zimbabwe:

Jacob Tozoona Maforo was born in Mutare, Zimbabwe, the second child and first son of a printing press operator/translator and a hospital worker who built their livelihood around The Old Mutare Methodist Mission outside of Mutare proper. The mission housed a school and hospital with a population of about 2,000 people residing in the compound at the time. The closest neighboring city Mutare is Zimbabwe's fourth largest with a 2012 population of 186,208; a community that thrives on the amenities of a small city that edges the hills of the Eastern Highlands yielding crops of tea, tobacco, livestock and timber. (CIA World Factbook)

Another non-commodity resource that also influences the area: Methodism.

Methodists have a long history in Zimbabwe. Formerly known as Southern Rhodesia during the years of British occupation and through the end of apartheid (1911-1964), it became an independent state in April of 1980. (CIA World Factbook). Jacob lived through this transition, when he would have been a teenager, thus his formative childhood years were embedded in the chaos of a country desperately seeking majority rule. Several factors leading to his success in the United States were part of his early socialization, including being multi-lingual; he is fluent in both Shona and English with some Nbele, all official languages, and enough French to understand it when spoken. Several parishioners who were interviewed were unaware that he had known English his entire life, a fact I found interesting in their assumptions. This reality of colonization often escapes United States citizen's imaginations as they forget that the controlling state not only forces strict rules on their vassal states, but often their language.

Another skill set he was able to navigate while growing up was the ability to make connections and develop relationships with various groups of people, even if those people belonged to the western white world that imposed itself on the mostly black population of the region. His faith was one of the primary tools that was used to foster these relationships. He, too, was from a long history of Methodists including several pastors in the extended family. The church permeated his everyday life as a young boy with days in the household shaped by parents who not only worked at the mission but attended church devoutly and expected their children to do the same. Life in the mission was guided by "very strict Christian values; every adult could rebuke you. No sex before marriage, nonviolence in the home, no alcohol, no divorce", although the latter prohibition came to define his family's life in later years as his parents eventually divorced.

Even though his parents divorced, his experience of their love and guidance was still important to his development from childhood to adult life. For example, he grew up in a house where gender roles, often culturally segregated, were collapsed. He was expected to learn to cook and clean just as much as his sisters as they, too, were charged to help tend sheep in the fields. Some amount of reversion occurred, however, when extended family gathered for weekly meals. The traditional roles of women in the kitchen and men around the table talking were adhered to on these occasions. Yet, when it came time to eat, the family would gather around the large bowls, one with a meat and the other with vegetables and begin the cycle of taking turns

dipping from the bowl with the oldest starting first regardless of gender. This balance of respecting tradition while at the same time embracing modernity were major players in Jacob's early socialization. Life seemed secure in this community. Despite what was going on in the country, at the mission everyone belonged through their connection through Christian social ties, so much so that to attend the school at the mission one had to first present documents of baptism and membership.

Daily routines revolved around formal morning greetings to parents, chores before and after school and on Saturdays, worship on Sundays that went far beyond an hour, and the anticipated after church afternoon of "heaven" because "one was able to play the rest of day". Honoring one's family, labor, community and faith were strongly held values. Another important value instilled in Jacob at an early age was attaining an education. "My parents were very strict on studying and helping us on our homework. After all these daily routines, a child is as busy as an adult." All of the children in the household attended University and received higher educations. His childhood, built around life at the school and a solid family, would change dramatically in his early teens, forcing much responsibility on him as the oldest male.

The first event was a move to a smaller rural community on the main road to the million plus capital of Harare. Due to his father's further training in boiler-maker maintenance, Jacob's family then moved to the Arnoldine Mission near Headlands, Zimbabwe. A rural, peasant farming community, it was here that life began to become more difficult. In a very short period of time, his father left, and his mother became a single parent raising the rest of the family. These difficult years brought hardship on Jacob, the oldest son, and his older sister who also had to help financially to maintain the family. The eldest son role also involves assigned duties he is expected to fulfill for the rest of his life. He shared that "as oldest son, the expectations are that you are primarily looking after your mother's household; yes, you have your individual life, you have your own family, but you are still expected to take care of your mother and the youngest siblings". I have witnessed his commitment to this duty as he not only hosts his mother for several months at a time, but also shares numerous pictures on Facebook standing with his siblings praising their celebrations and accomplishments like a proud father.

The economic adjustment was challenging for his mother, yet she eventually learned to adapt as Jacob's dad moved into Harare with a new family while she and her oldest children worked diligently for success on their own. Along with the financial difficulties was the battle of

fighting labels and stigmas associated with the taboo of divorce. “The Christian divorcing is very much an issue; so, you are almost labeled; they stop calling you by your name instead ‘she’s the divorced one’ or ‘he’s divorced’ or something that is very stereotyped. There’s a certain amount of acceptance now.” Even though the systems of acceptance are changing in Zimbabwe, it was an uphill battle for Jacob, his mother and siblings to gain their status back.

After the divorce, Jacob’s household, headed by his now single mom, moved to Harare itself. This move was the first of many chances that he would take throughout his life. Taking chances, he learned, allowed for more access to resources and educational opportunities. One of these chances led to one of the greatest resources that Jacob encountered as a youth: the YMCA. Balancing some rebellion with the upheaval of his life while searching to belong, he became heavily involved in the work of the YMCA as a young person. He had always had natural leadership skills, noticing as he reflected that “his peers just seemed to follow him”, sometimes even into mischief, but trusting him all the same. Even though I didn’t know him at the time, I assume the playful nature and ability to joke that I encountered during interviews probably aided his ability to make friends in the past. “A lot of playing happened at our house; whether it was in the village or the city. I always had a lot of friends.”

This type of charisma was something that continued to develop in his personality, gaining him more confidence as a leader at the YMCA not only in Zimbabwe but also across all Africa. “Later on in life, once I started working for organizations like the YMCA, I think I learned leadership as I was doing my work.” Through his association with the YMCA Jacob was inclined to pursue his education in Social Work. Unlike in the United States, the YMCA in Africa was built around Christian-based community programming that addressed social problems through educational workshops and leadership development. Jacob, determined to succeed, rose through the ranks of the YMCA youth groups, first as a local leader, then country-wide, and the World Council, gaining more exposure to persons from around the globe at an early age. “I got to move forward, and eventually, started being appointed for official roles as a leader; I became the national youth leader in the YMCA at a very young age. Even with less education than those I was leading. I was amazed at how this all happened.” All of this work involved taking chances and building trust in relationships as a group of international youth worked on social-justice issues including working petitions to be presented to the United Nations.

It would seem that he was a model student and young man during these years; but he was

sure to point out that he went through a phase of rebellion which involved drinking and hanging out with “the wrong crowd”. Even in this season, Jacob’s desire to be more faithful and obedient to God still haunted him. Jacob shared with me about a time, that while drunk, he “came to Jesus” at a religious meeting, confessing his sins and weeping about the life he had chosen which had led him away from the Lord. That night, he came home to his mother, who could smell the alcohol on his breath, and he promised to return to the path of a believer. Although he was serious in his heart, it took several years for him to gain control over his addictions and transform into the upright, faithful Christian he is today. Along with the mental transformation came the desire to reach higher levels of achievement through education and involved public and religious service. One thing that was apparent as he revealed his story was that the authentic ownership of the entire experience and the integrity with which he shared it was crucial in his presentation of self. This was not just with me; this was a defining and endearing fact that fostered trust as people in his churches grew to know him. I will write more about this as I describe the lasting effect of this transformation and transparency imprinted on the minds of his congregants as they claimed that “he is the real deal”.

His leadership in the YMCA eventually became the professional conduit that would garner his first trip to the United States. Several adventures had transpired up to that point including work as an elementary school teacher, a job he found out did not suit him but helped pay for college to seek a degree in Social Work at The University of Zimbabwe and the sister school in Zambia. All the while, he maintained the role of eldest son providing for the family, enacting his duties including negotiating the marriages of his sisters as a representative of his father and ensuring along with his mother that every single child in his immediate family completed college. This sense of upward mobility, not only for himself but for his family after the possible down-fall due to the divorce seemed to come from a place within him that drew on the importance of building relationships and strong social ties; an ability I suspect derives from a history of taking chances in spaces where he might have been considered a stranger. This practice would not stop once he migrated to the United States; it became a common practice for Jacob and his family.

The United States:

The first time Jacob came to the United States was through an exchange program in 1994 when he came to Chicago and worked at a YMCA that is not there anymore. Like many first

time visitors to a new country, he had his own set of cultural stereotypes and assumptions about the U.S. Reflecting on the experience he shared that he “lived in the poshest suburbs of Chicago, but I spent the days in South Chicago, and learned the differences, the disparities in society which I thought ‘wow!’. Before I had boarded a plane to America, I didn’t think there was any poverty in America; I thought the rural life was a farm with cowboys and guns; I did not realize that I would come and encounter poverty, I would come to encounter homelessness, that I would come to encounter social disparities.” I have heard this same statement from several international pastors and students as their picture of the U.S. alters upon their arrival. This experience of presumed stereotypes about “another country” would serve him in making connections with his congregations. Little did he know at the time that he would eventually gain first-hand knowledge as a pastor appointed to a former cow-town and a bedroom community supported by local farmers.

Jacob had been building more skill sets through his work with the YMCA. He led many workshops, groups, and even in the United States participated in camps “between Illinois and Michigan”. Returning to Zimbabwe after his first U.S. exchange, he completed his degree in Social Work. It was during this time period that he met his future spouse Virginia while living in Harare. Virginia was not United Methodist, which did not bother Jacob as he conceded it has always been more important for him to be a “Chris-ti-an” rather than be primarily identified by his denomination. This same kind of fluid identity again served him in finding connection to organizations that would eventually lead him to relocate to the United States. Not necessarily naming it a “call”, the thought of formal ministry began to enter his thoughts, even though he held a high position in the YMCA as Director of the Central African Region. He began to ponder what it meant to answer this new tug to pastoral ministry and how that might be achieved.

The possibility of this vocational leap began to solidify during his second trip to the United States in 1997 for an International YMCA training course. While in Denver, Jacob began to question the validity of YMCA qualification he was seeking. He had considered a position in Colorado, but the YMCA structure was different than the Christian community-based programming he was used to in Africa, and his interest in ministry was starting to spark a fire amidst the freezing weather of the Rockies. Desiring a new journey, Jacob started to consider the path of professional ministry in his familiar church of upbringing: The United Methodist Church. He looked online at ministerial programs, finding that he would have to add more

education to his background as his credentials in Zimbabwe were not accepted for master's programs at divinity schools. To gain that access, he applied to two United Methodist Schools; Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas and Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas. Southwestern in Kansas offered him the largest scholarship; thus, the journey to become Pastor Jacob took shape in the Great Plains, beginning coincidentally at the same school which I call alma mater.

Education in the United States

Southwestern college is a small United Methodist Liberal Arts college with a student body of less than 1,000 on campus with a constituency online that bolsters the number to around 1400. I graduated with a B.A. in Business Administration in 1991, so I am very familiar with the campus that rises "far above the Walnut Valley" with Christy Administration building serving as the highest point. The college prides itself on international student relationships, flying the flags of alumni and current students in a prominent spot next to the administration building. It is here that Jacob in 1998 came to live long-term in the United States, his spouse Virginia joining him later in 1999 with their first child TK. With the goal set towards full ordination in the United Methodist Church, he entered a Master of Ministry program at Southwestern beginning his first formal journey with American Methodism.

There were many adjustments to the school, including getting used to the cold, especially for Virginia whose first exposure to snow was not necessarily a highlight. Additionally, the food was a "huge change" for her as they started attending events in order to get to know people, often with lots of food to choose from but nothing appetizing. She stated, "she couldn't find anything...it was all covered in mayonnaise". Jacob, who had already come across the same experience would tell her to just go back and "pick something that looks nice". For Jacob and Virginia, starting over on this new path, however, was something that required these kinds of assimilating adjustments; they needed to figure out how to fit in. Another adjustment for both of them was the informality of interactions among elders, especially addressing them by their first names. "In our language we had a way of addressing anyone who is older than you, even if they are only older by a month." Jacob and Virginia also attended church at First United Methodist in Winfield, the largest of the three UM churches in the area. Participating in the events at the church, the college and campus organizations gave them access to new relationships that would develop into strong ties over time. There was only one place that Jacob felt like an "outsider"

based on prejudice; The Black Student Union.

“I tried to fit in there.... the black students treated me as an African and therefore reminded me that ‘by the way, there’s an International Student Association where you should be.’ And I’m like trying to come to the Black Student Union because I am black. I looked black but I wasn’t welcomed by my fellow African Americans; they made it clear to me that I was a freak; I wasn’t an African American. They didn’t say that, but they acted like that and it felt very awkward and lonely. I still went; that’s the person I am.” I could tell when he shared this that it still bothered him, even though he took the high road in dealing with it. Concerning his BSU experience he “knows that it’s purely ignorance.” In fact, when reflecting on the larger scope of the college and community he couldn’t think of one time he experienced “blatant racism based on attitude but was based in ignorance; so I tend to forgive that kind of racism.” This type of attitude served him well in every setting as he both assimilated and affected the places and spaces he engaged in, professional or otherwise. He describes it this way, “I don’t necessarily separate my education and my purpose in life; I think that whatever I learned in school is not for me to be a professional but to nourish myself to be that person.” This is that sense of authenticity that is so important to his presentation self as a student, a leader, a social-worker, as a Zimbabwean immigrant and as a representative of God.

A Pastor in the Great Plains

After graduation, Jacob did not immediately decide to enter into seminary as he continued to discern which path to take in the “professional pastoral life”. In this transition time he worked with two organizations that were not affiliated with The United Methodist Church, *Arise the Nations International* and the *Harvest of Jubilee*. During this season he traveled to preach in Botswana, Kenya, Zambia, India and Pakistan at mega mission events. During this time he also went back and forth doing children’s and youth ministries with organizations that were not exclusively “Wesleyan”. Although these were impassioned ministries, they were also less established in the United States. The United Methodist Church, on the other hand, was an organization that was accepting and utilizing more and more foreign-born pastors. With this rationale, he enrolled at Saint Paul School of Theology, the same institution where I received my theological education.

As described in Appendix C, becoming an Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church is not an easy feat. The formal process requires between 72-80 hours of schooling and

application to the Board of Ordained Ministry to begin a vetting process, 2-3 years of which occurs after completion of school. To apply for this process he needed a local church of which he had to have been a member of for two years to sponsor candidacy. Already the social ties he had built while at Southwestern College paid off as First United Methodist Church in Winfield, Kansas gladly sponsored him. Unlike my experience at Saint Paul which involved campus life in urban Kansas City, Mo, Jacob's seminary mainly took place at the satellite campus in Oklahoma City at Oklahoma City University. The process is time-consuming and intense involving full-time graduate school alongside the credentialing process of working with a mentor, going before District and Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry which included evaluation of theology, preaching and practical ministry. A candidate often takes their first assigned appointment during this time; often to small communities to gain practical experience while they further their education and pilot the process. This is how Jacob ended up at Caldwell United Methodist Church and where I came to know him as Pastor Jacob as he accepted my request to study his interactions and reception in his congregation.

Perceived Reception:

Pastor Jacob has experienced more than his share of being received as a stranger in new countries and cultures yet becoming part of an "in group" within a relatively short period of time; one could almost say he's an expert in the area. Within the early stages of our interview sessions I asked about his perceptions of being received not only as a pastor in the congregations he was appointed to, but also as an immigrant in the United States. His reply: "I would say my total experience in the U.S. rating between 1 and 10 and 10 being excellent; I would say a 10." This answer did not surprise me as I heard his story; his positive attitude outweighs the negative in almost every instance. Even when he and his family had to deal with some childish racist actions from TK's fellow classmates such as using the "N" word and altering a picture on Facebook in a derogatory way, Pastor Jacob saw these as opportunities to teach rather than become angry. Echoing earlier sentiments shared about his encounters with the BSU he stated "the racism I experience isn't based on attitude; it is based on ignorance. So I tend to forgive that kind of racism. I come across it even here in the small town community (where) somebody has never really had a relationship with a Black person." Again, as shared from his experience with the BSU at Southwestern, his tendency to forgive outmatched the human instinct to become angry. Instead of being offended he decided to engage the situation: "I don't want to blame the child,

so I thought it better to reach out to the family because this is learned behavior.” In another case, the parents of the child “reached out to us. We had a conversation, we talked, and I told them this is still High School...my attitude with racism is that they learned racism which has potential to be unlearned through education and exposure.” It seems clear that Pastor Jacob recognizes the importance of his role *as* the exposure of differences and strangeness to the community. Strangeness in this sense is not applied in a negative sense but instead as a possibility for transformation of harmful attitudes and possible actions. His actions made me wonder if other foreign-born pastors would react the same way when confronted with racist and xenophobic actions. Either way, his responses to this kind of adversity seemed like a great base-point from which to compare how a foreign-born pastor might build their relationships with native white communities through the practice of faith and fortitude.

Two Notable Observations From Pastor Jacob’s Story

Learning about Pastor Jacob’s personal journey from several hours of interviews and conversations, I began to develop a sense of what his life has been like and the person he is. His narrative provided me with the source material needed to define specifics about his life that might play into his process of forming relationships. There were two components that jumped out at me as I analyzed the information: 1) his experience of rising through the ranks of global organization and 2) his willingness to be “the different one” in communities.

Component #1: Rise through the Ranks of Global Organizations

By the time I had met Pastor Jacob his skills in developing relationships within the bounds of large social organizations was clearly evident. As a young man, his involvement in the leadership of the local YMCA and the access it gave him to leadership positions was paramount in his migration to the United States. Acting as a stabilizing force when his life was in crisis, this connection to a Christian global missionary agency created avenues of social capital that would serve him for many years. The work of voluntary community service inspired him to specialize in social work, which in turn, placed him in the system that aided him as a professional. His roles transformed under the wings of this institution, as Jacob moved from the life of a charismatic delinquent associated with downward mobility to the saved soul who became the example of success and aspiration.

This story is not unique, especially in the narratives of those who participate in religious communal life. Manglos-Weber documents the same type of aspirational mobility and processes of transformation when she interviewed a particular Ghanaian man who, despite difficulty in pursuing his education, had a similar approach by using the resources around him to elevate his status, namely the ministry of the church (Manglos-Weber 2018). Similar to a “born again” experience, something Jacob had definitely gone through after his ten-year rebellion, the transformation involves “taking on certain behaviors: sexual self-control, staying in school, dressing well, delaying marriage, and not cheating others in business. It was associated with moral restraint and discipline, and with the adoption of certain habits that signified a ‘modern’ rather than traditional orientation” (Manglos-Weber, 2018). Pastor Jacob resembled this life of discipline; he was always in a suit and displayed a warm, controlled behavior.

The ambition of Pastor Jacob mixed with the availability of spaces in the religious community for him to lead not only channeled his energy to transform but also taught him to adopt habits that were favorable to reception, including in the United States. This transformation as it developed into the pursuit of the “American Dream” bears a trustworthy attraction as his hard work to better himself and his family is the story many wish for.

Component #2: Willingness to be identified as Different

Pastor Jacob is not afraid of being different or sticking out in a community. He did not shy away from that label starting from an early age. He is the son of divorced parents, he was a delinquent, he was poor for a time; he owns all these labels and weaves them into his story as points of transformation. Furthermore, he continued to connect with communities where these labels would cause him to “be different” from those around him; the good kids, the kids with married parents, the rich kids. In labeling theory terms, he may have taken on secondary deviance roles at some point where that difference might have garnered negative reception; because he transformed, he then became the one who stuck out because he was “saved”. The salvation narrative is one of the greatest forms of connection between people from different groups. It represents a common theme that runs through many grand narratives, religious or otherwise.

With this salvific story as part of his narrative, Pastor Jacob was able to take advantage of several opportunities in spaces and communities where he was different but received. Living

amidst mostly white populations in the U.S. from Chicago to Winfield, his attributes as Zimbabwean immigrant did not create many barriers to his acceptance in these locations.

Again, Manglos-Weber came across this component in some in Ghanaian stories. The attraction of being in a homogeneously white community where the distinction of being “different” was met with curiosity rather than race or ethnic classification was appealing to many aspirational migrants. One couple who had previously lived in a mostly white town shared with her that “in that town they knew few blacks, foreign or otherwise. Nonetheless, they got along with their neighbors and were friendly with...co-workers”, yet when they moved to the more diverse setting of Chicago “their social networks became more segregated...and their white co-workers and neighbors were less friendly than they had been in the small town.” (Manglos-Weber, 2018).

The social location of being one of, or the only, immigrant family in a community also created reflexive opportunities for the community to learn from Pastor Jacob about his culture. In those spaces, his very presence and active engagement would challenge those community’s assumptions about Africa. He would not only do that through his storytelling but also by recruiting several members to try on the feeling of “being different” in his home country. Several people in his congregations, some of whom had never been outside of the United States, took him up on the offer as he guided them on a trip to his home country of Zimbabwe. There, the preconceived images of huts and the fear of not being able to communicate would be transformed by exploring large cities, growing infrastructures and developing economies using English as the base language of communication. Personal lenses often adjust to the “foreign experience” gaining a better knowledge base of how one will react to strangeness and difference. Simmel deems this a key element in the stranger’s work; the comfortability with places that are strange to them and the knowledge that difference doesn’t necessitate lack of relationship. (Levine, 1971) In his analysis, he believes the stranger can even gain more trust than native counterparts as their cumulative experiences often impress the native public they are settling into with a sense of knowledge and connection to the larger world. (Levine, 1971) In Jacob’s case, this impression and development of relationships would create another trusted role as people relied on his expertise, not only as a world traveler but as a pastor who has experienced the global church, which in another sense, made him different.

Chapter 5 - Trust in the Word: Trust in the Pastor

In this chapter I will discuss the suspended element of trust between the foreign-born pastor and the mostly white congregations that indicated some levels of personal connection based on my collected data. Although trusting a preacher to preach weekly to the congregation, with the participants willingly lending their ear to the interpretations of scripture, the assumption that 1) the pastor will be a good preacher and 2) that the congregation will respond by altering their perspective is not guaranteed. In this case, the positive reception of both the foreign-born and positive reaction of the congregation appeared to have taken place. What makes this even more interesting is the social and physical location of where this trust of the pastor's interpretation of the Word occurred.

In Red State Religion: Faith and Politics in America's Heartland Robert Wuthnow states "if one wanted to understand small-town America, Kansas was the place" (Wuthnow, 2012). This sentiment rings true when considering the two communities that I engaged with for this research. Just as Pastor Jacob represents an ideal type as "stranger" in the midst of an established community, so too does Caldwell and Belle Plaine represent the ideal type of the typical mid-American town. This said, I appreciate that they also represent two different kinds of city life, namely the Cowtown and the Bedroom Community respectively. Each exhibit unique traits that distinguish them.

Caldwell, Kansas is located 17 miles west of the Kansas Turnpike and hovers 3 miles north of the Oklahoma border. The largest town for 25 miles, the community had a population of 1,068 according the 2010 census and has been in decline for the last twenty years (US Census). Driving into town from the east, there are several farms and livestock pens right up to the city limits and yet entering from the North a prominent internet company welcomes visitors. Trains often block the "official" entrance into downtown as they load and unload at the large grain elevator. Past the train-tracks signs that tout this town as a historical tourist destination greet the casual driver with a highly artistic iron-work arch where limestone pillars hold up the nameplate and founding year of the community. I later found out that one of the church members I interviewed had designed the eye-catching structure. The UMC church, which blends well into the setting, lies one block west of the main street. Once a thriving Cowtown on the Chisolm Trail, much of the livelihood in the community depends on tourism and events

(<http://caldwellkansas.com/things-do>). Shifting between a slow-paced everyday life and high-energy host for large festivals, The Chamber of Commerce site describes the town best as it boasts the following description:

Est. in 1871 astride the historic Chisholm Trail on US Hwy. 81, Caldwell is a quaint little community with limestone buildings and archway, offering a 3-block downtown with an energetic vibe and a respectful nod to our rough and rowdy history that put us on the map. Earning the early title, "The Border Queen," this shining jewel on the prairie offered a place of opportunity to start a business and prosper. To tame her wild side, Caldwell created a landing spot for families, churches, schools, and a better way of life. Caldwell is still after these very things; working together to create more for our citizens, all while retaining her historic charm. Still an ambitious combination of amenities for a small village of 1,100, Caldwell has much to offer including a fantastic school, high speed fiber-fed internet, and health services serving growing families to retiring Boomers looking for an inexpensive place to create a safe, connected, vibrant life away from the hustle and bustle. The frontier spirit is still alive in Caldwell- create the life you want in Caldwell! <http://caldwellkansas.com/our-history>

Between my participation in community events, school life and group involvement it became clear the citizenry was expected to pitch-in to keep the community going. It was also clear that the town has thrived on the presence of strangers for short spouts of time; treating them as guests as they explored a history that residents were proud of. This requires a lot of volunteerism and trust in a bigger picture from every neighborhood. The community survived together on “welcoming strangers” and yet, the idea of a new resident stranger who grew up in Zimbabwe occupying the office of United Methodist Pastor probably never crossed their minds.

The same can be said of Belle Plaine, as they too, had never had a foreign-born pastor. Being closer to the Wichita metro, this town’s residents that relied more on urban jobs and manufacturing, even though the community had been founded on farming and cattle. With a main street that had seen more prosperity in former years, this community is also in population decline, with a projected -7.44 growth since the 2010 census (censusreporter.org). Many of those I interviewed described the town being more of a bedroom community for Wichita than a self-maintaining commercial city. Coming into town from the north on Oliver Road, a continuation of a major street in Wichita, several freshly built homes line the highway occupying large parcels of land. These homes did not seem to be farms, but instead showed signs of families finding a “better way of life” in a smaller community. Once inside Belle Plaine, sections of town display different periods of growth with 1950’s brick ranches on east side of the highway sit opposite of stores and a nursing home on the west. Behind this row of stores, the

core of the town resides with surviving Victorians and bungalows from an earlier era sitting next to homes that have been built on lots where the house was demolished. The Belle Plain UMC which had erected a new building A-Frame in the late 50's after tearing down their old wooden structure, rests on a large double-lot.

There are several amenities that allow for everyday life to be fairly comfortable; a grocery store, Casey's, Pizza Hut and some local diners, but if more variety is desired, folks often find themselves in Derby, a Wichita suburb of 22,000 just twenty minutes away. Derby houses multiple large market stores such as Walmart, Target, Dillon's, several commercial strips with high end fast food such as Chipotle, Panda Express and larger restaurant chains like Applebee's, Olive Garden and Rib Crib. The identity of Belle Plaine reflects a community that still honors the small town neighborly feel with a strong school system while touting proximity to metro amenities. Just like Caldwell, the Friday Night Football games and the community festivities play a large part in connecting people. Yet, Belle Plaine's largest tourist draw is the well-known Bartlett Arboretum, owned and operated by Robin Macy, one of the founding members of the famous group "The Dixie Chicks". The description of this special garden on Belle Plaine's Chamber of Commerce states:

"The Bartlett Arboretum is home to massive cypress, oaks, Japanese maples, and State Champion Trees. For over 100 years it has drawn visitors from across the United States and around the world to be inspired by this unique and unlikely sanctuary on the plains. The historic property is home to hundreds of varieties of trees and plants—both native and exotic. The Bartlett Arboretum is now listed on the National Registry of Historic Places and hosts several events throughout the year including the Tree House Concert Series.

A 20-acre garden of wooded and flowering beauty is a 30-minute drive south of Wichita, Kansas, on the west edge of the community of Belle Plaine. It is a cherished cultural resource and the only arboretum of maturity between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River."

(<https://belleplainechamber.com/bartlett-arboretum/>)

Knowing that both communities have attributes that define them as distinctly "Caldwellian" and "Belle Plainers", the groups I got to know in both towns were either members of or associated with the United Methodist Church. Despite their differences as citizens in either community, this affiliation connected them as believers but even more so, as congregations who had received Pastor Jacob as their appointed pastor. Like the national trend, both small towns are losing membership in their churches. However, these religious spaces continue to be

important in shaping the cities they occupy serving not only its spiritual needs, but as large capacity space for groups, and/or the place where local missions, such as the local food pantry are housed. There are multiple roles the church and the pastor play for the those who live in each town. Pastor Jacob not only appeared to take this role seriously, but several members confirmed his acceptance as a community leader.

Evidence of this perception showed up in my first in-depth interview when I asked the interviewee if Caldwell UMC (CUMC) was perceived as a community leader. She shared that “there’s lots of churches but for whatever reason it just seems like the Methodist Church has more people out in the community volunteering. If somebody needs help or needs money, the word is out there that the Methodist Church is where you go.” However, she clarified, “this has a lot to do with Pastor Jacob; for some people they are worried about being taken advantage of; not Pastor Jacob, he doesn’t worry about that.” I find it interesting that this picture of the stranger, i.e. Pastor Jacob as leader, seems to set an example of caring for the community of Caldwell that stretches the congregation’s level of trust for strangers in need. This care might be a factor in legitimizing his presence in a way that closes the gap between stranger/immigrant and native by developing personal relationships with more than just the members of the church.

His reputation preceded him at Belle Plaine, where word of his outward service and his strong preaching came through a trusted voice: Robin Macy. One of my interviewees was speaking with her while downtown, sharing the news of his coming and Robin lit up saying “You’ll love him – he’s such a good man and great preacher”. This surprised the congregant because Robin was not known to attend church, although her outward faith was often expressed in her music. Yet, here she was promoting this assumed “stranger” to a member of the church that was to receive him. She found out that Robin had crossed paths with Pastor Jacob several times in Winfield, where he went to college and he had made an impression.

In the first account, Pastor Jacob was presented as a good servant and in the second an anticipated preacher; both of which are key components of a good pastor, according to those interviewed. In both settings, the key theme that first seemed to produce an increasing level of trust in Pastor Jacob was that he “preached the Word” and outwardly seemed to live what he preached. This is not just something that these congregations’ value, it is still something the majority of American Christians expect despite declining trust in religious leaders presented in national surveys and polls.

The idea of how these communities define “the Word”, and more specifically its interpretation is often a point of contention between members of a congregation and/or their pastor, even if they are from the same denomination. In yet another Pew Research study about Interpreting Scripture, Mainline Protestants, of which the UMC is categorized, responded to the question on how to interpret “the Word of God” : 31% said that “it should be taken literally”, 27% said “not everything should be taken literally” 3% said “they didn’t know” and 7% said “it was not the Word of God”. With the plausibility that each United Methodist Church would have a make-up similar to this, the role of Pastor receiving affirmation that they are indeed, “Preaching the Word” is a testament to their skill in negotiating varying Christian beliefs. The pulpit is also one of the first places a pastor has a chance of garnering trust as their thoughts and beliefs are on display as parishioners listen, not only to learn, but to compare and contrast what they are getting out of the Pastor’s interpretation of “the Word”.

Preaching is often thought of as the main role of pastor as they present the scripture so that it makes sense and inspires each Christian to respond in faith. Pastor Jacob articulated his approach that “ the church needs to go back to the basics. We have to have a faith that is applicable. So I struggle with faith that is not applicable: it needs to have a Biblical basis. And I acknowledge that not everyone, even in my congregation has the same interpretation. But I want people to connect with the Christology and Divinity of Christ. I am a very scripturally based person even when I struggle with it, I want Christ to live in me.” Pastor Jacob values this representative life stating that “every pastor must be identified as the theologian in the community; if someone in the community needs a pastor here, you go as the community theologian.” This thought seemed to match what I heard from the congregations. They reported that Pastor Jacob not only preached the scriptures on Sunday, but physically seemed to embed the “Word” in his daily life. This made an impression on the congregants, even if they all did not interpret the “Word” the same way. I would say that as they witnessed Pastor Jacob living out what he “said” that trust in him was more likely to increase, most notably when they saw it consistently. This acted as a cue to his character as trustworthy.

Looking back at Manglos-Weber’s definition of how trust develops, she notes that “personal trust often builds from impersonal trust” suggesting that this happens when “the truster relies on symbolic cues projected by the other – the person’s self-presentation habits, expressions and so on, in a positive light and imagine the other to be a trustworthy person on the basis of

those symbols” (Manglos-Weber, 2018). It would appear that Pastor Jacob’s role as a public theologian was legitimized by some in the community because the symbolic cues of his desire to be of service and the result of his care enabled more trust to develop. For example, his willingness to pray and care for anyone in the hospital by preaching “the Word”, not just his parishioners, may have sparked hospital administrators to ask him to serve on their board. This act, as observed by those both in and outside of his church, appeared to earn a level of trustworthiness that served the dual purpose of solidifying his role as public theologian, but also a community leader. Being deemed trustworthy is not a unique experience as people trust certain roles in society every day with a level of generalized trust that is anticipated to develop into more personal trust over time. Parents trust teachers with their children, patient trust doctors, college students trust professors; there are endless social interactions where this occurs. The difference in this case is that the kind of time allotted to a pastor, both by voluntary members and community encounters: it is more frequent for longer periods and involves the representation of a spiritual agenda.

In most cases, the types of generalized trust that involve the submission of one’s control or power to another’s care happens within short periods of time: the teacher has a student for semester or academic year, the doctor for appointments. In the case of the foreign-born pastor, the amount of time allotted to them involves weekly, sometimes daily interactions that involve large amounts of time that are grounded in faith and the “Word”. This trust with “The Word” extends even beyond the Sunday Morning hour. Every Sunday after church, every community engagement representing the church, every marriage, baptism or funeral; the office itself involves a large amount of opportunity for generalized trust to develop. The unique factor in this incidence happening through the agency of GPAC and the local United Methodist Church is that these opportunities for gaining strong ties of personal trust are made available to immigrant religious leaders who might be deemed “other” in different settings, but in these settings have a high chance of becoming “one of ours.” The amount of time both cumulatively and over years of appointment helps to aid this development. This noted trust seemed to be replicated when asked about the idea of what it means to be a “good pastor”.

Almost every individual, household and group I met with for interviews stated a similar point about what makes a good pastor: “They must know the Bible”. This phrase includes a great amount of theologically embedded code. What is meant by “knowing the Bible” and how does a

pastor know if the congregation thinks they are “preaching the Word”? The sermon in any worship service, including funerals and weddings, is the central location where the pastor’s authority to interpret the Word is granted by the congregation and, for the most part pondered in their hearing of it. Of course, we know that with any performance, if it is boring or causes discomfort in subject matter a parishioner may tune out. Therefore, “knowing the Bible” and “knowing how to present the Bible” in ways that entertain the attention of those listening can be considered two different things. Whereas the structure of the Order of Worship is mostly the same in the United Methodist Church, the construction, delivery and performance of a sermon varies greatly based on region and culture. Again, time plays a role in the determination of a “good pastor”.

In the Mainline Protestant churches of United States, the entire worship service is expected to take place within one hour with the “deadline” of concluding before lunch. In more Evangelical traditions or Catholic services, more time often transpires as a sign of their cultural expression of worship. This is a reason why many Evangelical churches thrive in the southern hemisphere as the allotment for loose interpretations of time fit the norm. (Manglos-Weber, 2018) The order of worship may lead up to the sermon as the “most important act” in the experience; but if the clock is sitting at 10 ‘til noon, in the U.S. Mainline church the westernized mindset that values as “timeliness next to godliness” might force the shortening of the sermon in order to maintain positive feedback and reception(Weber, 2008). The closer the time comes to the cultural deadline, the greater the chance that the reception of the “Word” will decrease with the attitude of agitation. Not so in churches across the globe. In fact, worship services are often filled with hours of music and different preachers throughout the majority of a day. When I have traveled to Mexico, the worship seemed more like a “concert of praise” with no bulletin, relying primarily on the vocal cues of the pastors and worship leaders moving the congregation through each part.

A similar situation existed in Pastor Jacob’s experience growing up into adulthood in Zimbabwe. Worship was a spectacle, with almost a parade of authorities finding their places up front. These energized services were standing room only, going on for hours with sermons constructed but also “lead by the Spirit”. The length of these types of services often reified the message or theme of the day, embedding the core expectations of a parishioner’s response in the inspired repetition. This major difference in the operations of the sermon time(s) and how a

preacher “preaches the Word” seemed key to observe as I listened to and documented Pastor Jacob’s sermons to both communities. Whereas his status as an appointed pastor from the United Methodist Church allotted him years of time to develop relationships with the mostly white congregation, the interpretation of how that time was utilized was mandated from western practices, not African standards. As he adjusted to structural differences in worship in regard to time, how would he infuse this evangelic spirit that was important to him and his presentation of the sermon as a sign that he “knew his Bible”? While interviewing him about his leadership style he acknowledged this difference and the work it took to “relearn” the American way. Pastor Jacob did not use notes very often, so his engagements involved lots of eye-contact, walking, talking and gestures; again, something not as familiar with the standard Mainline audience, but nonetheless, embraced in both communities.

In the space of a 15-25 minute sermon, much work is expected of a typical pastor as a representative of God: the hearing and interpretation of scripture, connecting the ancient texts to relevant everyday life and challenging the parishioner to deepen their faith because of what they have heard. In the case of Pastor Jacob another set of tasks are added to the basket; being clearly understood, managing his accent while bridging the cultural divide to connect, educate and represent not only God, but their various cultures. Balancing the normal expectations and added work, Pastor Jacob grabbed the ear and interest of those listening to him through one very effective tool: personal and vulnerable witness.

In talking with parishioners at both churches it was not uncommon for people to mention how much they enjoyed Pastor Jacob’s sermons. “He just has such a passion for God” some would state, whereas others would say “he knows his Bible and the content is excellent”. But what seemed to linger with many of them was how his personal stories opened their eyes and connected them not only to his life in Zimbabwe, but to their experiences in the United States. Growing up with strong expectations of education, hard-work, time to play like a child but also experiencing divorce and rebellion while leaning on “faith”; all of this sounded much like their own narratives; and it surprised them. Listening to him tell heartfelt messages of desired salvation during those rough times time of childhood only fostered more empathetic, deep connection, even while hearing it all through an unfamiliar accent.

Concerning his accent several interviewees stated that “they just had to listen a bit closer”. One stated that “it took a while for him to ‘get the lingo’ and terms which made us

listen more; which wasn't necessarily a bad thing." A woman from Belle Plaine United Methodist Church (BPUMC) who had had trouble hearing him at first stated that she did not want to miss what Pastor Jacob was saying because "speaks from the heart and it makes sense". Despite the occasional stumble on words, people were learning and being guided in their faith by this aspirational migrant in ways that seemed to be both effective and meaningful.

When listening to his sermons, I too noticed his personal connection in the hearing. I was there one Sunday when he was talking about growing up in Zimbabwe and telling about the importance of camp and how mentors helped him with his faith. Again, going to camp is a common expectation of children and youth in the United States, a ministry the GPAC takes great pride in. Even with this commonality, I knew that the context of growing up in Zimbabwe and going to camp in the United States at the time of his youth was much different. Because I had personally interviewed him extensively, I knew that he had experienced some real hardships that, at least during my Sunday worship visits, he did not mention. In one setting he shared from his past that "he had seen the worst kinds of racism where vicious dogs were unleashed on black people because they were in the wrong district, that "you" were not allowed in. I suffered racism; I looked at my father being subjected. My father and sister were dressed down right there in front of everyone and with impunity." Even though I did not hear him speak of such things from the pulpit, I sensed that the people of Caldwell had some indication of this experience and that Belle Plaine would come to know it as well. What he did speak about was his life of rebellion as a young person, what he calls his "10 year hiatus" where he smoked and drank and was not the Christian he is today.

This type of personal sharing became a great connector as I heard several interviewees mention how they could relate to him because he was not "perfect". This again, is a type of bridging through commonalities between strangers and different cultures under the umbrella of religion; a point Simmel makes in his theory of how religion binds communities. This common experience of rebellion becomes relational which unites those in the shared narrative. As Simmel states in his affirmation of the importance of relationality "all social life is based on reciprocity and that means unity"; furthermore, this relationship creates not only unity, but transformation as he states that "through religious practice the foreign becomes familiar but it also transforms familiar social contexts in turn" (Levine, 1971). Although Simmel was talking more about the "foreign nature" of metaphysical relations with the "Great Other", meaning the Divine, this idea

also seems to connect in the experience of the stranger and the native understanding their common union. As the stage of religion expands with globalization, the symbols of connection to “the Other” used in local congregations to connect with God are transposed on the relationship of getting to know “the other” represented by both parties. This can be quite emotional, as Simmel infers, when this element of surprise might stir the connection to a powerful moment of developing trust. Manglos-Weber would agree as she declares that “emotion plays an important role in this process as well, since feelings are what give such symbols their power” (Manglos-Weber, 2018).

Another connective moment was when Pastor Jacob shared his salvation story and how, as he worked as a social worker in Zimbabwe, he *really* came to know Jesus and labored to improve his life. He met his wife, became associated with the leadership of the YMCA, eventually to become the regional director, and as he witnessed more for Jesus, the more he felt the blessings of life; including migration to the United States. The familiar theme of the immigrant experience of perseverance over hardship and “wrong” living reflects the German immigrant experience Weber documented; exhibiting the power of the Protestant Work Ethic on the salvific experience of the believer (Weber, [1956]2002). This common experience of “changing one’s ways” for God’s mercy is not limited to the United States experience; it is global. One parishioner, when reflecting on Pastor Jacob’s sermons recognized “that people had their own troubles and stories but that his sharing of his own message was persuasive and passionate creating connection. You could just hear it in his voice- he was touched.” This kind of emotional expression is deeply connected to the evangelical experience; an expression he was quite comfortable with and indeed, used to define his expectations of being a “good pastor”. Another parishioner from BPUMC said “I didn’t think I’d like a minister that preaches his style which is more energetic, but it doesn’t bother me; it does if it is in the south and a white preacher; but not him.”

Pastor Jacob’s involvement in the large evangelical missionary organizations *Arise the Nations* and *Harvest of Jubilee* helped him develop his preaching skills to include an evangelical, energetic tone. Even though he had strong United Methodist roots, his ministry was not exclusively tied to Methodism. This gave him ample opportunity to preach in front of large crowds in Botswana, Kenya, Zambia, India and Pakistan. It was in these settings that Pastor Jacob learned to witness and “preach the Word”. He used this phrase often, a phrase in the

United States that tends to be adopted by more Evangelical circles. From his standpoint, to “preach the Word” did not just mean unpacking the social context of the scriptures; it meant to bring the entire Word alive. He did this by interweaving his interpretation of those scriptures with the application of other scriptures to back up his conclusions. This introduced another “style” of worship that, again, these two white congregations may not have been used to; the call and response.

Pastor Jacob often invited a “call and response” format in his sermons. The idea that seemed to lie behind this approach was the memorization of key verses in the Bible. Initiating the engagement, he would begin to recite the first part of a scripture that highlighted his point then pause and nod to the people, expecting them to fill it in. This act was definitely not a typical Mainline practice. Granted, the early Methodist movement was known for its fervent preaching and the introduction of robust singing; but swaying and body movement, let alone talking back to the preacher was not a normal event. The first time I observed this, at least a handful or more responded. Their somewhat comfortable response pointed to prior teaching of the scripture from previous sermons.

In the academic theological community, one might criticize this as “proof-texting” rather than real exegesis; a theological “no-no” in the UMC. Proof-texting is “a method by which a person appeals to a biblical text to prove or justify a theological position without regard to the context of the passage they are citing” (<https://www.theopedia.com/proof-texting>) Even though I was avoiding critique as a researcher, I do not believe he was doing this. Instead, it seemed to be representative of his cultural infusion inspired by Evangelical roots inviting others to experience the movement of knowing the scriptures “with him” rather than owning the authority of its knowledge. The belief that believers have full access to the scripture without having to seek absolution from a priest is truly Calvinistic Protestantism at its height. That Pastor Jacob is able to promote the use of memorized public recitation on a regular basis and without complaint in a denomination that does not tend to use this practice is a possible indicator that they trust him enough with their faith development to try new things. As Mainline churches decline, one of the longtime theories behind its lack of attraction has been that worship has no emotive experience in the presence of “God’s frozen chosen.” If this Evangelical thread that Pastor Jacob utilizes in his sermon style is embedded during his tenure, then these parishioners could quite presumably expect this practice to continue, even after the foreign-born pastor is gone. However, the

likelihood of pastors following with this “call and response” style as part of their practice is low as they too, are often socialized in western Mainline traditions.

Another sign of literally scripture as signs of the “living Word” was found in the use of technology at both churches, especially the use of screens. In both churches, the screens were used to not only to indicate the order of worship but also as signs of modernity, meaning the willingness of the churches to “change” in order to accommodate new tastes and styles. At Caldwell, I noticed two mid-aged women taking turns each week running the PowerPoint from the front pew. I noticed another piece of modern equipment that I had not encountered before: a music box used to play the recorded organ music that when run through the speakers, was hard to distinguish from the real pipes prominently displayed at the sides of the chancel behind the pulpit area. At BPUMC, there was a different set-up with one large screen centered right under the large cross that hung from the modern A-frame. Instead of the controls situated up front, a tech-board was placed in the back with a team running the video and sound. In both cases, the purpose of these screens was to frame the theme and guide the congregations to focus on the overall experience of “the Word” through liturgy, song and group participation.

At Caldwell, I am not sure if Pastor Jacob was responsible for the installation of the newer technology; I do know that the overhead projection system was part of a renovation at Belle Plaine before his arrival. Regardless, Pastor Jacob’s ability to coordinate the vision of worship using these resources in order to highlight “preaching the Word” points to a skill set that many native-born pastors still struggle with. Additionally, the use of technology in worship often scares parishioners, especially older populations, and yet here were two congregations utilizing it effectively. One assumption that congregants might have of foreign-born pastors as they lead mostly white-congregations is whether or not they had access to such technology in their home countries or are used to utilizing it. In reality, Pastor Jacob had been using computers and technology since he was a young man in Zimbabwe helping out with his then fiancé Virginia’s church worship services. This was one of the early skills that created opportunity for Pastor Jacob to lead in church, a skill that garners trust as it requires a certain touch as the ones behind the controls help guide worship. In my experience, it is often difficult to maintain or train volunteers with this type of skill and that Pastor Jacob appeared to have these types of volunteers aiding him in the delivery of the Word through the use of technology was a definite testament to the level of trust people invested in his leadership. Once more, a common experience often

presumed in stereotypes of imagined circumstances in countries outside of the United States seemed to be debunked by the reality that he had these skills available to him for quite some time.

What seems special about this relationship is the support that commonalities were found through the discovery of each other's lives in these settings, including new discoveries of blending worship styles. This seemed to draw them even closer. Through all these Sunday interactions, it was clear that the living "Word" was as important to Pastor Jacob as it was to them, developing a crucial connection to him, but also a connection to the community. Pastor Jacob was not only a representative of God, but of the Church. Unlike previous pastors, however, he didn't look or sound like the people he represented; and yet they were very proud that he was out there doing ministry. This, again, required yet another "leap of faith" on his part as he embraced multiple roles, including pastor and resident immigrant, with the endorsement of his congregation. Under the umbrella of religion and the structure of the institution, the introduction allowed both he and his parishioners to engage with curiosity and even excitement as they enacted ministry together. Again, this elation strangers can feel when they discover something in common points to the relational attributes that normalize this union of spirits and helps legitimate the appointment of foreign-born pastors to mostly white locations (Levine, 1971). With ample time to do so, these commonalities can become identifying marks of deeper relationship that move it to personal trust, and in some cases to the level of fictive kin and/or personal family. I certainly found that to be true in this case as these mutual discoveries lead to the awareness of shared values and experiences between Pastor Jacob and the congregations he served.

Reflexively, as Pastor Jacob's congregational members noticed his involvement in the community from "visiting hospitals to home visits" as well as being involved in the school, the hospital board and the president of the Ministerial Alliance, they too were challenged to imitate his actions. It was clear that he did not just represent the congregation as the living Word, i.e. practicing what he preached but that he taught and sent the congregation into ministry as well. If he was going to "take the leap", he expected them to do so as well. His interpretation of the common value of "faith" meant faith in action.

In Caldwell, a community leader who had been in the congregation for some time observed "before Pastor Jacob, the pastor did it all; now, everyone has a job to do. As funeral director, I

used to have to go open the church up, but now there are several who get there beforehand to help.” Pastor Jacob wanted the parishioners to not only help in the church, but to maintain their conference obligations as well; honoring the institution. The lay leader shared that she did not want to go to the Uniting Conference when the Great Plains UMC was formally established because she “did not agree with it.” Pastor Jacob said, “well you might not agree with it, but don’t you think you should go to find out what is going on so other people know?” She went and was glad she did so in order to honor his wishes and the duty of representing the congregation. Another parishioner shared that “he’s very persuasive, he doesn’t want ministry to be kept in secret; there are people who have never ‘done’ things before that are doing them now.” Many congregants noted that he would “ask” people to go with or be part of ministry in the community. Without this prompt, they may have never engaged in such a thing; but with Pastor Jacob as a mentor, they learned to find confidence and felt they were living their faith by openly caring for their community. There are trace elements of Weber’s concept of early Protestants matching their “belief and labor” here, maybe not so much as a sign of salvation, but as a responsibility of representative of the church in the town they belonged to (Weber, 2002). Weber made special note that this driving element of “call” was the foundational connection between faith and the American way of embedding capitalism into its very core. Pastor Jacob, connecting his call to his labor seemed to be exemplifying an American value that these communities could relate to; hard work exhibited through faith. The interesting note is that this value was not learned in the United States; it was instilled in him since birth in Zimbabwe.

Even though he had only been there a short time, evidence of this same kind of influence seemed to appear at BPUMC. In an interview with a couple, both of the parishioners shared that “he knew his Bible” but that he also was making them think and do “new things”, the newest of course being adult trips to Zimbabwe which will be discussed later. Of course, in both churches, not every parishioner responded to Jacob’s sermons and teaching with fervor; this is common in any church. However, the sense that his presence, message, and interpretation of the scripture pointed people to actually “be disciples for the transformation of the world” seemed to make a strong impression on some. In a small way, this supports my theory that his presence was enacting some sort of “intervention”, ever so slight, that might not have been there with a native-born pastor. Convincing people to change is difficult; especially since many congregations,

large and small, rely on their hired clergy and staff to “represent” the church *for* them rather than be transformed to change habits, beliefs and maybe even worldviews.

It is important to note that Pastor Jacob may not have been the instigator of the two congregation’s response to “the Word” through hands on mission; this most likely had been embedded in their practices long before his presence. However, the continuation of those practices and the prominence he gave to them in worship in both settings was a clear marriage of values; to serve your fellow neighbor. In Caldwell, they gave proclamation of this “call to serve” by allotting a “Moment of Mission” in the worship service. Although BPUMC did not have a formal slot, similar attention was given to this outreach during morning announcements. These missions were not always simple to accomplish; some involved travel to spaces like Open Door, a homeless shelter and community resource run by the UMC, in Wichita, Kansas which was 50 miles away for Caldwell and about 20 miles for Belle Plaine. These mission actions occurred mostly outside of Sunday acted as public displays of imitating Christ through labor and hospitality, a responsibility defining their identity as “being Christian”. Even though the entire community did not take part in these missions as a whole, the representative few were charged with “living the Word” on behalf of the church. This symbolically points out their commitment to a long held value of being “sent out” of their close-knit environment to help others in larger, urbanized world; an action that would be expanded by the presence of a foreign-born pastor who would gather representation to go much further than Wichita to embed these ideals.

In both congregations, Pastor Jacob had either taken or was planning to take a group of people to the Old Mutare Mission in Zimbabwe. For many in each congregation, this was or would be their first trip outside of the United States. Although I was not able to interview all those who went or were planning to go, a few interviews involved persons who had gone, bringing this experience into the conversation. In chapter six I go into more detail about the way this impacted the sense of connection between the churches and the country of Zimbabwe. For this theme, “Preaching the Word” I want to focus on how faith was enacted to reach beyond the scope of the church, and even their home country. That groups in the congregations were willing to “leap” and trust Pastor Jacob as they would become “strangers” for several days in his home country seemed to present a high level of confidence in him. 10 people from CUMC had took the trip whereas at least 8 or 9 were already signing on to go by the time I got to BPUMC.

This “leap of faith” seemed to come from a place where the commonality of religion, and specifically the UMC, as the Old Mutare mission was United Methodist, eased the decision to go. The fact that the UMC has global locations, one of which their foreign-born pastor had been born in, seemed to act as a bridge between cultures but yet still tied them to the large organization they trusted. This coupled with the guidance of Pastor Jacob, a possible mechanism of trust from consistent care seemed to provide the white parishioners with the amount of trust to safely engage in this new adventure and grow from it. Their decisions to follow Pastor Jacob to his country as a “rational choice” may have been informed by the common connections they had found between their religion and sharing their life story. Simmel attributes the power of faith or religion to make sense of what would otherwise seem irrational as a function of religion; “only when religion is the deciding factor in life, can it relate life’s separate elements truly to each other or to the whole” (Levine, 1971) Again, referring to the sense of making connections between abstract and irrational decisions that metaphysical thinking often brings to the table in religious life and believing in an unseen deity; the down to earth experience of trusting an “other” i.e. foreign-born pastor, who had become trustworthy enough to guide a person to a new land seems applicable as an explanation of what is going on.

But why did people trust Pastor Jacob so much? One explanation came from a parishioner in Belle Plaine explaining his first interactions with Pastor Jacob. “We were in Bible study reading a book and we (she and Pastor Jacob) were not agreeing, going back and forth. We had a dialogue. Honestly the content of the book was nothing but he ‘made it something’; I respected that.” Another parishioner from the same church mentioned a similar exchange saying “he is very receptive to different points of view; his Bible studies are truly discussions, you sometimes leave totally in a different place than he is, but that’s okay; that’s good. We’re supposed to learn something new.” This acknowledgement that it is okay to disagree and still be trusted as a pastoral leader is not something that happens easily. In fact, during the interviews reports of negative history with a previous pastor were shared quite frequently.

One Caldwellian noted that “before he came attendance was going down; the pastors were good people, but comparatively, he just seemed to ‘fit’”. Another noted that she “just didn’t feel as connected to the previous pastors, she liked Pastor Jacob’s sermons more, they were more Biblical.” The same was heard in early reception at Belle Plaine as one parishioner shared, “I just didn’t get anything out of the sermons from the previous pastors.” One couple shared that

“they weren’t even sure that what their previous pastor was preaching was actually in the Bible it sounded so “off”; they had to go check.” It was apparent that primacy of scripture was something that both churches had in common with Pastor Jacob yet applying the same interpretation of scripture was not always important to either group. What was binding was that they “saw” the scripture come alive in their Pastor based on his interpretation and were also guided to do the same. They may not agree; but they were expected to at least act out what they believed. This became an identifying factor in Pastor Jacob’s approach: utilizing common connections to guide people to respect different views; something that comes from his conviction to move people from ethnocentric views to more culturally relative ideas about the world.

Interpretation of the Bible is important to parishioners and can be a major dividing point if handled not from a place of authority, but as an authoritarian. Pastor Jacob was comfortable in his authority but found little threat from opposing views. With this sense of comfort in what he believed and how he believed it, he seemed to be able to traverse those divides and come out with not only generalized trust intact, but with possible growing personal trust. It is important to note that not all those interviewed disliked their previous pastors; some were genuinely grieving the loss of some of those beloved pastors even year or so after their move. What does need to be said in this case, is that when this immigrant pastor who seemed so different from these communities took the place of previous native-born pastor’s he garnered personal trust in both congregations in a way that seems vastly different than normal immigrant-native relationship. I suggest that Pastor Jacob’s authentic and straightforward approach was partly to credit this positive response.

As most white religious populations still operate out of the old white missionary script, these interactions with Pastor Jacob may have challenged its application; especially when his presence stirred thought about American issues of disparity such as race. A few comments made by parishioners during interviews made me think this quite possibly had happened. One person shared, looking up as they were pondering out loud “I wonder if the pastor wasn’t foreign-born but just ‘black’ if they would have had the same level of growth and acceptance?” Another shared that same sentiment “if we just had a black person from Chicago rather than Jacob, would it have been different?”. In both cases, I didn’t push the issue but made sure to note them as they articulated embedded meanings that others had shared about race, ethnicity and how we balance those social statuses in the United State. No matter the case, these possible shifts didn’t appear

overnight, it took time, trust and building a relationship with a stranger to the point of some possible “intervention” in their thought processes. But time is something the United Methodist Church is allotting for these interactions. Time enough to evaluate whether their pastor, who happens to be black and immigrant is “the real deal” and in the process, honoring his governance with growing trust that is difficult to acquire in this day and age in America.

Chapter 6 - The “Real Deal”: Trust in Leadership

In this chapter, I explore the second theme of suspension that presented traces of personal trust that reached beyond the expectations of pastor as preacher. Pastors, although losing some of the former power occupied in the height of Christendom, still serve as major leaders and connectors in communities. This does not happen automatically as a pastor must prove themselves as trustworthy as any other community leader, and yet, some pastors have an advantage based on the church organization they represent. In Kansas and Nebraska, pastors in the United Methodist Church are still considered important representatives of the community despite the decline in membership. The historical importance of the denomination in the development of these states through the establishment of higher education institutions, hospitals, policies that promoted abolition and the mere presence of a Methodist church in nearly every community still connects the pastor to the larger narrative of the area (Wuthnow, 2012). Of course, much has changed in the make-up of the denomination, including the shift from establishing congregations to maintaining them. Even though UMC clergy still occupy a position of status in most of the communities, they seldom become “insiders”.

Being labeled an “insider” in mostly white homogenous communities is often a difficult task. Even white people that fit all the attributes of these close knit groups are often considered “strangers” and never fully accepted. One interviewee noted that his wife “who has lived here for forty years, is still considered an outsider.” In fact several parishioners made note they were not originally from “town” and felt that estrangement on a regular basis. One noted “I’m still ‘new’ to Belle Plaine and been here 22 years.” This type of “outsiderness” can bleed over into the church experience, especially if the pastor is itinerant.

In the United Methodist system, moving the pastor is part of the process that most parishioners and townspeople are used to. Their realm of authority in this appointment is limited to the length of the assignment, with of course the longer tenures creating more access to the “in groups” without being counted as a member. Still, interactions with “in groups” both in and outside of the church come with some level of power both in and outside of the worshipping community. This power comes with the office of Pastor. In the United Methodist Church, the responsibilities of the ordained elder, the third highest level of authority behind Bishop and District Superintendent, are to administer the work of the church through Word, Service, Order

and Table.

These expected roles involve the instruction, missional guidance, governance and administration of the sacraments to the church they are appointed. Even though these are the bestowed rights given to the pastor upon completion of the ordination process, the ability for the pastor to effectively lead and gain the trust of the congregations pertaining to these duties is not automatic. Arriving with a level of generalized trust, it takes effort from both parties to develop relationships beyond that level. Even more, it takes specialized interest on the pastor's part to not only govern along with the local Administrative Council in the areas of authority allotted, but also to become involved in the governance of other activities in community. Pastor Jacob was such a pastor as he not only seemed to have gained the personal trust of his congregation in the governance of the church, but also the respect of the community as he was the president of the Ministerial Alliance, and a member of the Sumner County Hospital Board. He may not have fully been part of the "in group" but his access to the community in leadership positions was clearly present. Presence of authority and governance, even while being absent, became an important display of trust in Pastor Jacob's ability to lead.

When I first set up the study, I had pictured meeting the Caldwell congregation, the only site known to either of us at the time, with Pastor Jacob being present. Things did not transpire that way; my first Sunday present for worship, he was away for the Special United Methodist Conference on Human Sexuality. He may have been away, but I would come to find that Pastor Jacob's governance was still respected even from afar.

First Sunday Experience: A Stranger Received

After Pastor Jacob agreed to the project, he immediately connected me to the CUMC Administrative Council Chair via email. He explained the procedure that I was proposing while asking her to look for me on the following Sunday as I visited the site. As he would be gone, she would be my first contact with the congregation. Pastor Jacob had no "official" role at the conference but wanted to observe with an open mind how the global denomination would discern the volatile subject of human sexuality and its reception in the UMC. He had gained a reputation as a traveler, especially to religious, cultural or familial events as part of his ministry, sometimes going to several states in a week. In fact, one parishioner noted with a smile during our

interview that “Pastor Jacob, he just goes; like I mean it’s nothing for him to drive to Dallas, Texas or Nebraska.” This observation was noted in many conversations throughout the project.

Interestingly, this is a characteristic of the ideal type of stranger. Simmel suggests that “the stranger will thus not be considered here in the usual sense of the term, as the wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the (one) who comes today and stays tomorrow—the potential wanderer, so to speak, who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going” (Levine, 2917). With his adventures, Pastor Jacob would bring back with him first-hand knowledge about the conference or even connect them to the event via Facebook videos, providing insight. In this way, Pastor Jacob was collecting cultural goods to bring back to his congregation, something that they probably would not have access to if he had stayed home.

With Pastor Jacob gone, I had an opportunity to start the study connecting with the congregation in a kind of “cold call” introduction, but with the governed permission of Pastor Jacob. I had a lot of questions going in, and a bit of nervousness of whether this project would work. Even though it had been “okayed” by Pastor Jacob and the Administrative Council chair, would the congregants be “okay” with my observation and inquiry? Even though I was an insider, so to speak, as a leader in the United Methodist Church, I was still an outsider in the everyday affairs of this congregation, including worship. One thing I have learned about being in Christian communities that are not your own; be yourself, be transparent and do not be afraid to ask for help because that sense of Christian welcome often “kicks in” as it did in this case. The public endorsement from Pastor Jacob, however, did not hurt, helping greatly later on in gaining enough generalized trust to enter into homes to ask questions about their relationships with Pastor Jacob. I valued that trust. Knowing what I knew from a recent study conducted in Iowa and Kansas small towns, knowing who to trust is often a challenge in communities like Caldwell. As parents and leaders encourage their young to leave and pursue better opportunities those who stay are often left out of leadership because they were not trusted prior to adulthood and those who move in are often transient (Carr and Kefalas, 2009). This kind of environment can create looser ties and more guarded receptions of younger people. Even though I am 50, I am still comparatively “young” in most of the eyes of the parishioners. Additionally, churches often remain havens of connection, granted not without conflict, but with genuine intent on being a place where people are trusted. Because I was entering into their lives with basically the same

amount of generalized trust as any visiting pastor from the conference would, the idea of my role as sociologist working with them on my dissertation was eased in two ways; under the shelter of the United Methodist Church and by Pastor Jacob's approval.

Even though Jacob was not there the first Sunday, the overall flow of the worship and content represented the fairly consistence routine that I would to expect every Sunday I attended. Parking was limited in front of the church, so overflow of cars, trucks and SUVs lined nearby residential blocks as well as in front of the church office which was across from the main facility. Each week I visited I noticed people walked up to the church chatting about the weather if it was sunny or hunched over and heading to the door if it was cold or rainy. Even though the southern front of the church had a grand staircase at the entrance, people tended to enter through the eastern updated entrance that housed an elevator and stairs up to the Sanctuary. You could also reach fellowship hall and the Sunday School rooms from that entrance.

As I went through the entrance, I was greeted warmly by a male greeter who I would find was a welcoming fixture of the community. He was not afraid to chat with strangers and was extremely helpful in pointing out where the Sanctuary was. I got used to seeing him at church every Sunday either greeting at the door or helping in the back with bulletins. My welcome did not stop there as people noticed the mid-aged light blonde haired person finding her way to a place in the front of the sanctuary; I felt like I stood out as a stranger. Being there especially early on the first day to watch the practice of gathering for worship, I remained seated in order to observe how others were greeted. The welcomes and catch ups happened in droves as people came through the doors and connected before worship began. This practice happened every Sunday without Pastor Jacob's presence because he was often driving from his other church, as he was part of a two-point charge. When churches cannot afford to pay for a full-time pastor which entails meeting a salary package that is standardized by the Annual Conference, then churches can be yoked with the same pastor sharing part-time duties at both. Some pastors in the GPAC served three or four churches, sharing preaching responsibilities with laity on opposite Sundays. It is somewhat common then that the initial part of worship services in these types of contracts are always started and lead by laity.

I sat in the second row in the northern section of this Akron style early 1900's space surrounded by stained glass windows. As a life-long church-goer and pastor, I felt at home even though I did not belong to this congregation. In truth, pastors do not belong to congregations,

they belong to an order, of which I belonged to the rank of the Order of Ordained Elders. The uniting factor of my association with the denomination did make difference in my comfort level, however.

To avoid staring at people, I focused my gaze on the windows, many of which depicted Jesus' life through familiar bible stories. I had grown up in a modern church that had mid-century modern glass but the church where my husband was currently pastor looked a lot like this sanctuary, so it was not unfamiliar. I looked up at the empty balcony, which loomed unused but a reminder of a room that once had a larger congregation flowing into the theater-like wooden seating. At the front of the raised chancel a pulpit set center stage with what might be called an "altar" in other traditions but is called the Table in the United Methodist Church. At floor level where rows of dark stained wooden pews split by two offset red-carpeted isles which stretched and curved to face the pulpit, the cross and the table. Grand chairs were placed behind the pulpit like thrones which were common in the era that the building had been erected. Church architectures tend to reflect the "ideas of the era" and embed the practiced theology of the time they were built. This church pointed to the seasons of revivals, the authority of preaching and a high elevation of scripture as "Jesus looked" at you from all sides.

Focusing again on the people entering the room, the casual chatting and laughter of shared stories started to fill the air with the "music of belonging". A mid-aged man with a guitar made his way up to the pulpit area while tv screens that were hanging on the side walls that framed the chancel area flashed on. A relatively young family of two 50 year-olds with what looked their children and a grandchild made their way to the area I was sitting where I realized the tech equipment to run the screens lay in the front pew. They welcomed me as they all scooted in and after a few questions back and forth I explained in full who I was and why I was there. They smiled as they too, were K-Staters and we were the same age. As the buzz continued to climb with a younger mom setting up for a children's sermon, the guitar player started to play gathering songs that were reminiscent of church camp with a few bluegrass-like hymns thrown in, some of which people joined in. The atmosphere focused on creating a "joyful noise" as folks found their place and the leaders coordinated the first parts of the worship. The Administrative Council Chair whom I had connected with via email noticed me and waved. She came over and made sure to connect with me face-to-face warmly smiling while continuing to remain in motion as she had a role to play in making announcements. At the same time, a lay-

speaker was getting ready by the pulpit, placing notes and getting situated. I later learned she had been the main preacher in between clergy appointments and was respected by the community for her thorough bible-teaching and preaching. The gender-roles appeared fairly equal as men ushered and led music while women prepared the aspects of worship.

After the last gathering song, the Administrative Chair stood at the pulpit making announcements, sharing where Jacob was and going through the processes of reminding people of church events throughout the week and upcoming missions. Congregants, which numbered around 50 people of diverse ages from babies to old-age, perused their bulletins, quieted, listened and interacted with the leaders with a wireless microphone that was carried by an usher to the person in order to correct, verify or make a new announcement. It was during this time that I was welcomed from the pulpit as an usher brought the mic to me so that I could introduce myself and the purpose of my presence with them over the next few months. I also explained that some of them might know me from my role as a pastor as well as my husband who was the “Network Leader” of a regional group of churches who focus on area missions and ministry together. Familiar nods assured me that some had indeed recognized me and knew who Mitch was. Thus, I felt a sense of warm welcome but also curious consideration of what my “project” might look like as they would come to know me as a sociologist as well. Understandably, when a group recognizes that they are being “studied” in the midst of a “variable” that happens to be a black, foreign born pastor and his family a certain amount of unease, curiosity and wondering is expected. Their work of receiving me involved several presentations of my social self, Stranger, pastor and researcher.

Even with anticipated levels of speculation from those who were suddenly aware that they were also the foci of my study, the congregation welcomed me warmly throughout the morning and into the fellowship dinner that I found out was happening afterwards. Generalized trust, whether it came from valuing my multiple roles or just from the initial benefit of the doubt seemed to be part of my reception thus far. I also felt that the work Pastor Jacob did to ensure my welcome acted as a conduit to the reception. The governance of the pastor, even while gone, was still evident in the day. This did not just apply to my introduction, it was everywhere. Most notably, on the front of the bulletin was a clear spiritual direction, placed by Pastor Jacob, stating the congregation’s connectional role to the larger bureaucracy and its personal implications on the community:

“As the UMC Special General Conference convenes this week, we ask ourselves: ‘How are we supposed to treat others?’ and ‘Does God’s love extends to all?’ Our prayer is that all shall be well; God will set everything right. God blesses the poor and the suffering and empowers the church to reach out to those in need. The Golden Rule teaches us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us-regardless of whether they are friend or foe, saint or sinner.”

Pastor Jacob, even while absent, still set the mood of the worship through the statement on the bulletin; mainly the mandate of “loving and treating others as ourselves”. Again, these types of words as fresh reminders in their heads might have helped my reception that day. Being warmly received in a religious enclave does not always occur. This was verified by a few stories that interviewees shared about other churches they had tried to fit into; only to feel like a constant guest but never a member. As I thought back on this experience, I wondered if some of this warmth had developed under the governance of Pastor Jacob, or even in the act of welcoming Pastor Jacob *and* receiving him had honed these skills. In the following weeks, I would begin to put together that picture and the part each actor played in the attitudes concerning reception and how they worked in this church. What I did detect was that my presence as a sociologist studying this phenomenon did not seem “irrational” to the group but seemed interesting to those I encountered.

I noticed that the entire morning focused on the message of “extending love to all” with similar and repeated symbolic language scattered throughout the call and response greeting, call to worship, written prayers, response and benediction. The formality of the order comes directly from the Wesleyan tradition in the United Methodist Book of Worship; a clear order with high participatory interaction from the entire body. In the United Methodist Church, in fact in several Christian worship services, the bulletin acts as the “guide” to the experience. Even if the “bulletin” is not physically printed as many churches rely on screens for the order of worship, the idea of what would be in the bulletin if printed still prevails. Announcements, welcoming statements, time, place, focus, liturgy, hymns and praise songs, prayers, anthems and solos, scripture lessons, sermon titles, the indication of communion and benedictions, all are wrapped up in this artifact. Additionally, the calendar, contact information for the pastor, list of those in need of prayer and special activities and missions are listed. This artifact centers the group as a playbill centers an audience watching a play, giving indication of what will go on with the performance and historically documenting the event as copy of the bulletin is often filed as a

reminder of what happened that day. Whether parishioners realize it or not, this coordinated production tool overseen by the Pastor as part of their governing role is a key factor in not only setting the mood of worship, but also organizing it. To explain how this artifact unites the entire United Methodist experience, I will take a moment to diverge into my use of this tool throughout the study.

As mentioned earlier, the bulletin would become an important statement of Pastor Jacob's presence in both churches as I paid close attention to the presentation, language and symbolic meaning of the messages. What was interesting in the analysis was that Pastor Jacob's bulletins varied little from those of other church services of which I was familiar, including my own. There were inklings of his philosophy sprinkled throughout, an influencing factor for sure, but nothing strange or unexpected. The most I could make note of was the presence of his and his families' names being distinctly Zimbabwean. Otherwise, Pastor Jacob seemed to blend and assimilate into the culture. This not only seemed to indicate his philosophy of cultural relativism, respecting the culture that he was serving by producing a bulletin from their perspective, but also his belief in the practices of the larger UMC system. Again, this was not strange to him as he used the historical order of worship, the main difference being the time it took to perform worship. "The order of service we (Zimbabweans) use is the same order of service, but the length of time is different; I think that it is very common for an ordinary service to last 3 hours." I never asked if they had a bulletin in Zimbabwe, but no matter the case, the interpretation of how long the experience presented was going to take was significantly different. I found that many interviewers made note of this cultural difference, often with a slight grin that at first, "his sermons could go a little long". In Sundays where he was up front and in the pulpit, I noticed that Pastor Jacob was aware of this tendency as he often ended his sermon with similar jokes such as "I know I could go on and speak for hours on this subject, but I also know you are hungry and want to go home and eat!" Every time that was said an easy chuckle rumbled through the room as they looked down at their bulletins evaluating what "was left" in worship. My bet is that they were calculating when they would be sitting down for lunch based on when his sermon ended. This is a common practice of congregants even if the sermon has not gone long. I have also come to find that services without the pastor's presence do not necessarily end earlier as the skill of guiding worship in a timely manner is not something most parishioners are used to; they rely on the pastor for this. Returning to my first Sunday at Caldwell UMC, they

benefited from the lay speaker who delivered a wonderful sermon that day while at the same time keeping the flow of worship on time; luncheon downstairs began at exactly 12:00pm.

As we exited the sanctuary, people specifically came over to greet me, making sure I was invited to the luncheon, they were really good at welcoming a stranger in my opinion. This was a great opportunity to connect with members in a more relaxed, familiar setting so I followed a few ladies to the fellowship hall. Now, I am vegetarian, and these potlucks tend to have a lot of meat dishes, but the need to blend in and gain trust was more important than my dietary choices. One of the women who invited to join in made sure I met the Mission chair, who was in the kitchen fixing up the main course of taco salad. I did not want to disturb the work in the kitchen, but as a guest I understood that new folks are often introduced around and so I followed her in.

The kitchen was nicely furnished with new appliances neatly arranged, but in a space that still required coordinated shuffling. The Mission chair greeted me with a warm smile, asked if I wanted a beverage, of which I chose tea from the rows of plastic cups that were displayed in the pass through. A line had formed outside to fix up their taco salads and head to a table of hot sides, relish trays, salads and desserts. The women explained that this happened every month so that people could enjoy a meal together and catch up. I'm familiar with this practice in other churches and think it is one of greatest gifts the Church gives communities; a place to not only socialize but to create relationship beyond the pews. Churches often provide a space with a meal which symbolically represents the "family table" with homemade food shared as a valuable part of Christian fellowship.

That day, however, I never sat down at a table. Once I stepped outside of the kitchen I started chatting and introducing myself to the folks in the line. I could tell that this was fine, but a little challenging as the subject of my observation, Pastor Jacob was not present. However, standing outside the line as I shook hands, initiated by the congregants, I caught a sense of receptivity from the "in" group that did not balk at this outsider's presence. In fact, my last short conversation was with the couple who had sat in front of me during service. From appearances, they looked established with an ease that gave a hint that they came from families who were long-time community members and leaders. When I shared my subject in a little more depth with them, they thought it was very interesting, especially surprised by the number of foreign-born pastors serving mostly white congregations. I had not asked anyone previously in the line if they would consider an interview, but because of the connection with them as K-State grads and

age group, I went ahead and posed the question. They both nodded and she said “sure, we’d be willing to help you out”. Even though it felt strange, as starting a study like this often does, I could not help but recognize later that this congregation volunteered; they liked to help.

This desire to help reminds me of the historical connection Weber made between the attitudes of “calling”, an underlying sense that God mandates certain forms of labor including intellectual as the Protestant duty to gain salvation, which he attributed as a contributing factor in the rise of capitalism in the United States (Weber, [1956] 2002). As an expression of duty, helping a fellow Christian, even with a secular endeavor such a sociological field work, *calls* persons to put aside time to aid another, the return of which is the feeling of moral obligation. (Weber, 2002). The framework of “helping the other” as a Christian calling was not the only factor at work though. Not only did I feel the sense of initial buy-in from the congregation in helping me with the project, I also sensed that Pastor Jacob’s approval gave me the authority to ask for help and gave them the authority to comply. Even in his absence, his “okay” eased the conversation and evoked a sense of power and governance that greenlighted the project. This again made me wonder how the canopy of the UMC embeds that power in the pastoral role and how that serves the assimilation of foreign-born pastors. This embedded power was part of a system that is endorsed by United Methodist life *the world over* connecting millions of people, to a discipline that governed the life of the church, with shared responsibility from the laity as guided by their spiritual shepherd, the pastor.

Up to this point, I have shared more detail about Pastor Jacob’s leadership at Caldwell UMC than Belle Plaine. When I found out about the development of his new appointment, I wondered if Pastor’s Jacob’s reception would be similar or different than Caldwell’s. Would this community, who had its own unique history, receive him as well as they had at Caldwell? Would his strategy of connecting to the congregation through the institutional standards and goals of United Methodism carry him into this new relationship with indication of respecting his governance as pastor? From what I observed, early indications were “yes”.

Before attending a worship service at Belle Plaine UMC, I had set up time with Pastor Jacob to discuss the continuation of the project and to familiarize myself with this new community. This was easier as Belle Plain was only 10 miles away from my residence in Mulvane as compared to the 50 miles I traveled to Caldwell. The 2-point charge reflected a higher rank in the system as both of the churches were larger than Caldwell, entailing more

responsibility and a larger salary. However, Belle Plaine UMC too was experiencing some challenges to their budget of maintaining a full-time pastor, so along with receiving their first foreign-born pastor they also had to adjust to a shared part-time pastor and be yoked for the first time with another congregation. This experience is significant as it is not easy for any church to go through decline. They had just survived a 1 year pastoral appointment of a white male who wasn't a "good fit", drastically losing membership and financial support. This fact may have eased Pastor Jacob's entrance into the role as pastor, as he was known for being a "peacemaker" in his previous appointment. Yet, the challenge of reception that lay before Pastor Jacob was now twofold as he not only had to build cross-cultural relationships in a community that was homogenously white, but also help introduce a new system of a two-church structure that was unfamiliar to both of the churches he was now appointed to; the acceptance of his governance was key in making these new transitions.

Yet, when I showed up for my first Sunday in worship, the "every Sunday everywhere" feeling of United Methodism prevailed. In fact, my first Sunday of observation slightly repeated my experience at Caldwell as Pastor Jacob was not slotted to preach; it was United Methodist Women's Sunday with a guest presenter. Pastor Jacob was present and sat with his family in the second pew as women led the service. This gave me yet another perspective of his governance: The role of being present to participate but not to lead.

Prior to the start, I had been warmly greeted at the door and handed a bulletin. The atmosphere of the room was more modern, an A-frame Sanctuary with updated touches. I found out later that they had renovated a few years back. As mentioned in chapter four, a video projection screen landed below the large hanging cross above a large communion table with fresh decorations placed carefully to highlight the theme of the day, United Methodist Women's Sunday. A choir loft to the side filled with members in robes while the pianist played joyous modern hymns akin to a Wyndom Hill variation as people chatted or found their place. As I went to the center isle to find a pew near the back, I noticed a sign on a tri-fold centered at the back of sanctuary; it was a display highlighting a fundraiser and possible trip to Zimbabwe to rebuild the parsonage at Pastor Jacob's home church in Africa. It was clear Pastor Jacob was already exposing this congregation to the larger world through a very personal experience.

Even though the general order of worship was basically the same, each church, both CUMC and BPUMC, reflected the culture that it was positioned in. Being a larger congregation,

with over 100 in worship spread throughout the sanctuary, there were several families of different ages represented, all or most who appeared to be white. Like Caldwell UMC, the laity led a large portion of the service including the roles of liturgist, children's moment leader, choir director, accompanist/organist and video/sound crew.

The church service and building reminded me of my experiences growing up in 1980's Derby when it was a bedroom community, so much so that the anthem sung by the BPUMC choir later in the service was one I remembered hearing and loving as a teenager sitting in those pews. The service began with announcements highlighting the various ministries in the church; one being a "mission moment" the collection of toilet paper for the hygiene pantry. Like Caldwell, added announcements from the congregation were received with casual reminders of the upcoming missions and activities. After announcements, greeting time involved congregants standing to shake hands, smiling and moving out of the pews to say, "good morning". This is a common practice in United Methodism; however, a larger church often includes less movement. Both Caldwell and Belle Plaine were small enough to afford people time to move around the room, greeting almost everyone, and still get back to their seats in a few minutes. Once people had returned to their pew, a prelude accompanied by an acolyte bringing the symbolic "light of Christ", again an experience I had witnessed at CUMC, which focused the congregation on the religious experience. What seemed different than Caldwell UMC was a higher sense of formality which maintained a friendly but professional demeanor.

Personal expressions of community were presented with a practiced leadership, paying special attention to birthdays and anniversaries through the public display of celebrants coming forward to give change to missions by dropping change into a church-shaped bank on the front railing. During my weekly observations I noticed that some took the opportunity to "speak from the mic" about their anniversary or birthday; a touch of honor and thanksgiving in their voices. This was not the only time this church gave money through public display. After the children's moment, the volunteers and nursery workers would guide the children throughout the sanctuary carrying plastic cups asking for "noisy change" as they walked toward the back of the sanctuary to exit for children's church. Every pew yielded much reward as plinking sounds were heard throughout the gleaning of change. The importance of teaching children by example to "give" was a key value of this community. I couldn't help but connect Weber's observation of Benjamin Franklin's inspiration on early American Protestants about the value of money; both how to

labor, save and spend it; shaping much of the Protestant work ethic. (Weber, 2002) By the time the service would conclude, the community had enacted the importance of giving to the causes of the church through the celebration of anniversaries and birthdays, the collection of noisy change and the morning collection.

Another difference I noticed when observing Belle Plaine was the language of the liturgy; much of which highlighted social justice themes. Of course, this was United Methodist Women's Sunday and mission was a highlight; the same was true of Caldwell during their UMW Sunday. The language in Caldwell, however, seemed more traditional whereas this seemed more "modern". I hate to use those terms as often labeling occurs when sharing a dichotomy. That is not intended here. Instead, the difference seems to reflect the connection to community culture and how this is embedded in the actions of worship. The liturgy seemed appropriate in this modern A-frame sanctuary just as much as the traditional language sounded perfect in the Akron style turn-of-the-century sanctuary in Caldwell. The content pointed to the same basic actions, care of neighbor, care of the world, thanksgiving and praise, but the words varied. What was interesting in considering this is that the "language" seemed to match Pastor Jacob's level of education a little more than the vernacular of Caldwell, and yet he seemed to "fit in" in both congregations.

Even though he did not technically speak from the pulpit that day, the minute I read who the guest speaker was I recognized a subject that was familiar. From the Sumner County Community Health Department, the speaker focused on suicide and the rising rate in the State of Kansas. A mid-age health administrator known by many in the church, she thoroughly described the statistics, the effects on community and what was needed from churches and social groups to both raise awareness and combat the issue. As the presenter spoke, member's heads nodded as a concerned atmosphere filled the air. What is significant about this focus on suicide is that Belle Plaine was part of the Sumner County network, a group of UMC church pastors and leaders who met monthly to connect and support each other in ministry. Both Caldwell UMC and Mulvane are in this group; my husband being the appointed clergy leader. All the churches had pledged to focus on ways this issue could be addressed from the pulpit, yet this was the first church that I noticed had dedicated an entire Sunday to the cause. This not only gave me an image of the culture of this church, but also how the early governance between Pastor Jacob and his leadership was working; this was collaborative in bringing forth an important social problem

deemed so by the formal organization of the United Methodist Church. This thread of “being Methodist” together was showing up once again.

After service, Pastor Jacob headed to the back to greet people as they left, including me. Like the rest of the crowd, I joined in the ceremonial line of shaking hands, noticing that this act had not happened in the same way at Caldwell. There, they were simply dismissed and may have caught him for conversation in the back of the sanctuary, but here there was a process of the “formal handshake”. As I stood in line, I was greeted by several members with a warm smile as they recognized me as a visitor. Reminiscent of my luncheon mingling at Caldwell, I again conversed lightly with congregants about my purpose for being there and they seemed just as interested in helping as Caldwell had been. Unlike my first Sunday in Caldwell, I did not make a formal introduction until the next week. From first impressions, BPUMC placed more importance on language, education and social engagement of societal problems from the pulpit, whereas Caldwell seemed to focus on the elevation of scripture and doing mission as a response to the call of what the Bible said. Both arenas were comfortable spaces for Pastor Jacob and indeed important to him. I was already starting to put together from observing him at both churches that bridging different settings, interpretations and cultures as if “already at home” was part of his wheelhouse. Comparing the two it was apparent to me that a key strategy he engaged in his governance was the maintaining of norms and practices that were uniform in the United Methodist Church with some variation. The scope of that unifying reach was latently stretched by the leadership of a foreign-born pastor whose vastly different cultural background did not keep the group from finding things in common through the connecting work of the United Methodist Church.

United Methodists have a long history of being socially engaged change agents concerning societal problems; it is one of the attracting values. However, in this political charged global environment, finding a common cause to get behind without opposition is harder and harder to do. Making note of how early in his appointment to BPUMC he had already seized the opportunity to connect the congregation with his homeland of Zimbabwe and the needs there, I wondered if he had been as quick with the connection at Caldwell. No matter, it became clear that his emphasis on common causes that draw people together, including global mission, was already at work. His value of the United Methodist mission “of making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” seemed to be his guiding principle in any locale. This

characteristic awareness of presence as representative of this mission, not only to the denomination, but to God, was embodied in his actions. Even sitting with his family, together in the front pews but also with the congregation at large that first morning in Belle Plaine there seemed to exude a social consciousness that this pastor, who happens to be a black immigrant from Zimbabwe, endorsed opportunities for the congregation to learn, grow and engage the social problems of this world as disciples and he was there to help them do it.

Governance in Addressing Social Problems

Refusing to shy away from this identity, he gives ample space for congregants and community members to learn more about race, immigration and globalization from their experience of him and his family, but this was not his main foci. Instead, it was the shared experience of being Christian and acting out of that identification which fueled him most. In one of our interviews he shared “you’ve probably figured out I preach the same sermon: I do feel strongly about issues to do with human rights; I do feel strongly about the Holy Spirit; I do feel strongly about our mission as the United Methodist Church making disciples for the transformation of the world, so a lot of my sermons revolve around that and I think the main issue is, “how do we embody Christ?” Again, without his direct presence in the pulpit as preacher those first two Sundays, the authority of his message still rang true in the worship service. I would even take a chance and say that this missional attitude is a common factor among most foreign-born pastors in the Great Plains; although that has yet to be documented or analyzed.

Pastor Jacob’s “ease” of facing intersectional social problems did not seem unfamiliar to me as I had witnessed the same kind of attitude in my work with foreign-born pastors on staff, in the conference and by association. They, too, had exposed me to that same sense of confidence. To be honest, this seemingly different attitude of the cohort may have been the spark that made me question if foreign-born pastors were bringing a unique quality to the pastoral appointment in the first place. It seems to me they own their presence as “the other” and in many ways “the stranger” as an endearing quality rather than a cause for alarm, using it to their advantage rather than as a hindrance. The environment of the religious location where they express this “otherness” may allow the encouragement of this attitude. This seems unexpected in a country where immigrants are often met with exclusion when they claim their “foreign” identity, and in

some cases in the Great Plains churches this might be happening. In Pastor Jacob's case, however, it was a badge of honor and pride as exposure to "other cultures" and the social problems of the world, both local and global, was something he made part of his vocational "call".

For some foreign-born pastors, the cross-cultural appointment appears to be a chance to balance being different while finding unexpected connection to the parishioners, especially if they govern with bridge-building as one of their goals. Simmel would say that this happens because the assumptions and stereotypes about the foreign-born are challenged by the truth learned through building relationships (Levine, 1971). In Pastor Jacob's case, this kind of truth seems to bear with it a trust that not only presents a common value of "Preaching the Word" but also with consistent trustworthiness that opens the door for trust in governance, both in and outside of the church.

Every Sunday Everywhere: Pastor Jacob as Representative of the Global UMC

The consistency of religious organizations to provide a "sense of home" while immigrants migrate from region to region has been well-documented (Manglos-Weber, 2018; Cabell, 2007; Min and Jang, 2015; Chae and Foley, 2010). Religion serves as a connector and assimilator as people settle, even if the same language isn't spoken in the new services they are attending. Simmel's idea that "religious life creates the world over again" fits well with this idea. He states that "it interprets the whole of existence in a particular key, so that keeping with its pure idea, it will not interfere with our contradictory worldviews" (Levine, 1971) The general order of worship, rituals, and sense of purpose often cross language barriers, especially as large groups of immigrants move-into new locations and communities. Yet, when the person moving in is a foreign-born pastor assigned by appointment to a mostly white community, assimilation requires several forms of role-taking including the immediate leadership of these common practices. One question that congregations receiving a foreign-born pastor might pose is "do *they* do things the way *we* do?"

Concerning worship in general, there was evidence from the very first encounter at Caldwell UMC to the last encounters at Belle Plaine UMC that Pastor Jacob aims for consistency rather than difference. Not only did his use of the UMC order of service create a commonality between him and congregations he served but this choice might have seemed more comfortable

to the parishioners than those sometimes made by native-born pastors. In efforts to compete and stay “current”, native-born pastors often “play around with” the worship service order to make it more “contemporary”, something I admit doing. This type of inconsistency can put churches through worship whiplash as they adjust to the “new style of worship” introduced by each new pastor. Instead, Jacob’s close following of the Book of Worship may have endeared the congregations he served to him as they shared in the experience of “being Methodist” through this standardized experience. Occasionally, there were a few personalized touches unique to the community but not disruptive of the flow of the traditional which was always present.

This in no way implies that the services were boring; in fact, quite the opposite. When I was able to witness Pastor Jacob in the pulpit, I quickly recognized that he was a dynamic preacher with a deep accented voice that would rise and fall with excitement or emphasis, but still easy to listen to. As I came to observe him in both settings, it was clear people enjoyed him as their pastor, an exhibition of both his strangeness and familiarity. His sense of authority and governance was established by this interplay; the most prominent role of course being that of Pastor who leads the congregation in *the* United Methodist way. However, the role of immigrant, indeed adding Manglos-Weber’s distinction of aspirational migrant, was not hidden (Manglos-Weber, 2018). Pastor Jacob fully acknowledged this role as he almost wore his awareness of the cultural differences as a badge of understanding. “If anything, I am the one who has brought it (differences) up most of the time to just check and make sure things are okay because I’m the one who is trying to be sensitive; because I’m the one that’s different.” When I asked earlier in chapter four “why do people trust Pastor Jacob so much?”, this awareness of both his authority and vulnerability is key to people identifying him as “the real deal”.

This level of ownership in this multi-cultural relationship often eludes new immigrants when assimilating into new communities because of their lack of participation in ethnic groups other than their own. Yet, in this case, each role Pastor Jacob owned, including the role of being transnational, seemed to build personal trust between both parties because *he* chose to be in charge of asking for help with traditions, cultural norms and mores. Of course for the most part it is Pastor Jacob who is helping the congregants understand the meaning of their traditions of faith, especially in two areas of governance allotted to the office: Baptism and Communion. The authority of these orders is reserved for the office of pastor and pastor alone. I experienced communion several times at both CUMC and BPUMC, even being asked to assist a few times by

Pastor Jacob as a fellow colleague, blessing and administering the elements of bread and cup as the people came to receive. I also observed the baptism of an infant at Caldwell UMC, an honor many pastors cherish as a sacred trust. Both of these practices share the conveying of authority.

The Connecting Power of the Sacraments

Even if Pastor Jacob's governance did not extend beyond the church, the responsibility of the office to explain and connect people to the discipline of the United Methodist is a mandate of the office. This is sometimes difficult as the membership of the small town church is often made up of people who did not grow up United Methodist. This was true in both churches I observed. Of the 25 people I interviewed, 75% of them had not been raised in The United Methodist Church or earlier forms of the denomination. As small towns close multiple churches due to population loss, Christians start worshipping in spaces with persons they did not grow up within the church, infusing the body with a variety of socialized traditions and types of governance that are not United Methodist. This action of "collapsing believers" into the surviving denomination develops a sanctuary where difference becomes part of the normal practice. As one member stated, "there's something in every church that one might not like. For some it is baptism, others communion. But the most important thing is to believe that Jesus died on the cross- that's the important thing." Things such as baptism and communion practices may not seem like large differences, but historically in the Church, wars have been fought over such disagreements. Pastor Jacob's various engagements with more evangelical missionary churches along with his deep roots in Methodism from childhood probably served him well in this setting. He both claimed his authority as leader in the United Methodist system, but also valued the perspective of other faith traditions. Along with the congregation's admiration of his ability to "preach the Word", his evangelical passion gave the impression that Pastor Jacob was not just a "company man" reciting the liturgy, but "the full package" as he not only officiated the sacraments, but immersed himself in the full meaning of their connecting power of the community to each other and to God.

No matter what the weather is like or what time of the year, pastors in The United Methodist Church can count on communion Sunday being higher in attendance than other Sundays in the month unless engaged in the holy seasons of Christmas and Easter. The Book of Discipline stipulates that communion must be served at least four times a year, with most

churches opting for a monthly practice. There are many churches that have some form of a weekly communion service, but this is not the norm. In the six months of observation at both churches I was able to partake in communion several times. However, on a few occasions, communion became a deeper experience, two of which I helped officiate and one where the event exhibited the amount of love and trust that had developed between the congregants at Caldwell and Pastor Jacob. I start with the latter experience to describe the overall effect of this valued ritual.

On Mother's Day, Sunday May 5th, 2019, I entered the sanctuary at Caldwell UMC to be greeted by the human chorus of chatting, hand-shaking, gathering music and a rose handed to every woman of every age in the congregation. I also saw the familiar site of a special table draped in white linens stationed in front of the larger "table" with the elements of a loaf of bread and a brass cup filled with grape-juice awaiting blessing, consumption and communion. Amidst this environment was an air of sadness and even a little anger as the week before it had been announced that Pastor Jacob and his family would be taking a new appointment to nearby Conway Springs and Belle Plaine. I had not been there the Sunday before by choice; I did not want my presence to alter the experience of receiving this news which, from what I could tell, shocked and displeased the congregation. This communion Sunday was much different than the one I had shared with them a month before on April 7th, 2019.

On that day, as I was beginning to make my own connections with the congregation, Pastor Jacob recognized my office by calling me forward to be present and bless the elements alongside him. I cherish this role as pastor as a sweet wonderment of authority, the perfect demonstration of Durkheim's sacred in the midst of a profane existence (Durkheim, 2008). I was honored to be asked. As I made my way up front, I noticed all heads were looking up, eyes transfixed on the performance of the ritual and waiting for the invitation to receive; the actual title used to bring people forth to take a piece of bread and dip it in the cup as a symbol of their faith in Jesus Christ. Standing up front, a female ordained elder and a foreign-born pastor on the path to ordination, we both represented how far The United Methodist Church had come in a seemingly short period of time. It was a precious moment as Pastor Jacob handed each parishioner bread and with them moving to me to dip it in the cup and then return to their seat or pray at the altar railing. Most parishioners made eye-contact with both of us while smiling, a definite sense that this was personal. Even the little children seemed enthusiastic about that

moment as parents guided them to learn the proper way of “intinction”. It seemed like the perfect intersection of reception, both giving and receiving, honoring the power of the office with a personal trust that reflected intimacy and governance. They were the parishioners and we were the set apart “leaders” of this event and it felt special. That was April, but a month later, by Sunday, May 5th, the atmosphere was much different surrounding this act.

A disappointed heartbreak to the decisions of the larger United Methodist institution still lingered from this week-old news. Not only was this Mother’s Day communion Sunday framed by the sadness, but also the report that the relationship with the church they had shared responsibility for funding Pastor Jacob full time was ending due to loss in income. There was much to mourn. At the beginning of worship, the Administrative Council announced that a meeting would take place directly after service to vote for the type of appointment they would request from the Annual Conference. Pastor Jacob and I both went to that meeting, and I noticed that his governance was a bit different in that setting; he knew this was their decision and was there as support rather than guidance. During worship prior to that meeting tensions were high, but Pastor Jacob was not the target; the conference was. Even at the start of service while receiving my Mother’s Day flower from one of the regular ushers, it was evident it was affecting him. With a sad smile he asked only half-jokingly “could you come supply the pulpit?” I replied that I could on occasion if needed, crossing roles on my part, but we both knew this was more of a gesture of comfort. Even though unstated, I knew that the unsettling feeling of losing a trusted pastor whose governance they had gotten used to and the announcement of the new “strange” pastor was an uncomfortable undertone of the meeting. True unhappiness was felt as these details sank in causing grief in losing not only Pastor Jacob but his family.

Pastor Jacob had been with them six years and during that time many of them had sown personal ties not only with him but also with all the Maforo’s, including both mothers who visited regularly. In fact, Pastor’s Jacob’s mother was visiting that day and had been there for several months. As I watched and listened to people digest their situation and try to see a way forward, I made note that their protest was genuine; they wanted him to stay, not just because he was a good pastor but because they loved him and his entire family. This will be shared more in the discussion of the third theme, but the intersection of losing Jacob’s governance as leader and friendship as personal family and fictive kin struck me as a sign that personal trust had been deeply established for many in that room. I found out later from Pastor Jacob that several

families had offered to let TK, his son, stay so he could finish his High School there with his many friends.

One parishioner who was the lay representative to the Annual Conference was angry, stating that she had sent an email to the District Superintendent saying they needed to keep Pastor Jacob for at least another two years. Of course, when emotions run high, we have to recognize the human reaction to “hold on” and try to prevent the change, but in this case, it felt like more than that. The move of *this* pastor and his family had a sense of ripping a close-knit bond that was causing much distress. These strangers had seemed to adopt each other as personal kin and were exhibiting great pain with the fact that they were no longer going to see and be with each other on a regular basis. All of this was set amidst the backdrop of what was in the middle of the room, a table that when approached this time would carry the symbolism of hurt and brokenness, whereas a month before it had seemed to represent communal unity. Both of these feelings, by the way, are wrapped up in the theology of the Cross in Methodist theology. This ritual brings many interpretations to it from those who partake, yet this particular Sunday it seemed to bear a shadow of a relationships built on levels of personal trust that spoke volumes about Pastor Jacob’s reception: this loss was not one of strangers but beloved ones.

Despite this, Pastor Jacob lead the service with the same reassurance, fervor, and governance he always had, giving an animated sermon pacing, raising and lowering his voice and making points with affirmative gestures. There was even an added United Methodist Women’s celebration uplifting the group’s missional history which included the presentation of a UMW pin, which, notably was given to a male usher as honorary member of the “Women’s missionary group”. And then there was communion, one of the last they would share with Jacob as their pastor, filing up to take the bread, heads hung low compared with the month prior. The lay speaker who had preached the first Sunday I had arrived assisted Pastor Jacob, symbolically sharing the space of shared power but this time with a parishioner and pastor. In a few weeks, a sense of settling into the change would occur, including knowing the type of pastorate they would fund and the name of the new pastor. A new life of some sort, one that might resemble their life prior to Pastor Jacob, would take place. Emblematic of that future, a few weeks later, I was able to witness Pastor Jacob administer the second important sacrament in the United Methodist tradition: Baptism.

On the third Sunday of June, the week before Pastor Jacob's farewell, a young family dressed in their best, holding a baby and accompanied by doting grandparents, came forward to have their child baptized into the faith. This was the first of three baptisms that would occur on that day, the other two borrowing space at the Christian Church where the two young people could be "dunked" instead of "sprinkled". It is not a common part of the United Methodist tradition to "dunk" or "immerse" people being baptized; this is something that seems trivial to people outside of the Christian faith, but can be a major point of contention between Christian institutions arguing about "the right way" and "the right age" in which baptism is administered. In more recent years, however, the "right way" has become more relaxed as more and more pastors allow full immersion. For this baby, however, it would be the act of sprinkling that would be enacted. The words of institution presented over the symbolic water of baptism evoke a spiritual response. Mere weeks after Mother's Day, where attitudes appeared glum, here, as the congregation observed Pastor Jacob invite the family forward and take the baby, blessing her in the name of the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit", a sense of joy rose through the smiles felt in the room. These symbols carry great power of connection, but also, great pride in the office of Pastor. Fully aware of the changes that would occur in a week, as that was Pastor Jacob's last Sunday, families were taking full advantage of this pastor baptizing their children, both in the United Methodist way and the "evangelical" way. I do not know if they thought of it in this way, but this flexible governance in an era of such divisive certainty of "rightness" was fresh to watch and something I was glad they had experienced. I was not able to attend the immersion baptism, but the next week in church, the two girls who were "dunked" were heartily celebrated as they were welcomed fully in the "family of faith". Pastor Jacob had made an enduring impression as their pastor, governing their spiritual and sacred lives, and was no more seemed a stranger to them than anyone else in the room.

Months after my experiences with Caldwell United Methodist Church and well settled into the participant observation role at Belle Plaine United Methodist Church, I recognized new life taking hold in this new community as well. Pastor Jacob had once again asked if I would like to administer the words of institution and lead communion, and I was again honored by the invitation. This time, instead of a small table at congregation level we stood behind an ornate grand table, fully decorated again, as we stared into a full house of congregants ready to partake.

That same feeling I had experienced in Caldwell the first time I helped lead communion with Pastor Jacob returned as heads were up, faces smiling as we enacted our roles as pastors.

Another difference had occurred between that first time and this, and it was in our relationship. I no longer was standing next to a stranger or even just a colleague, but a friend. I also felt a kinship to his spouse Virginia and his family as we had encountered each other multiple times throughout the study. This moment reminded me what it might have felt like for the parishioners as they developed close ties with Pastor Jacob, as I too found out we had more in common than we did not. This shed light on how this participant observation had occurred. At the beginning of the project, I had assumed we would get to know each other and gain some insight from each other. What I did not expect was that as we stood together at the front of this sanctuary, inviting people to come and receive that I was aware of all the wrong assumptions I had made about this relationship, as if it would just remain somewhat generalized in trust. It was not; it too had become personal and family-like. I trusted Pastor Jacob, fully believing he was indeed “the real deal”.

Trusting a Real Deal Pastor with the Governance of Faith

There are levels of authority and governance that pastors are furnished with from their basic appointment, Word, Service, Order and Table, all of which we have explored with Pastor Jacob’s reception into both congregations. However, these areas of governance can all be conducted without engaging personal trust from the congregation: I have personally witnessed this kind of a relationship between a congregation and pastor. Lack of ability to keep the order of the Book of Discipline, inability to preach let alone inspire, missing mission to the community and lackluster performance of the sacraments happens too often in the church, I am afraid. The difference I saw being experienced by the congregations that Pastor Jacob lead was that his governing orders matched his actions to his beliefs as “being real”. My interviews supported my observations as many responded that “he’s the full meal deal”, or “he’s the real deal; didn’t phone anything in – just puttin’ it all out there”. These answers did not just come from Caldwell where personal relationships had developed over six years, these same statements came from Belle Plain after just six months. His authenticity was perceived as genuine which translated as trustworthy for the office. As mentioned earlier, this is not always the case. One parishioner from Belle Plaine added that “one thing he couldn’t tolerate was when a pastor lied to you, even

if they were trying to spare your feelings”. The idea of being “in the same camp” appears less important to these respondents than being authentic. This behavior, as recognized, looks to validate one’s character as one who is ethical and worthy of being trusted with more governance.

Simmel would say that strangers sometimes gain “real deal” trust because they have a sense of outside objectivity that is gained from their world experience while engaging in relationships with the natives at a personal level that, if deemed trustworthy, gives new hope that honesty still exists in the world (Levine, 1971). I would say that the base ideas of not knowing what to expect from this new relationship provided a new stage from which to start, but once Pastor Jacob was able to convince the native residents that he lived the Word that even stronger ties may have developed. It appeared they were willing to take “leaps of faith” in his overall governance of the church, in the community and for some, even to Zimbabwe where their personal connections could grow even deeper.

Pastor Jacob defines this as the balance of “authority” and “integrity”. What is intriguing in his case is that comparatively there were members of the communities that I interviewed who were not “from there” that felt they were still trying to gain access to such trust. One reason I assume this happens comes from the placement of Pastor Jacob from a higher institution into the community social role of “pastor”, shared with others who claim a clerical role in the town. Even though he has had to earn higher levels of personal trust to fully be considered trustworthy, he was placed alongside principals, local elected officials and police, in a role that is expected to lead the community. (Pew Research: Politics and Public Policy, 2019) These roles are sometimes filled by persons who did not “grow up” in the community. Yet the likelihood of encountering a person who was born outside of the United State taking up one of these local positions is highly unlikely in middle-American towns with low immigrant populations. Additionally, I suspect the other community offices if occupied by “outsiders” would take more time to garner trust for a few reasons. One, the type of work may bring persons into contact with the office, but not necessarily on a weekly, face to face basis. Second, because Pastor Jacob, through his appointment, was expected to not only lead worship but also the elements of ritual that bind communities together such as communion, baptism and cycle of life activities such as birth, marriage and death, this office carries with it a sense of power that engages the personal experience. Police officers, public officials and administrators are endowed with levels of power that the community must respect, but the office of pastor contains within it an even higher

authority from those who believe, even respected as such by many who do not. As I conducted my observations on Sunday mornings in both churches, I noticed how that power of the office even carried over to me. I too was garnered a level of generalized trust under the protection of the United Methodist Church, especially since I am an ordained elder while Pastor Jacob was still a provisional member on his way to ordination. The given qualities of the office that Pastor Jacob enacted appeared to grow with more entrusted power and governance the longer he was with these communities, so much so that he no longer presented as an outsider.

One of the greatest signs of this happening is when people start to claim that you are one of them. I captured several accounts of this as those interviewed stated “he’s one of us”, or “he become *my* pastor immediately”. In Caldwell, when asked whether they would want him back 100% said “yes” and similarly when I asked Belle Plaine parishioners if they would like for him to stay, all of them indicated positively. This kind of connection comes from a sense of being seen as trustworthy; but it also points to another type of trust that moves beyond personal, being considered “family.” In Pastor Jacob’s case, Caldwell considered not only Pastor Jacob as part of their family but his spouse, children and extended family as well. In Belle Plaine, indications were that some of those feelings were starting to stir there too.

Chapter 7 - Making it Personal: Receiving a Family

Moving from the role expectation of preach to the desired position of leader, in this chapter, the reflexive connection of being received as a family. Like the previous themes, the common reflexive work of adoption and reception of both parties pointed to a level of trust that appeared to be personal. Exploring their own language used to describe the relationship, the adoption seemed mutual and equal for the most part. A sense of reliance and strong ties again indicated that these relationships, at least those observed and interviewed, had developed a personal connection that encouraged higher levels of trust.

One thing that Pastor Jacob was known for in both communities was “making it personal”, meaning, he gave a glimpse into his own life, often utilizing the sermon to do so. Conversely, I often caught him talking with parishioners about their personal lives, taking interest and genuinely listening. I teach Intimate Relationships at Emporia State University and start my class with an equation to intimacy that is agreed upon in relationship science: Intimacy=vulnerability + curiosity, an equation that Pastor Jacob seems to get. It is this part of his personality that might be the most compelling for parishioners to encounter when connecting with Pastor Jacob; he’s there to build a relationship, a deep, personal relationship. Parishioners receiving a foreign-born pastor may worry that they have nothing in common and that making connections will be difficult. I have found quite the opposite in observing Pastor Jacob, causing surprise in some cases. One couple from Caldwell shared that their ideas about his ability to connect with them during sermons was challenged as they did not expect so many commonalities. One stated that “his perspective is always right on, you know, it’s so interesting. He’s coming from such a different world, but when he shares his own story, we find out he’s rebelled as well when he was young, and we really relate to that; I want to say – ‘you’re just like one of us’.”

In like-group experiences, this kind of revelatory work might seem embarrassing as one wants to present themselves as sensitive to difference. But this particular experience draws the “strangers” closer; knowing that they are not the same but have found things in common, which gives joy and maybe even a little release (Levine, 1971). Simmel presented this possible effect as almost “confessional” stating that “the stranger who often moves on...often receives the most surprising revelations and confidences...about matters which are kept carefully hidden from

everybody with whom one is close” (Levine, 1971) This confessional experience is common among itinerant pastors, myself included. However, the content of the confession might be much different when shared with a foreign-born pastor as some of this sensitive emotional work might involve racism, stereotypes or harmful attitudes towards immigrants. When shared as part of the work of this relationship, that embarrassment may be replaced by a sense of curiosity and vulnerability which might incite even more intimacy.

This confessional work is not one sided, it is reflexive as Pastor Jacob learned more about the cultures he served or is serving. He reflected with me “I think the biggest issues are around communication and implementation. I do have my cultural issues that sometimes come in the way of my communication. If someone mentions it to me, I am always willing to listen.” In Pastor Jacob’s case, the way in which he sensitively embodies these actions help unravel ignorance through a graceful touch that promotes learning from both parties. This work reminds me of Habermas’ “ideal speech situation” where the communicator, i.e. Pastor Jacob, engages in conversation about their cultural differences with intended rules of clarity, even if they were not verbally stated (Habermas, 1981). Pastor Jacob, in his ease of talking about cultural issues, seems to be also asking for his utterances to be understood as a reciprocal cultural sensitivity while getting at “the truth” together. As Habermas’ states, “although speech acts oriented toward reaching understanding are always involved in this way in a complex world-relations illocutionary role- under standard conditions the meaning of the component- determines the aspect of validity under which the speaker wants his utterance to be understood *first and foremost*. When he makes a statement, asserts, narrates, explains, represents, predicts, discusses something, or the like he is looking for an agreement with the hearer based on the recognition of a truth claim” (Habermas, 1981). The truth claim in these interactions is the bridging of cultural respect, understanding and change based on correcting assumed stereotypes and wrong assumptions about each other’s culture while at the same time acknowledging that overarching similarities exist in both. Again, this involves that “leap of faith” that both Simmel and Manglos-Weber look for when the stranger, i.e. the aspirational migrant and the native born parishioner engage in building relationships.

Returning to that first Sunday at BPUMC, observing the starting point of this kind of work rather than an ending journey was fascinating. Evidence of an already shifting “lens” seemed to be taking place as I noticed the spark of their sociological imagination start to take an

internal “leap of faith” with their assumptions. One parishioner I interviewed shared in her reflection of this new relationship that her perspective had already started changing. “I’ve learned things, you know it changes your mindset; you know when I think of Africa I think of huts, little huts everywhere and then I was talking to Jacob about his mother who needed health insurance to pay for a knee she couldn’t get paid for with her insurance in Zimbabwe. You know, I just never really thought about places in Africa having health insurance.” This vulnerability is priceless as these kinds of discoveries came to light. On a larger scale, if this kind of “leaping” were to be accomplished in the majority of the spaces where internationally cross-cultural appointments occur, then this may indeed become one of the greatest effects of this new deployment of clergy leadership across the plains. Yes, native-born pastors can be an “other” for church groups and communities to engage with; whether it be gender, race, sexuality or political view, yet, most congregations, even if they do embrace the pastor, act as familiars to these social issues as if they are “nothing new”. However, to be “other” from another country creates an unfamiliarity of relationship, even when considering ideas about immigration. From this position, congregants may be able to operationalize their patterns of welcoming and helping a new pastor, but new territory is crossed in learning about the real-life experience, culture and leadership of the foreign-born pastor and their families. This lack of knowledge creates opportunity to learn and shape mindsets if, and this is important, if the reception of the foreign-born pastor moves from generalized trust to personal trust, indeed for some, to a level of personal family.

A Sense of Family

I define personal family as family you choose, both by biological and non-biological relationship; they are the ones you want to be involved with your entire life. It is this type of family tie that I felt amidst so many at Caldwell and developing at Belle Plaine. Yet, the extension of this distinction of family was not relegated to Pastor Jacob alone; it applied to his entire family! I cannot tell you how many times parishioners talked about Pastor Jacob’s family as if they were their own. All of them made impressions on the communities, not just the church, and for good reason; they are a great family.

The importance of family was a clear commonality the Maforo’s shared with the mostly white congregations they lived amongst. Next to Pastor Jacob’s faith in God, the value of family

is a close second. Throughout our interviews, he stressed his and Virginia's desire to raise their children as good citizens, participating and engaging in their communities was paramount in his work as a parent. Additionally, his respect and love for his mother and mother-in-law was highly regarded as each visited for months at a time sitting in the front pews every Sunday with Virginia and the children. Why did the parishioners and community talk so personally about the Maforo's as if they were their own? My hunch was that they actually represented values that many had placed on the American family as they enacted the values of faith, family, education, citizenship and clean living.

For many of these communities, families like that are shrinking from existence. Honestly, families like this are disappearing from the clergy pool as well. As pastoral recruitment staggers in the United States with the decline of church participation, varied groups such as single people, second career, couples without children and commuters are taking the posts more often. This does not mean that these types of clergy cannot set good examples or be looked up to as faithful, "real deal" pastors. It is just the historical memory of the days when people thought families looked like two parents and children being good, God-fearing citizens is still embedded in the eternal yesterday of their minds. Many church communities still long for the historical "church family" even though many are aware that this was more of an "idea" and not necessarily what the real family looked or acted like. But, when an entire family, even though of Zimbabwean heritage, moves into a parsonage that for some pastoral appointments remained empty, the emotional reaction for that nostalgia cannot help but aid the reception. In Pastor Jacob's case, his family fit the bill of these longings in Caldwell for six years, and for those in Belle Plaine for years to come.

I can tell you many incidences in which the Maforo family was highlighted in the minds of parishioners. Caldwell embraced the whole family as TK played basketball and Shinga became associated with the children's nursery and Sunday School. An older daughter, Nyasha, is at UCLA. The congregation was extremely excited when her research was chosen for a national competition representing the school. When talking about these three, the congregation talked about them as if they were their own children. It was not uncommon for a parishioner to state that "they are our family" or point out how they felt saying "I get a kick out of TK" or "his kids are a couple of goofballs!" They loved Virginia, Pastor Jacob's spouse, often chatting with her before and after church, many of which had become good friends with her. As they absorbed the

news that Pastor Jacob was moving, they mourned the whole family as much as they did him. One member shared how “giving they were as a whole family, noting that her son had received a model car from Virginia because she knew he liked them; they are truly going to be missed.”

Making the shift to Belle Plaine, the Maforo family seemed to be making the same kind of impression. His mother was mentioned lovingly, as a member stated “I visit with Jacob’s mother quite a bit. We haven’t had a minister with a family in a long time.” Another couple had had the whole family up for dinner and glowingly shared that it was “so nice; I just love him and his family!” There is no doubt that the gift of building relationships was not limited to Pastor Jacob; as one person shared, “they just know how to make friends”.

This longing for relationship with families and friends is something many towns state they want; of course, there are many families in these communities. Poverty has struck both counties each church is located in creating larger family dependence on welfare or poor housing. These families are seen as dependents on the community, and because of their transient nature, are treated more like strangers than the Maforos. Pastor Jacob often reached out to people like this in his ministry, often introducing people, some of which had lived there for some time, to the church community. I was in church in Caldwell when one such introduction was made as a fellow foreign-born UMC pastor, one of Pastor Jacob’s close friends, was visiting. At Belle Plaine, one parishioner noted that a young man “looking like he was down on his luck specifically asked for Pastor Jacob; he wasn’t there at the time so I talked with him; I don’t think I did as good as Pastor Jacob would have. I expected, though, that he was going to come back, he just has that kind of effect on people.” One thing I noted as I saw the relationships develop with Pastor Jacob as family alongside his role as Pastor was that he was becoming somewhat of a trusted guide, teaching them in their own territory to connect with their own community. In many ways, Pastor Jacob was teaching his congregations how to “adopt strangers” and make those “leaps of faith” that pushed their boundaries even further.

This aspect of being adopted as family in churches is something that often happens between pastors and congregants, especially if the Pastor treats parishioners as family. I have encountered this feeling multiple times as I always made an effort to connect with those I served in a familial way. Yet, the pastor *providing* family in which to connect is becoming rare. This might be another reason that foreign-born pastors might gain personal trust and strong ties in these settings because many of them have families, with children. Looking at these families as

they thrive, indeed embedding the “ideal family” in people’s minds, gives a sense of hope to those associated with them. In fact, it might even represent an eye-witness account of “The American Dream” in action, something these two communities have struggled with for years. Ironically, these strangers displayed the most familiar experience in their midst; what it meant to be American.

What is even more interesting is how the family dynamics start to expand and include extended family such as mother and mother-in-law. In Pastor Jacob’s case, that extension went far beyond the nuclear and extended family as his presence in these churches would draw friends and personal family of Jacob’s life into the midst of their congregations, and the members loved it! In my observations of the two congregations, there was no greater evidence of this extended family than in the experience of Pastor Jacob’s last Sunday at Caldwell UMC. Their experience of family was no longer limited to local or national but was truly global.

Jacob’s Last Sunday: Two Worlds Engage in Kansas

Pastor Jacob is a global citizen no matter how you slice it. Whether pastoral or religious, national or international, the many organizational ties he has fostered are balanced and woven through several interactions; sometimes occurring within a week. One of the most interesting engagements takes place because of an event he founded and hosts at nearby Southwestern College entitled Building for the Future. As described on the website:

“Since 2014, the Building for the Future Conference has been the premier gathering for Zimbabweans and friends of Zimbabwe in Kansas. The conference is an opportunity to experience great fellowship, speakers, music. It’s also a chance to worship together in both English and Shona. The event is hosted at Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas. The 2015 conference brought together people from across the United States as well as England, Canada, and Zimbabwe.” (<https://www.institutefordiscipleship.org/zimbabwean-gathering/>)

This is interesting on its own, but what makes this relevant to the project is that each year, on the Sunday following this event, several participants from this conference visit the church Pastor Jacob serves. Infusing the mostly white congregation with about 30 Africans adds 50% more in worship on that Sunday. What adds even more to the account is that in 2019 this event coincided with Pastor Jacob’s last Sunday at Caldwell UMC. This was an amazing day to observe knowing that the likelihood of this *ever* happening in most white churches seems low. Even if an

ethnic or “outside” group were hosted by a church for a program, none could match the intimacy and connection that this native African community shared with the native Caldwellian congregation. From what I observed, there were several in the visiting group that were known by congregants from the yearly visit, treating them like family.

By this time, the congregation had learned of the appointment of their next pastor, a mid-aged white male District Superintendent assignment who lived in Wichita and would commute to Caldwell to pastor. At the time, they were still wary of the new pastor, as expected, but the level of anxiety had reduced somewhat as he decided to attend that day to get to know the congregation. So in one day, the celebration of Pastor Jacob, his family and their Zimbabwean roots also included the knowledge of knowing their future with a new, white, native born pastor. It was actually a lot of fun to consider that this would be this pastor’s introduction to the community; one he embraced well. Certainly, this was a day that “difference but unity” was being celebrated in many ways.

The noticeable difference of this particular Sunday began upon arrival in town as the number of cars, trucks and SUV’s surrounding the church had doubled; I had to park a block away. It was a bright sunny day, and tents were set up next to grills and cookers for the block-party that would happen after worship. As I went up the front steps, greeters whom I recognized welcomed me into a vastly diverse group sharing in the connection of worship. The room was loud with conversations, and brightly enhanced by the presence of multiple Zimbabweans. On the front of the bulletin, the focus reminded everyone that their lives were changing with the words:

“The times of transition can also be times of transformation as God prepares church for a time of praise and thanksgiving and to also receive new and unique gifts of spiritual leadership that have been prepared for the church.”

Again, this seemed like Pastor Jacob’s way of guiding the church into the change, hoping that they would embrace this new transition. Even though the person being assigned shared a lot in common with the community, he was still a stranger. I noticed many people greeting him, making sure to connect with him as he too, brightly smiled back and shared the excitement of being their new pastor. I could not tell how the greeting felt as there were so many intersections of emotion that day, but from what I could see, it looked favorable.

As expected, the order of worship was the same as every Sunday except for one line: Zimbabwe Worship Celebration. Looking around the room as people made their way to their seats, Pastor Jacob's high school son TK and the daughter of the children's director were the liturgists for the day. They had been liturgists for the last few weeks, something the congregation loved to witness. This young leadership, one might argue, was again the picture of reception as family right before their eyes as both were treated as an equal son and daughter of the congregation. Another difference in the day was the sound in the room; it was full and warm with an international spirit. To be in a sanctuary of equally black and white bodies, immigrant and native-born vibrantly singing the opening hymn "Freely, Freely" in a common space, as if this were normal, took my breath away.

When we got to the section set aside for the Zimbabwe Worship Celebration a soloist with a strong gospel voice was the first to share, bringing down the house with the power of her musical message. At the end of each song sung to accompaniment tapes, "Amen's" rang through the sanctuary from both black and white parishioners. Looking around, I even noticed a few of the men wearing brightly patterned shirts that looked like they had come from Zimbabwe. It was quite the transformation. Then, literally half of the congregation moved to the front. The Building for the Future group formed a choir sharing hymns with a joy-filled energy that along with every smile in the room punctuated just how important this event was to the congregation. It would not surprise me if several were not only mourning the move of Pastor Jacob and his family, but the sad reality that this might be the last time something like this might happen in this space. These, too, were part of their familial experience of the Maforo's.

In Pastor Jacob style, the sermon did not waiver from his core message that strung throughout his ministry, titled "It's All About Jesus". Guiding the congregation through the tenants of the message, "call and response" and "fill in the scripture verse" he engaged the congregation throughout. His energy heightened to leave the community with hope, not despair and a charge to move forward and not be afraid of change. This is not an unusual charge in the UMC when a pastor leaves a congregation. The difference is that the amount of change that this congregation would experience was accentuated by the most likely loss of cultural exposure that had shaped them in many ways for six years; a loss that involved much more than trust, it involved love.

The memories of this experience, however, were also captured in the space of their building with a familiar artifact: Pictures that were displayed. Just as a family home often displays pictures of their connected loved ones, so too, did Caldwell display this relationship that had developed over the years with Zimbabweans that Pastor Jacob and his family had introduced to the congregation. These pictures, I imagine, will probably hang in the Caldwell church for a long time. Intriguingly, pictures of far-away places also showed up in the Belle Plaine congregation within the first six months. The saying goes, “a picture is worth a thousand words” and so, as a way to record artifacts, I took pictures of both churches, trying to capture the influence of Pastor Jacob as he shaped their world.

Family Pictures

One of the first unobtrusive acts of my research consisted of setting aside an hour or so to take pictures at each of the church facilities without congregants being present. When void of human occupants, a different kind of energy lingers, one that is often felt from the relationships built in the space. I used my camera phone to save all my pictures to the cloud, leaving me free to wander the rooms, hallways, staircases and gathering spots where most of the church rituals took place. What one might not know if they are not a Christian in a mainline church is that churches collect, display and store part of their personality on bulletin boards, hanging art, posters, and furnishings. All of these present labels of identification such as we are “a church with children” or “a church with a strong mission for the poor” or even “we are a family church”. Although these exact phrases can sometime be found in literal form, Erving Goffman’s idea of the symbolic “presentation of self” as applied to church “body” is literally exhibited everywhere. (Goffman, 1956) Those encountering these displays were meant to catch the hint of the church’s values, norms and practices that made them, well, them.

In both Caldwell and Belle Plaine I saw much evidence of such display which verified much of what I have already shared about both churches being welcoming and engaged in mission as presented through their gatherings. My work for this task, however, focused on finding signs of the relationship and multi-cultural influence Pastor Jacob might have had on both communities respectively. I was not disappointed.

In Caldwell, in the open and adjacent parlor off to the side of the sanctuary with stained-glass of a light-skinned Jesus stood a treasure trove of Pastor Jacob’s impact: poster after poster of people in Zimbabwe, some with members of the congregation, all posing as if for a family

reunion. This, along with the Zimbabwean Sunday gave the impression that Pastor Jacob not only exposed the congregation to a global perspective but introduced and guided them into new relationships with these international friends. One of the members I interviewed said “I went on the trip to Zimbabwe; it was my first experience outside of the United States. It was all good; we met many relatives. Many people spoke Shona but for the most part spoke English. On our two mile walk to the church we spoke with many people who were very friendly. We are sister churches because of him.” Sister churches are like “support” groups, staying in contact, sometimes the poorer of the two receiving funding. Another poster beside the mission trip displayed this kind of contact with pictures of women and men in worship with captions saying “UM Women’s Day Borrowdale UMC, Harare. Another poster showed the “Old Mutare Mission”, Jacob’s birthplace. Zimbabwe was not the only foreign mission the congregation engaged in; a framed picture of a child they were sponsoring was prominently placed with a collection jar next to it. However, this looked like something one would see in a “normal” church setting, whereas the Zimbabwean picture boards were more unique. Arguably all of these mission connections could have happened in any church in America, but the fact that they were not happening, sans the possible sponsoring of a child, prior to Pastor Jacob’s presence points toward some influence on his part. It also indicates the presence of personal trust that had possibly moved toward a more familial connection. Persons making the decision that their first trip outside of the U.S. will be to Zimbabwe with their foreign-born pastor is a big “leap of faith”, in my opinion.

Additionally, these displays did not give off the vibe that they were “missionary” in the sense that Caldwell congregants were taking pity on those in the pictures. Quite the opposite, they showed evidence of meaningful relationships. This was encouraging towards my theory that the relationship developed with Pastor Jacob might inspire a script change from the white missionary going to save foreign populations to a more culturally relativist understanding. I know that pitying the “African” is one of Pastor Jacob’s major pet peeves and am quite sure he worked hard to help make this shift in American minds. He shared as much with me, “What really offends me but the part we don’t talk about is when people perpetually feel sorry for you because you have come from Africa. The media portrays Africa when they are talking about hunger and starvation and civil wars and no fresh water. They never portray what is going well in Africa so when someone comes across me and I am introduced, and they are told I am from

Africa I let them ask questions, and say, ‘are you sure you haven’t learned more than that?’” As a Preacher, Pastor Jacob is also a Teacher; he wants his congregations to learn “more than that”.

In these photos there lay the evidence that members of Caldwell UMC had quite possibly shifted some. Indeed, these interactions may have even embedded deep enough that Pastor Jacob acted as an “intervention” as presented in Wuthnow and Lewis’ work on altruistic behavioral changes due to the intervention of the pastor. (Wuthnow/Lewis,2008) True, all-encompassing altruism is more of an ideal type and not fully attainable, but a shift that moves people to stop in their tracks and ponder their ethnocentric positions, thus posing the question of cultural relativism, must be considered as a possible influence and interception not only as Pastor, or even possible personal family member, but as guide.

That is why it did not surprise me when I went to Belle Plaine UMC and saw a poster, inviting people to give and consider going to help to reconstruct the parsonage of the church that Jacob had grown up in. He was already engaging in the elements that develop intimacy, vulnerability and curiosity, and I had word that several were interested in going. Although this seemed to be the only unusual artifact connecting Pastor Jacob’s presence as an intervention at Belle Plaine UMC, to see that nearly ten people were willing to consider taking such a ‘leap of faith, in such a short time was fascinating to me. On my first few Sundays as I hung around in the back near the poster, many people talked with me about the project. One family in the interviews said they were “especially excited as their son was going to go on the trip and a few other young people were interested.” They hypothesized that Pastor Jacob might get the church more involved in “world missions”. Unfortunately, the COVID19 pandemic cut plans for the time being. Like Caldwell UMC, I imagine, Pastor Jacob will challenge their perspective on the definition of “world missions” and what that means. My guess is that his focus on building relationships and bridging cultures will certainly bring new light to the term as their relationship develops, maybe even to the level of personal trust that builds personal family.

Faith, governance and family, three areas of value where the mostly white congregations that Pastor Jacob served seemed to develop themes of personal trust based on the shared commonalities found in Preaching the Word, being a “real deal” leader and emulating a sense of family. So what do the gathered themes in this study and their indications mean when evaluating Pastor Jacob’s representative role as ideal type “stranger” on the larger landscape of foreign-born pastoral across the Great Plains? Is Pastor Jacob truly representative of the foreign-born

pastor or is he just an exceptional pastor with unique qualities? And what about the settings? Do these two churches exemplify the typical United Methodist church on the Plains or are they exceptionally good at receiving strangers and making people feel welcome? I cannot fully state that either are ideal types; but my evidence thus far gives me a pretty good indication that they are not far off. My presence and interactions with both congregations and Pastor Jacob did not seem to affect their responses; their answers appeared honest and accurate. What excites me is that this study supports the idea that this possible new religious gateway has created an impact in two known locations through the development of personal relationships between a foreign-born pastor and the communities he was assigned to. This impact appears to be positive. Furthermore, the implications of this leap of faith to which the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church seems to be committed may indeed, over time, create a new platform from which immigrant-native relationships can develop with the possibility of a more culturally relative perspective rather than the historical white missionary dynamic. This requires further study. Based on this work, however, a general sense of how this relationship might or might not work with other combinations of foreign-born pastors serving mostly white congregations is now given a case for base comparison, which serves as groundwork for my research for years to come.

Chapter 8 - A Forward Leap: How a Possible Religious Gateway Affected Two Communities

I learned much from observing, participating in, collecting, interviewing and analyzing the data gathered from this research. The picture of how the relationship between Pastor Jacob and the mostly white congregations developed was discovered through the capture of themes that presented after evaluating the observations, artifacts and transcripts. What I found grew into three themes that displayed evidence of personal trust that had grown from the following: 1) the shared value of “Preaching the Word” 2) the value of authenticity and 3) the feeling of being family. These three themes appeared to be intricately connected to three predominant values in American life: faith, fair governance and family. As these three themes intermingled through the study of these relationships, validation of Pastor Jacob’s reception was exhibited through trust in his office to lead them in their faith, administer the sacraments, to govern the church, represent the church as leader in the community and through the widespread feeling of adoption as personal family, exchanged from both parties.

It was stirring to find that each of the themes I discovered added support to my theory that the appointment of foreign-born pastor is likely to create a different kind of immigrant-native relationship than we typically see. Indeed, there may be a slight indication that a different kind of pastoral relationship might be developing wherein the added element of mutual discovery between a foreign-born pastor and a mostly white congregation is not the same as the mutual discovery between two native relationships due to the vast application of Simmel’s social interactions with “the Stranger”. Although all of this remains to be validated in future research, I can state the following about this particular set of relationships.

1. The introduction of this foreign-born pastor to two mostly white communities under the authority of GPAC did seem to foster deep and personal trust relationships between the pastor and many congregants through vested authority and mutual discovery of difference and commonalities bound by the connection of religious membership.

2. The relationship did exhibit possibilities of a power flip between the immigrant stranger and some native-born members as the expected traditional white missionary script most often used for reception of immigrants was often replaced by a more culturally relative approach. This suggests that both parties worked, learned and grew from multiple interactions on a weekly basis broadening their view under the respected authority of a foreign-born pastor.
3. The relationship developed a sense of global guidance from the pastor to reach beyond the congregant's perceptions of the world and its inhabitants in a non-threatening way that in some cases seemed to indicate worldview change even to the point of welcoming more types of strangers into a familial dynamic.

I suggest that these possible movements from generalized trust to personal trust in these immigrant-native relationships were able to develop differently than typical immigrant-native relationships because the safety zone of common religious identity provides a place where commonalities can be discovered breaking down fears, assumptions and stereotypes with each new discovery. In a country deeply divided on immigration policy, especially across party lines, the introduction of a foreign-born pastor into these communities seems risky. What surprised most of those receiving Pastor Jacob was how little of a negative stir he and his family seemed to make, in fact quite the opposite. Instead, wonderment from both parties engaged them in ministry together that found common values in their ministry together.

In both congregations, initial impressions of this cross-cultural appointment varied from worried to thrilled. In Caldwell one parishioner, more curious than judgmental, remembers seeing Pastor Jacob for the first time in the introductory meeting saying to herself "I wonder how this is going to work? At first, we didn't know he was an immigrant, but then, once he started, he just seemed to fit in." Another member said that she had been wondering if the cabinet were going to appoint someone "really different" and then she saw him for the first time and exclaimed "you did it!" To her, this was the kind of kick in the pants her congregation needed as she had grown tired of the same types of pastors coming and going with no real change in the congregation. From that moment she just accepted him; "it just worked." Some in Caldwell reported that there was one woman who left. Ironically, she "wanted a man" as the last two

appointments had been women. The interviewee who was thrilled to receive Pastor Jacob chuckled and said, “We got a man; he was just black and an immigrant; one more set of things for this person not to like.” Even though many in Caldwell “wondered about it” at first, the response I received from most congregants was that “It was cool! Something different, something interesting as we get to see a different perspective.”

The same type of reaction was recorded at Belle Plaine even though he had been there only a short time. One of the first persons I interviewed had some concern “about the Klan” as a well-known high-ranking member was known to live in the neighborhood. Another later interview confirmed this fear about the same individual sharing that “I worried about Jacob’s safety, but at this time the church has welcomed him with open arms.” One parishioner said that their first impression was that he was “very Americanized” and fit in very well. Every interview in Belle Plaine said they already hoped he would stay as the congregation had just gone through a very difficult appointment prior to Pastor Jacob, the attendance dipping to 60 people. “Now we worship around 120 in worship; I just love him.”

These reactions say a lot about the readiness of these congregations to receive “someone different” in a society where racism, both against minorities and immigrants, is on the rise. In some ways their awareness of this possibility mixed with the excitement of something new meant they were ready for a stranger. Often, smaller to medium congregations feel like stepping-stones to larger appointments or are places that receive local pastors without the same level of credentials and representation at Annual Conference. This can feel somewhat disappointing as if they are being slighted. Many of those interviewed at Belle Plaine worried that Pastor Jacob was not going to be able to stay long because he too, was on the ordination track. No matter the case, he had made a generally good impression at both churches. They came to find out that his “strangeness” and different perspective, as intriguing as it was, was not the only reason to trust him. His development of relationships from the position that he was granted through the United Methodist Church created a different power dynamic that in many ways overrode the initial fears of difference and possible racism, replacing those fears with positive experiences as faithful pastor, community leader and personal family to many in the congregations. This unexpected turn seemed to present an interesting twist to the typical native-immigrant relationship, a kind of power flip that is not often available to many aspirational migrants making their way through the gateways of the U.S.

Trusting the Stranger: Power Flips and Personal Trust

As I witnessed these three common threads of faith, governance and family connecting the communities to Pastor Jacob and his family, I began to wonder what to call the underlying mechanisms I was observing that produced the themes and their revealed levels of trust in these key value areas. For the purposes of this study and for future comparison, I settled on these terms: *multiple mutual discoveries* and *trust in a non-threatening global guide* as my main arches of the mechanisms that helped this trust develop.

Multiple Mutual Discoveries

At the time of appointment for both churches, neither had ever had a foreign-born pastor; this experience was truly “new”. Even though the practice of welcoming new pastors into churches is part of the United Methodist system; parishioners are often prepared to receive these strangers through the same mechanisms of reception that they have utilized for years. Mutual discovery happens in these cases, but the fascination and novelty of the discovery based on such a vast unfamiliarity with the stranger as represented by the foreign-born pastor, might not. Additionally, native-born pastors in the United Methodist Church are often familiar with the territories they are being sent to. They may have a slight learning curve when it comes to settling in, especially when learning local customs, traditions and value, to say nothing of the scope of American culture.

In the case of foreign-born pastors and the congregations they are assigned to, however, the discovery of that which is “foreign” is mutual. Because the discovery of differences while also being surprised by commonalities seem endless in this situation, wonderment may be sustained for a longer period of time than compared to native born mutual discoveries; even to the end of the appointment. It is in this space of discovery that the suspension of certain requirements of trust seems to occur, propelling the relationship forward to places where personal trust between the foreign-born and native has a chance of developing. The social location of the church and the sponsored contractor of the GPAC has created this new relationship setting which warrants much interest as the agency brokers this coupling multiple times a year and at an increasing rate. In this case, I cannot definitively say that multiple mutual discoveries happened with every parishioner or that native-born relationships do not exhibit this behavior, but for now, I will

continue under the assumption that they do not. I can say that those I did interview often mentioned that the fascination with Pastor Jacob and his family had not worn off as too, Pastor Jacob also continued to discover new things from those he served.

I can also say that Pastor Jacob maintains mutual interest and enthusiasm for his parishioners that he has developed personal family relationships with, knowing that he still keeps in contact with some congregants and run into each other through district and conference events. Of course, the relationship with Caldwell UMC has changed; he is no longer their pastor. The many discoveries that they made together during their time together, however, may be long lasting and continue to influence both parties' lives.

As far as Belle Plaine is concerned, I can only say that I believe the multiple mutual discoveries are just beginning. Parishioners are asking lots of questions about his life and adjusting to an occasional African pastor and friend joining them for worship; this happened twice in the short time I observed them. Discovering differences and likenesses were unfolding as those I interviewed were at least curious about what this new experience would bring. Just as Caldwell learned that they could “take a leap” by trusting Pastor Jacob with leadership, even taking them across the globe, Belle Plaine seemed to be gearing up for that same journey through trust in these same actions of multiple mutual discoveries.

The Establishment of the Foreign-Born Pastor as a Non-Threatening Global Guide

The second mechanism that seems to be at play in developing personal trust in both churches is the willingness to trust Pastor Jacob about global issues because he is not perceived as a threat. As discussed in chapter 2, immigrants are often seen as threats in communities because of competition for jobs and or introducing strange practices and customs into a community (Cabell, 2007). In this case, the introduction of Pastor Jacob and his family to both congregations appeared more welcoming and warmer, even enthusiastic to some. Because of the need for the church to have a pastor, a position that he was qualified to occupy, their relationship started positively as to fulfill this need. The nature of his role also affected the relationship as this type of work required him to be their spiritual guide, exposing them to his talents as a preacher, leader and the ability to develop personal relationships.

Yet, what both congregations would discover is that he did not want to merely lead them; he wanted to transform them into disciples who in turn could transform the world, as the United

Methodist mission so states. This transformation, according to my evaluation of Pastor Jacob's method, was an intentional directive to gain enough trust in him that they could start to see the world from a different perspective, just as he too engaged in that activity in getting close to them. Even though it would seem that "stretching too far" might rebound on him due to the amount of strangeness that existed between him and his congregants, he took a "leap of faith" beyond spiritual guide to the community, adding global guide to the mix by taking parishioners to Zimbabwe as well as inviting mass amounts of Zimbabweans and African friends to the church. This bet landed him in a more positive light as parishioners were curious about this new experience rather than threatened.

As mentioned earlier, the power deemed by his office as pastor established large amounts of time for him to interact with the congregation and expose this global view, especially during the time of the sermon. Combining the trust built in the three areas of preaching, leading and developing familiar relationships, Pastor Jacob approached the action of opening the congregation to the world he knew through personal sharing. His relational stories endeared the communities to him, so much so that they started following his lead more closely. When those stories matched familiar experiences of the community, even greater discovery took place as stereotypes and assumptions were broken down and replaced with a "truth" that came from trusted relationship building. Eventually, Pastor Jacob became a "global" guide of sorts; infusing the community with his cultural presence through exposure and even travel, while adopting the local customs and traditions of the community as he became "part of them". By the end of his time with Caldwell at least some had begun to trust his non-threatening global guidance to the point that their script seemed to change, taking into account perspectives other than their own, especially some that would have seemed strange to consider before their relationship with Pastor Jacob. It was too early to tell with Belle Plaine whether that trust was leaning toward a sense of global guide, but as shared before, they did have a scheduled trip to Zimbabwe on the books quite early in the appointment so there is some thought that this action was taking hold.

Are these two mechanisms, discovered in the themes of Preaching the Word, leadership and developing familial relationships unique to experiences and interactions with Pastor Jacob alone? I am not sure. It will be interesting in future research to see if similar traits present themselves, both from the foreign-born pastor's initiative and the receiving congregation's

reaction to the new experience. From the comparison of these two churches at different stages, it is at least clear that the same themes and mechanisms of building trust between the same foreign-born pastor may have occurred in two distinctly different locations. Even though the exact actions might not occur to trigger the levels of developing trust in the same way, my bet at this time is that this type of transformative social change amongst foreign-born pastors and mostly white congregations is not unique, but to be anticipated. One thing that I will take from this study is that my research design and method operated well to yield results that were comparable. Granted, the research design was altered by the addition of another site via the new appointment, but it would not be inconceivable to try and “catch” a foreign-born pastor at the end of one appointment and follow them to another given the steady cycle that occurs with the GPAC appointive process. Either way, the process seems effective and I look forward to engaging it again so that I can compare my results and verify or support some of the findings that I have discovered in this study, including the possibility that the actions of *multiple mutual discovery* and development of the pastor as *non-threatening global guide* are underlying mechanisms of developing trust in these new relationships.

Although this base inquiry and case is my entry point into the larger investigation of this phenomenon and cannot make definitive assumptions about the larger scope of the field, I anticipate much of what I have discovered will continue to surface. For example, it would not surprise me to find similar components to those of Pastor Jacob including the ability to navigate global organizations and the willingness to be identified as different. The comfort level of the foreign-born pastors that I have encountered tends to match these ideals. To clarify this hunch, I plan to do a survey of foreign-born pastors in the near future to help me understand their qualifications and attitudes more fully. Additionally, I would not be surprised to find many congregants excited about the possibility of receiving a foreign-born pastor, especially if that pastor brings desired attributes such as strong preaching of the Word and leadership that has been lacking from previous appointments. Therefore, the common themes identified in this investigation quite possibly could present in future cases, yet I suspect each context will reveal different themes of trust or lack thereof as well. Much is to be verified as I trust these findings as base comparison.

I think my continued investigation into immigrant-native relationships as set up through this possible new religious gateway sponsored by the work of the United Methodist Church in

Great Plains will produce interesting material to consider in several arenas, both in the Sociology and the Religious sectors. More specifically, I think that there are three groups who might be interested in this initial work: those studying the intersection of religion and immigration, those studying Georg Simmel's theories of social interaction and trust, and religious institutions themselves. If the introduction of foreign-born pastors into mostly white communities through the institution of the UMC and more directly the GPAC indicates the possible establishment of a new platform or even gateway in which immigrant-native relationships have a high possibility of developing personal trust, then I would think those who study the intersection of religion and immigration would benefit from my findings. Whether used for comparison to other social locations, such as religious, geographical, or even in relationship to status or power; the results of this qualitative work may engage conversation in ways that might offer contrast or like comparison. Either way, I predict this possible new platform will only continue to expand as the UMC and GPAC show no signs of discontinuing the practice of appointing foreign-born pastors to mostly white congregations, with a strong inclination that this practice might increase.

Another group that might be interested in this work or those who use Georg Simmel's phenomenological theory to explore the relationality and levels of trust developed by examining the characteristics of an "ideal type" upon real life society. Simmel's idea that the merchant Stranger engages native communities differently than known traders, eliciting different responses of trust, finds a fresh set of characters for the interactive stage as the Stranger is exchanged for the foreign-born pastor and the natives for the mostly white communities they serve. As shared in this paper, there were several areas of comparison where Simmel's predictions of this ideal type found flesh and bone examples to match his assumptions of what happens in these relationships. As sociological disciplines have been favoring more quantitative work testing hypotheses through large scale surveys and data-sets, I find it refreshing to go back to applying abstract theories such as Simmel's in order to understand base relationships that occur at grass-roots levels, as many of the large scale predictions based on polls and mass sampling are not always capturing the nuances of change as found in the up-close qualitative work of field research.

Lastly, the group that might benefit from this research the most is the United Methodist Church itself. I believe this base study and the work that ensues afterward will not only offer insight on how these new relationships between foreign-born pastors and mostly white

relationships are developing, but also inform the larger institution of its role as an institutional religious gateway that might be instigating change across the Plains and elsewhere by the sponsorship of its welcoming attitude toward foreign-born pastors and the utilization of their gifts in cross-cultural settings. Additionally, I believe that this work may point to a greater impact of the fulfillment of their mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” and their slogan “Open-hearts, Open-Minds-Open Doors: the people of the United Methodist Church” as this act inclusion, despite other forms of exclusion being debated right now, is representative of the kind of transformation that they might want to claim and celebrate. In these three arenas and more where the many intersections of this work occur, I believe the findings could be an important contribution to the areas of religion, immigration, the development of trust and the study of between immigrant-native relationships.

Although this research does not explain all interactions that may occur between these new religious immigrants and the white communities they serve, including those who left or did not receive Pastor Jacob in his appointment, those that were analyzed and recorded give good indication that his presence did affect some attitudes and worldviews of those who interacted and received him as their pastor. It is my intention to continue this research, comparing other foreign-born pastors in mostly white congregations, with the goal of eventually developing an already broad theory on this phenomenon. As the first case in a series of numerous anticipated future cases, I come away with the excitement that this research may open doors to new places from which to study immigrant-native relationships, especially in a location so dear to my heart. As a sociologist, this work will fuel my fire for years to come and I look forward to what I find in future settings.

But I cannot leave this work without noting how thrilled I was to discover the impact this immigrant-native relationship had on two mostly white congregations through the integrative efforts of The United Methodist Church. These two relationships not only served as groundwork for my study, but also as inspiration as two communities set an example of how immigrant-native relationships could look if given the opportunity to interact over time and develop trust to levels beyond a generalized state. I wholeheartedly believe that this opportunity lends itself to a better possible relationship where stereotypes are challenged, truth is discovered, and relationships are able to form on a more mutually equal platform. As a parishioner from BPUMC put it in a most enlightening comment about this new phenomenon, “I believe travel is

a blessing and helps prejudice – but maybe, we don't have to 'travel to them' – they are traveling to us!" This sentiment added to a CUMC parishioner's parting remark as we closed the interview stating, "I feel fortunate to have had Pastor Jacob and I think about how many people didn't get to have Jacob as their pastor, I'm truly grateful for him". This gives me hope that this kind of transformative change is truly possible as I prepare for the journey of exploration that examines this new phenomenon to greater depths.

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Appendix A - Quantitative Path of Exploration Prior to Qualitative Process

To capture the phenomena of receptivity in the first stage, I first evaluated foreign-born pastor performance as compared to native born pastors across the conference by studying yearly reports in the Great Plains Annual Conference. These results will inform the field research by providing information on the success variables of *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership* while also looking for variation. Conducting a longitudinal regression study across the years 2013-2016, when the conference data was most available prior to and after the creation of the Great Plains Annual Conference, I collected frequencies and ran regressions with control variables to clarify anecdotal hunches into hard data. My main hypothesis based on experience was that foreign-born pastors as a whole would be doing well compared to native-born pastors, but I found little support from the evidence. However, when some control measures were introduced, including standardizing the success variables to percentages of growth or decline, identifying outliers and regressing with and without their presence as well as controlling for demographic variables, there is some evidence that congregations with male foreign-born pastors had higher success on the indicators.

I was access to Great Plains Annual Conference information through the national United Methodist database EZRA, which is the depository of yearly reports from all UM congregations in the United States. Additionally, I studied Great Plains Annual Conference journals for the years 2013-2016 to gather information about congregations and clergy serving the Great Plains Annual Conference. With these two resources, I was able to create a data set containing personal descriptors of clergy and congregations across those years. The frequency information, presented in my second chapter, supported the variables to be regressed and evaluated, as the theoretical section discussed: *income*, *worship attendance*, and *membership* indicate a pastor's "success" and receptivity to a congregation, at least quantitatively. Understanding the clergy make-up of the conference before those regressions was an important step as other causes for increase or decline may present intersections.

In the first year of study, 2013, the Great Plains Conference appointed 652 males to 346

females, totaling 998 to serve as lead pastor in local congregations. One may notice that this does not add up to the 1008 available appointments due to the fact that some very small congregations often have lay-speakers fill pulpits. Thus, these congregations still bring in income, count attendance and keep track of members, but they may not receive an appointment in the year. This number also does not include Associate Pastors of which the number would increase in both sexes. Of those 998 full time clergy, 26 were foreign born pastors serving 47 mostly white congregations. In the concluding year of the study the number of foreign-born pastors serving increased to 54 serving mostly white congregations, more than doubling their presence. Appointed clergy often serve more than one charge, which is also the case for many foreign born-clergy. This impacts the exposure of mostly white congregations to this relationship. These 47 churches, then, represent the baseline for statistical receptivity of white-congregations assigned foreign-born pastors based on standardized measures of *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership*. (See Tables 1, 2 and 3)

Another challenge for analysis when comparing these 47 congregations to the whole set is that there are a few very large churches in the conference, including the largest United Methodist Church in the United states, located in the boundaries of the Great Plains Annual Conference. This greatly affected the variables of *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership*, so I ran plot boxes to spot outliers in the data set. These tests revealed three congregations that outperformed all other churches in these three areas, which made a difference in regression outcomes (See Appendix C). I ran regressions with and without outliers controlling for eight variables: *gender*, *foreign-born gender*, *race (white/non-white)*, *region of birth*, *years of service*, *district*, *state* and *ordination status*.

Finally, it is important to note that not all foreign-born pastors are from the same regions in the world. For example, the influx of South Koreans came in two waves according to Dr. Chun, a major catalyst for recruiting South Koreans to attend seminary at Saint Paul School of the Theology in Kansas City, and this area has become, as a result, a major supply chain to the Great Plains in connecting new graduates to the Great Plains Annual Conference for appointment. Involvement in the first wave in the late 1980s and 1990s, according to Chun, consisted mostly of women attending Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, and these women remained on work visas to serve in the United States. The current wave, however, involves not only South Koreans but Africans, Central Americans and a mix of other countries of

origin as well. In conjunction, this wave involves more pastors with families and clergy couples intending on immigrating to the United States.

Preliminary Results from the Quantitative Analysis

I first ran regressions that considered gender alone among all appointed clergy before adding in foreign-born status. I wanted to know how important gender was to reception levels. With a conference where 1/3 of the clergy are female, a wave that began after full ordination rights were granted in the previously named Methodist Church, to females in 1956, I felt it important to observe this pattern of receptivity before analyzing foreign born results. As suspected, churches with an appointed female clergy in 2013 exhibited negative relationship across the 2013-2016 regression regarding *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership* with and without outliers. Except for income with outliers, all negative relationships were significant. This means that churches in this scope who had female clergy made less income, with lower attendance and membership as compared to churches with male pastors regardless of origin of birth. I had a hunch this affect would be present concerning foreign-born clergy when compared to each other.

Knowing this information, I added the control variable *gender of foreign-born pastors* comparing to all other native-born pastors. With the outliers, all relationships of foreign-born pastors to *income*, *worship attendance*, and *membership* were negative, and *gender* did not seem to affect the overall relationship. *However, without the outliers*, a different story emerged. Although in 2013, female foreign-born pastored churches still show negative relationships of *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership* in comparison with native-born pastored churches, congregations with male foreign born pastors in 2013 flipped to positive relationships of *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership*. Due to the size of the population, these relationships were not significant, although nearing significance. Thus, gender and foreign-born status *do seem to* indicate possible positive reception of male foreign-born pastors as compared to all other pastors. These findings help me to specify which congregations to include in my field observations and interviews.

Table 1
Coefficients and Standardized Beta
predicting for congregations with foreign-born pastors
by gender on Income 2013-2016

<i>Variable</i>	2013	2013	2014	2014	2015	2015	2016	2016
With Outliers N=1008	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>
Without Outliers N=1005	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>
	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>
<u>Congregations</u>	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)
<i>Fbpastfem2013</i>	-.005	-.023	-.002	-.025	-.005	.038	-.005	-.013
<i>Fbpastmal2013</i>	-.020	.039	-.007	.049	-.018	.038	-.018	.037

p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 2
Coefficients and Standardized Beta
Predicting for congregations with foreign-born pastors
by gender on Worship Attendance 2013-2016

<i>Variable</i>	2013	2013	2014	2014	2015	2015	2016	2016
With Outliers N=1008	<i>Worshi</i>	<i>Worshi</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>
Without Outliers N=1005	<i>p</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>
	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>Outliers</i>
	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	
	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>						
<u>Congregations</u>	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)
<i>Fbpastfem2013</i>	-.005	-.022	-.006	-.024	-.007	-.025	-.007	-.029
<i>Fbpastmal2013</i>	-.030	.027	-.030	.029	-.029	.023	-.029	.026

p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 3
Coefficients and Standardized Beta
predicting for congregations with foreign-born pastors
by gender on Membership 2013-2016

<i>Variable</i>	2013	2013	2014	2014	2015	2015	2016	2016
	<i>Member</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Member</i>	<i>Member</i>
With Outliers N=1008	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>
Without Outliers N=1005	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>
<u>Congregations</u>	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)
<i>Fbpastfem2013</i>	-.005	-.023	-.002	-.025	-.005	.038	-.005	-.013
<i>Fbpastmal2013</i>	-.020	.039	-.007	.049	-.018	.038	-.018	.037

p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Expanding the analysis, I conducted regressions on foreign-born pastors by regions of birth (*South Korea/Africa Central Conferences/South America, Central America, Caribbean*) as compared to all other pastors. In most of the regressions, all relationships were negative with no significance. Although, in 2015, African pastors had positive relationships without the outliers in *income* and *worship attendance*. That this happened in 2015 only might suggest a spurious relationship since it did not happen before or after that year.

The next set of regressions were based on *years of service*. Longevity tends to be valued in religious institutions, however, due to the appointment process, pastors in the United Methodist Church move more often than other Protestant institutions. I consider four years of service or more as a sign of longevity, meaning, the likelihood of remaining past five years is high. Pastors are often moved before that point if there are low signs of receptivity based on yearly numbers. This decision seemed to have merit, as *years of service* is the *second most* consistent positive significant relationship of **all** the regressions on *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership*. Ordination also seems important, especially compared to local pastors of lower status. Because ordination guarantees appointments similar to tenure, ordained clergy receive larger churches with higher incomes and receive higher personal incomes (See Tables 4,5 and 6). This is important because *most* foreign-born pastors in the United Methodist Church are seeking ordination. The data support this: the variable *ordination* regressed on *income*, *worship*

attendance and membership showed the *strongest* consistent positive significant relationship in **all** of the regressions. The findings thus far show that if a congregation had an ordained elder assigned to the congregation in 2013, this church had more income, attendance and membership than those without ordained elders serving.

Table 4
Coefficients and Standardized Beta
congregations predicting support of tenure and ordination
on Income 2013-2016

<i>Variable</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2016</i>
With Outliers N=1008	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>	<i>Income</i>
Without Outliers N=1005	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>
	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>
<u>Congregations</u>	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)
<i>4yearsormore2013</i>	.067**	.091***	.048	.077***	.069**	.108***	.069**	.096***
<i>ordination2013</i>	.098**	.317***	.035	.313***	.088*	.300***	.090**	.299***

p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 5
Coefficients and Standardized Beta
congregations predicting support of tenure and ordination
on Worship Attendance 2013-2016

<i>Variable</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2016</i>
With Outliers N=1008	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>	<i>Worship</i>
Without Outliers N=1005	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>	<i>Attend</i>
	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>without</i>
	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>	<i>Outliers</i>
<u>Congregations</u>	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)
<i>4yearsormore2013</i>	.079*	.082**	.080*	.089**	.078*	.085*	.082*	.099**
<i>ordination2013</i>	.153*	.335***	.149*	.330***	.142*	.323***	.140*	.326***

p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 6
Coefficients and Standardized Beta
congregations predicting support of tenure and ordination
on Membership 2013-2016

Variable	2013	2013	2014	2014	2015	2015	2016	2016
	Member with Outliers	Member without Outliers	Member with Outliers	Member without Outliers	Member with Outliers	Member without Outliers	Member with Outliers	Member without Outliers
	with Outliers N=1008	without Outliers N=1005	with Outliers N=1008	without Outliers N=1005	with Outliers N=1008	without Outliers N=1005	with Outliers N=1008	without Outliers N=1005
<u>Congregations</u>	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)	Coef(Beta)
4yearsormore2013	.071**	.047	.072**	.050**	.075**	.055	.077**	.055
ordination2013	.207***	.338***	.201*	.335***	.199***	.399***	.194***	.399***

p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Next, I compared foreign-born pastors to each other, controlling for state and district. Some districts did not have foreign-born pastors in 2013, so they could not be included. However, it is important to note that all districts had foreign-born pastors serving churches by 2016. Nebraska foreign-born pastors showed positive relationships with no significance as compared to Kansas pastors. Additionally, in 2013, churches with foreign-born pastors in the Five Rivers district in Kansas indicated significant positive relationships as compared to all other foreign-born pastors serving the other 16 districts for *income*, *attendance* and *membership*, yet with no significance. The Blue River district in Nebraska had the second largest positive relationship but no significance. Several districts had fluctuating results, some turning from positive to negative relationships, other doing the opposite. These are small sample sizes, but they provide some basis for interviews with the congregations and communities concerning receptivity.

Overall, these analyses helped paint the picture of how foreign-born pastors are being received as compared to native born pastors since 2013 in percentage increases or decreases in *income*, *worship attendance* and *membership*. When outliers are removed, we see that there is little difference in reception of foreign-born pastors, *until* gender is applied. Foreign-born male pastors as compared to all pastors indicate high levels of receptivity when compared to all pastors regardless of region of birth. This sets the basis for my field research.

Appendix B - The Central Conferences of Africa

The history of evangelizing Central and South African regions by the American United Methodist Church is a robust story that has resulted in African United Methodists now evangelizing in the United States. A full description of how these areas developed can be found at <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/history-of-the-united-methodist-church-in-africa>. I group these three sending conferences into one study group because these Central Conferences administrate work on the continent much like the Annual Conferences operate together in the United States. Thus, when pastors from the continent of Africa settle in the United States, they often know each other from the collaborative work and associate as one group even though their native countries vary. Below is a map of the Central Conferences in Africa.



Appendix C - The Structure and Process of Ordination in The United Methodist Church

The Structure of the United Methodist Church and the Process of Appointment

The United Methodist system is an intricate design of governmental structure; the highest level being The General Conference of the United Methodist Church. This body made up of elected officials from each Annual Conference assembles the worldwide church every quadrennial, the last being spring of 2016, to decide policy, budget and ministry focus. All policy, doctrine and procedure is recorded in The Book of Discipline which is published every four years with additions, deletions and amendments. The BOD, which include a Constitution, is the tool used to determine every level of United Methodist government.

In July following the quadrennial meeting, each of the United States Jurisdictions meet to elect Bishops and then to appoint Bishops to Annual Conferences within each Jurisdiction. There are five Jurisdictions in the United States: Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central and Western. (<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/jurisdictions>). The Great Plains Annual Conference belongs to the South Central Jurisdiction which encompasses all of Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska. As mentioned earlier, The Great Plains United Methodist Conference encompasses all of Kansas and Nebraska as of August, 2014.

The levels of government are further stratified within the Annual Conference into Districts. Whereas the Bishop is assigned to keep order as the equivalent of a CEO, District Superintendents serve as the cabinet to the Bishop and keeping order and making appointments. In 2017, 14 District Superintendents serve 17 Districts (some share combined authority over larger districts with lower populations). The District Superintendent is charged to meet with every clergy under or up for appointment in the fall of each year to assess and discuss their appointment. Each clergy turns in a request of appointment indicating desire to stay or relocation. The District Superintendent also works with each congregation within their charge to discuss the effectiveness of the pastor in relationship to their mission as a congregation. Each congregation has an elected Staff Parish Committee that is assigned to work with appointed clergy and the District Superintendent to determine whether a pastor should remain or be reappointed. The Staff Parish also turns in a yearly assessment form. Additionally, the

Superintendent is the official who signs the contract at each Annual Church Conference making sure that the minimum salary package, including housing and health insurance, is met. The scale of salary varies depending on the status of the clergy appointed. Many church appointments are not filled by Ordained Elders, the highest status other than District Superintendent and Bishop. Many churches, especially small congregations or multiple parish settings are led by student pastors, local pastors, lay ministers and clergy from other denominations. However, the mainstream process of providing clergy leadership to local congregations in the UMC typically focuses on placing Ordained Elders into position, while the filling remaining openings with clergy status other than Ordained Elder.

Appointments in the GPAC are usually assigned from mid-spring to early summer prior to the Annual Conference gathering. All clergy and lay delegates are required to attend. Representing the larger body that meets every quadrennial, the Annual Conference enforces policy of the larger body while setting local policy, budget and mission goals for the local conference. As long as the Annual Conference policies are in line with General and Jurisdictional Policy, the conference is free to interpret how they will conduct business. This includes setting minimum salary packages with benefits that District Superintendents use when approving individual contracts between clergy and local congregations.

The Status of Clergy in The United Methodist Church

All ordained clergy are tenured members of an Annual Conference. They are not members of the churches they serve. Instead, the Annual Conference “acts” as their church membership. To become an ordained member of an Annual Conference one has to apply to The Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM). This Board of consisting of equal clergy and laity meets yearly with candidates who are applying for recognition as clergy in the United Methodist Church and access their ability to serve and receive credentials. Additionally, each district has a District Board of Ordained Ministry (DBOOM) that helps vet candidates and evaluate clergy statuses that require yearly review. These statuses will be shared shortly. The highest level of appointment based on status is the Ordained Elder. Since 1956, The United Methodist Church (formerly The Methodist Church) has ordained both women and men to this status.

Ordained Elders are guaranteed yearly appointment, a base salary and benefits package that must be met and full voting rights in the Annual Conference. The process to become an

Ordained Elder involves a credentialing period that has a minimum of four years and completion of a Master's of Divinity Degree from a Theological School that the UMCUS recognizes as accredited. The timeline can vary depending on "passing" board review and completion of schooling. One can expect to spend more than half a decade preparing for the privilege of becoming an Ordained Elder.

The first step of the process begins with inquiry from the candidate with an assigned clergy mentor of the status they are seeking. This allows the candidate to ask questions about the process and discern their "call". If a person decides to progress further, they initiate a meeting with the District Superintendent to receive a mentor and begin the candidacy process of examination. Officially, the interested party is required to be a member of local congregation for two years. This stipulation can, however, be waived by the District Board of Ordained Ministry. The first committee to examine a possible candidate for ministry is the person's local Staff Parish and Administrative Board to which they are member. This approval must be voted on with a 2/3's vote and maintained every year by the local church at their Annual Conference with a 2/3's vote. If the possible candidate is approved, they continue to meet with their mentor and prepare for the next stage of examination, the District Board. This stage requires the submission of a video-recorded sermon, a written essay examination answering questions concerning doctrine and theology, a psychological and health examination, an in depth background check and a formal day-long meeting and interview with the District Board of Ordained Ministry (DBOOM).

If the possible candidate for Ordained Elder passes their first Board, they are enrolled in the process as an official Candidate. Candidacy, however, doesn't fully begin until the candidate is presented to the full body of Ordained Elders at the Annual Conference and voted on. This is the body that the candidate is seeking membership into. The vote requires a 2/3's majority. After this vote, the Candidate is grouped with other candidates for regular meetings with a mentor who the group through required curriculum. The candidacy process takes two years to complete. The candidate is expected to meet with the District Board for a minimum of two years. At the end of the two years, the candidate can request to become a Provisional Member. First, the candidate must have approval through a 2/3's vote of the DBOOM. If elected to move forward, the candidate applies to the Conference BOOM submitting further materials and essays as well as requesting an interview with the board.

These interviews are extensive, day- long examinations with several review teams studying different components of the candidate's work. One team views the sermons while another team goes over the written material. Lastly, the candidate meets with the whole board after the two teams share their recommendation. The entire board may ask the candidate a question or two and then proceed to vote. If the candidate passes this process, they will be recommended for Provisional Membership to the following Annual Conference be presented to the Ordained Elders for a 2/3's vote to proceed in this position. Once approved, the Provisional Elder must continue the process with their mentor group for the ensuing year. During this time, the candidate will prepare for the application of Ordained Elder if they so choose to move on. Most choose this, although one can remain a Provisional Member for. The Provisional member no longer meets with the District Board, shifting all efforts to passing the conference board.

Once the candidate chooses to apply for Full Ordination rights, the Provisional Member begins to answer an extensive set of historical essay questions concerning g doctrine, discipline and theology found in the Book of Discipline. Additionally, the candidate is required to present yet another video-taped sermon for review. Even though a candidate may apply for this privilege one year after Provisional Membership, candidates are often denied their request and asked to reapply the following year. The intensity of these interviews and discrimination of the board is heightened to determine if the person is fully ready to become a member of the Annual Conference as an Ordained Elder. If the Provisional Member passes the board, they are recommended once more to the Annual Conference and voted on by the Order of Elders. If approved with 2/3's vote, the new member is presented to the full body of the Annual Conference and welcomed. This happens with all levels of candidacy (Ordained Deacon and Candidates for Professional Ministry). During the Annual Conference a specific service of Ordination celebrates all candidates, provisional members and with great fanfare, all newly received ordained elders.

Although Ordained Elder is the highest clergy status one can achieve, it is not the *only* status one can hold and receive an appointment. **Figure 3** displays all possible status assignments. Most clergy serving the 1,035 churches are either Ordained Elders or preparing for this status (reference). Licensed Local Pastors make up the second largest membership status. This clergy are not members to the Annual Conference in full connection and yet serve a growing purpose in filling pulpits. The primary difference between Ordained Elders in Full Connection and Licensed Local Pastors is the level of Education (LLP's attend Course of Study for intensive schooling that does not yield a Master's Degree) and they are not guaranteed a yearly appointment. Many native born clergy opt for this route, especially if their call to ministry is a career change.

By far, Ordained Elders in full connection receive prime appointments to larger congregations, higher populated areas, higher salaries and longer tenures. Lay Pastors have to renew their license every year by meeting with their DBOOM for approval. Larger numbers of foreign-born pastors apply and complete the Ordination process in the GPAC each year; whereas more and more native-born pastors are opting to forgo schooling and receive appointments that may or may not be available each year. This enhances the possibility that foreign born clergy will be serving larger, more wealthy congregations as they continue to be appointed.

AF	Affiliate member
AM	Associate Member
AP	Appointment Pending
DA	District Superintendent Assignment
DM	Diaconal Minister ('92 Discipline)
DR	Retired Diaconal Minister ('92 Discipline)
FD	Deacon in Full Connection
FE	Elder in Full Connection
FL	Full-time Local Pastor
LM	Certified Lay Minister
OA	Associate Member of another UM Conference
OD	Deacon member of another UM Conference
OE	Elder member of another UM Conference
OF	Full member of other denomination
OP	Probationary member of another UM Conference
LFT	Member serving less than full-time
PD	Provisional Deacon
PE	Provisional Elder
PL	Part-time Local Pastor
RA	Retired Associate Member
RD	Retired Deacon in Full Connection
RE	Retired Elder in Full Connection
RL	Retired Local Pastor
ROE	Retired Elder - Other UM Conference Approved
ROF	Retired Elder - Other Denomination Approved
RP	Retired Probationary Member
SP	Student Local Pastor
SY	Supply (DS Assignment)

Figure 3 Table of Orders

Appendix D - Outlier Analysis

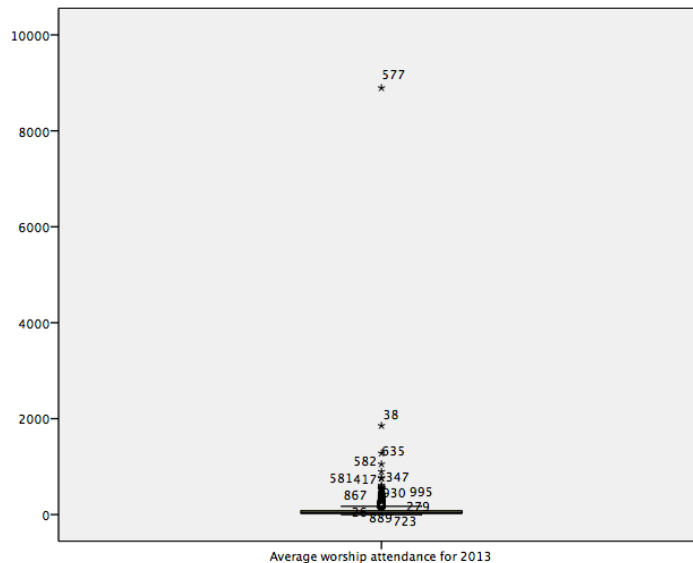
Based on exploring the skewness and kurtosis of all cases, cases **38, 347, and 577** skew the numbers all four years of analysis in the variables of average worship attendance and total professing membership. I conduct regression analyses with and without these cases to see whether they change the results. Additionally, I will run regressions on congregations with foreign-born or native-born without taking out these cases with newly computed variables that show percentage changes for each year 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 in membership, attendance and income. I present the results below.

Outliers and Percentage Change comparisons:

2013 Average Worship Outliers: Cases 38,347, 577, 581, 582,635

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Average worship attendance for 2013	1006	99.8%	2	0.2%	1008	100.0%



Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error	
Average worship attendance for 2013	Mean	87.83	9.578	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	69.04	
		Upper Bound	106.63	
	5% Trimmed Mean	60.99		
	Median	41.00		
	Variance	92293.410		
	Std. Deviation	303.798		
	Minimum	0		
	Maximum	8895		
	Range	8895		
	Interquartile Range	60		
	Skewness	24.680	.077	
	Kurtosis	705.672	.154	

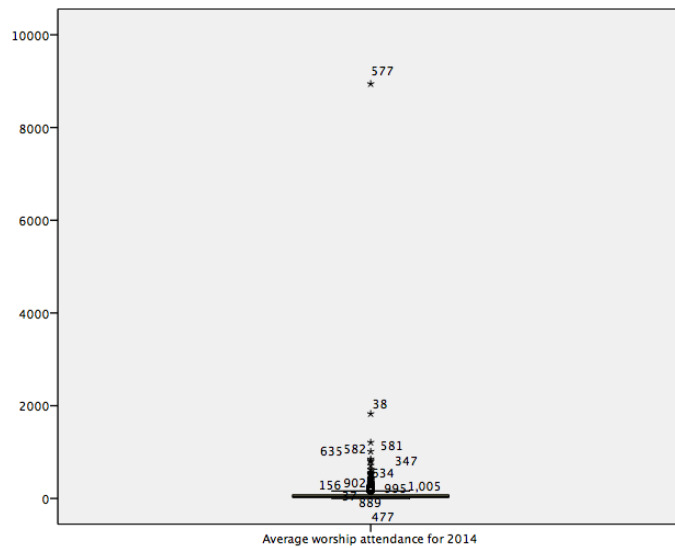
2014 Average Worship Outliers: Cases 38, 347, 577, 581, 582, 635

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Average worship attendance for 2014	1006	99.8%	2	0.2%	1008	100.0%

Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error	
Average worship attendance for 2014	Mean	85.75	9.604	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	66.90	
		Upper Bound	104.59	
	5% Trimmed Mean	58.87		
	Median	40.00		
	Variance	92792.686		
	Std. Deviation	304.619		
	Minimum	0		
	Maximum	8942		
	Range	8942		
	Interquartile Range	59		
	Skewness	24.870	.077	
	Kurtosis	713.676	.154	



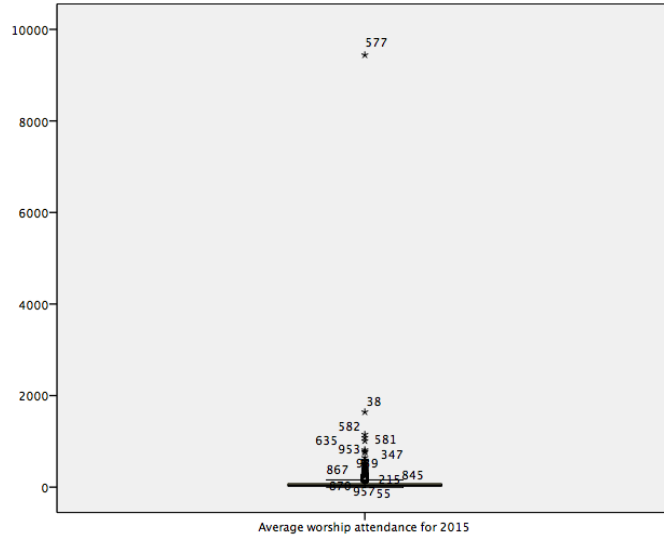
Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error	
Average worship attendance for 2015	Mean	85.03	10.079	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	65.25	
		Upper Bound	104.81	
	5% Trimmed Mean	57.79		
	Median	39.00		
	Variance	101784.644		
	Std. Deviation	319.037		
	Minimum	0		
	Maximum	9441		
	Range	9441		
	Interquartile Range	55		
	Skewness	25.531	.077	
Kurtosis	741.276	.154		

2015 Average Worship Outliers: Cases 38, 347, 577, 581, 582, 635, 953

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Average worship attendance for 2015	1002	99.4%	6	0.6%	1008	100.0%



2016 Average Worship Outliers: Cases 38, 347, 577, 581, 582, 962

Case Processing Summary

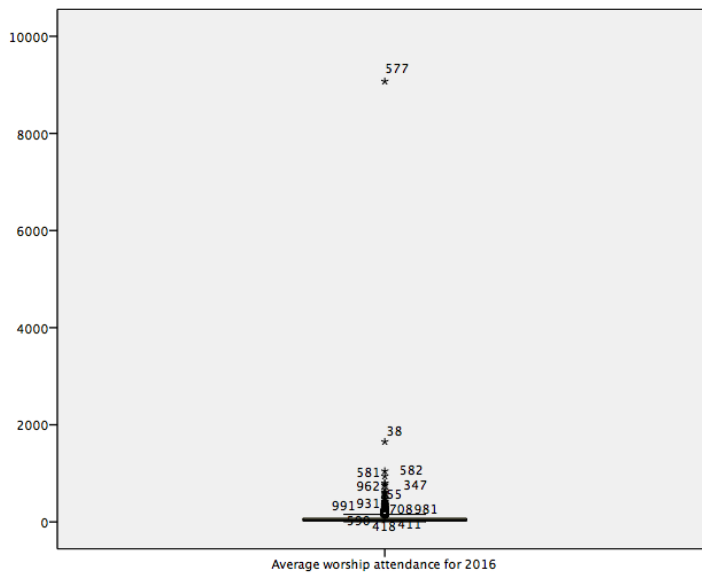
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Average worship attendance for 2016	1002	99.4%	6	0.6%	1008	100.0%

Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error	
Average worship attendance for 2016	Mean	81.46	9.663	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	62.50	
		Upper Bound	100.42	
	5% Trimmed Mean	55.46		
	Median	38.00		
	Variance	93551.212		
	Std. Deviation	305.861		
	Minimum	5		
	Maximum	9071		
	Range	9066		
	Interquartile Range	54		
	Skewness	25.692	.077	
	Kurtosis	747.934	.154	

2013 Membership

38, 347, 577, 846,



Outliers: Cases

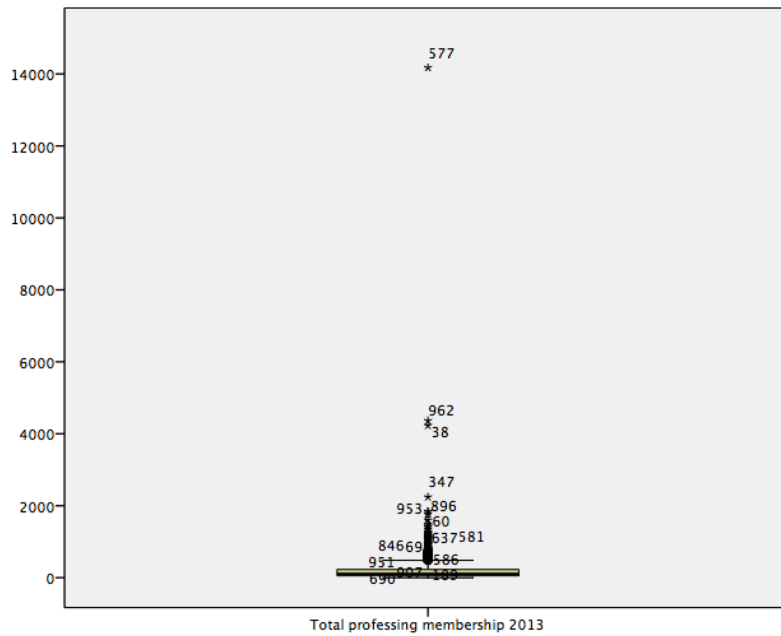
953, 962

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Total professing membership 2013	1000	99.2%	8	0.8%	1008	100.0%

Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error	
Total professing membership 2013	Mean	217.37	17.091	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	183.83	
		Upper Bound	250.91	
	5% Trimmed Mean	159.61		
	Median	105.00		
	Variance	292104.734		
	Std. Deviation	540.467		
	Minimum	0		
	Maximum	14173		
	Range	14173		
	Interquartile Range	176		
	Skewness	18.429	.077	
	Kurtosis	451.950	.155	



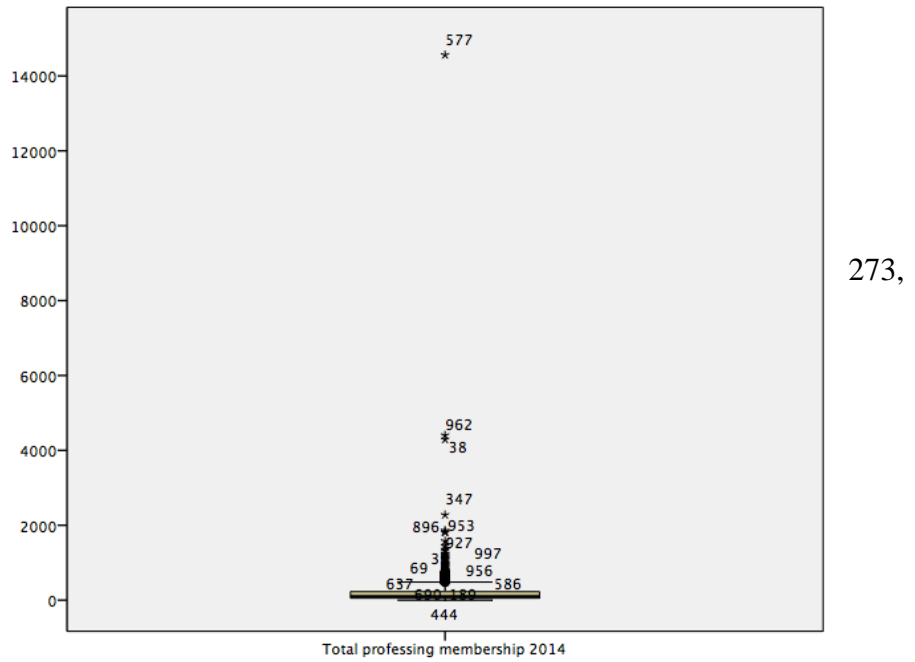
		Statistic	Std. Error	
Total professing membership 2014	Mean	214.82	17.346	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	180.79	
		Upper Bound	248.86	
	5% Trimmed Mean	157.01		
	Median	102.00		
	Variance	302076.349		
	Std. Deviation	549.615		
	Minimum	0		
	Maximum	14560		
	Range	14560		
	Interquartile Range	174		
	Skewness	18.894	.077	
	Kurtosis	469.574	.154	

2014 Membership Outliers: Cases 38, 347, 577, 876, 953, 962

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Total professing membership 2014	1004	99.6%	4	0.4%	1008	100.0%

2015 Membership Outliers: Cases 38, 347, 577, 896, 953

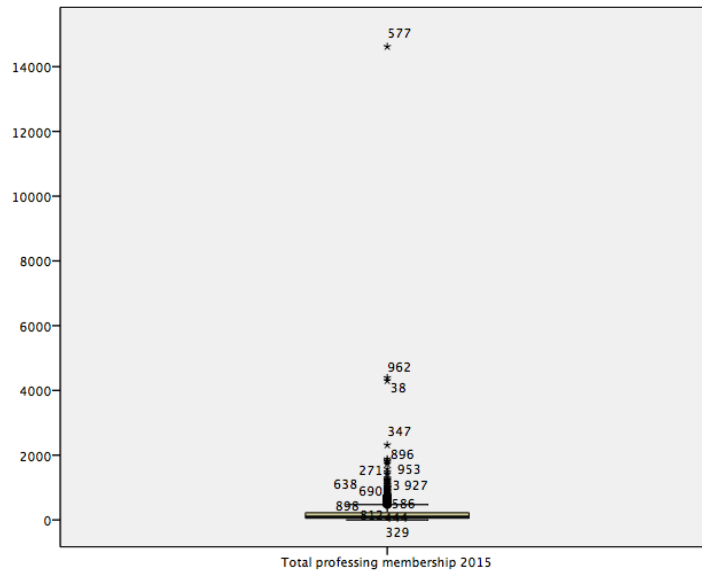


Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Total professing membership 2015	1002	99.4%	6	0.6%	1008	100.0%

Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error	
Total professing membership 2015	Mean	213.71	17.460	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	179.45	
		Upper Bound	247.97	
	5% Trimmed Mean	155.17		
	Median	100.00		
	Variance	305450.337		
	Std. Deviation	552.676		
	Minimum	0		
	Maximum	14619		
	Range	14619		
	Interquartile Range	171		
	Skewness	18.855	.077	
	Kurtosis	467.866	.154	



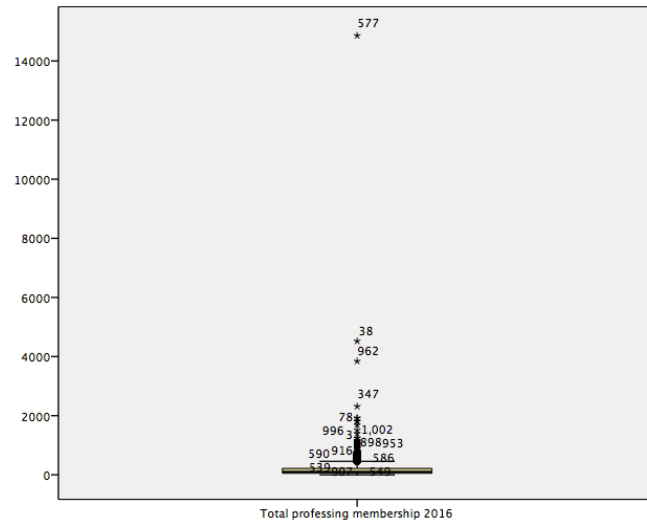
Descriptives

		Statistic	Std. Error	
Total professing membership 2016	Mean	211.24	17.582	
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	176.74	
		Upper Bound	245.74	
	5% Trimmed Mean	152.98		
	Median	99.00		
	Variance	309751.174		
	Std. Deviation	556.553		
	Minimum	0		
	Maximum	14857		
	Range	14857		
	Interquartile Range	164		
	Skewness	19.278	.077	
	Kurtosis	485.130	.154	

2016 Membership Outliers:38, 78, 577, 347, 577, 962, 996

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Total professing membership 2016	1002	99.4%	6	0.6%	1008	100.0%



Appendix E - Walk with the Pastor

The method described as *Walk with the Pastor* was inspired by my sociological work early in my pastorate and graduate work. Figure 8 is the worksheet that I give young pastors in the conference when I teach the process.

Walk with the Pastor

Gaining trust with those you serve

Purpose: To unearth culture and stories that shape the congregation.

PROCESS	RULES	QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Make space of 2 to 3 blocks of time during the week to dedicate 2 to 3 hours of "walk" time. * Post sign-up and have online option. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Allowed to capture you for no less than two hours * They can take you to workplace/ home/land tour/ favorite restaurant etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * How long have you lived here? * How long have you been at this church? * If married - where did you meet?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Run for two months (start as soon as you begin your appointment or in a new season) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No note-taking; only connection time. * Let them teach you * Share your story * Always close in prayer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Tell me about the history: church/ community * I want to know more about the concerns. * What should I know?

Afterwards: Return home and make notes in a notebook that is kept confidential. What did you learn? What patterns are you seeing with other "walks"? How does this prepare you to serve?

You can restart Walk with the Pastor or do them yearly at the same time

Figure 4 Walk with the Pastor

Appendix F - Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for All Participants:

All that apply:

Pastor Church Member Church Minor Community Leader

PROJECT TITLE: New Religious Immigrants in the Great Plains: A study of Mostly White Congregations Receiving Foreign Born Pastors

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE/ EXPIRATION DATE: TBA

LENGTH OF STUDY: April 2019 to December 2019

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Matthew Sanderson
Randall C. Hill Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work & Professor of Sociology

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:

204 Waters Hall
1603 Old Claflin Place, Manhattan, KS 66506-4003
mattr@ksu.edu
785-532-4969

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:

Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PROJECT SPONSOR: Kansas State University

PROJECT STAFF: Jan Todd email: jet7979@ksu.edu Cell: 913-553-0267

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: For purposes of gathering qualitative research on my subject, I will be working with a Caldwell United Methodist Church members and participants, including minors, the pastor of Caldwell United Methodist Church and the Caldwell community as well as the Belle Plain United Methodist Church. For approximately 6 months I will be conducting participant observations and in-depth interviews with the previously listed participant population. Caldwell United Methodist Church received a foreign-born pastor from an appointive process five years ago and Belle Plain received this same pastor in July of 2019. The congregations and the communities are predominantly white. My research involves studying the processes of reception and understanding the transition of generalized trust (institutional appointment) to personal trust (acceptance and personal relationship) between the congregation and the immigrant pastor.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED

Six Months of On Site Visits for Observation: April, May, June, July and August, September, October and November –Sunday Services, special meetings and gatherings as observations of “everyday life” in the community of congregants.

Purpose: To observe relationships between:

- Congregation and Foreign Born Pastor
- Congregation and Leadership
- Congregation with each other
- To document outside observations of the processes of reception and trust
- To begin recruiting volunteers for in depth interviews

In Depth Interviews of the Pastor: To gain insight into pastor's perceptions of reception and the processes of building trust as viewed by leadership. Two to Three interviews throughout the process.

In Depth Interviews of Congregation and Community:

The desire of this study is to acquire 50-60 personal interviews with person's ranging in age, degree of power, longevity in the congregation and or in relationship to the congregation, longevity in Kansas, gender, socio-economic level and differing political views. These interviews will be conducted until I reach the number desired – thus may continue through the summer and fall of 2019.

Snowball Method: The term snowball sampling is a process by which the researcher gains names by referral. In this study, referrals will come from the pastor and members of the congregation. All Participants will have full disclosure of the process, be able to end the interview at any time. All participants will be assigned a code rather than a name in the dissertation if they decide to protect their identity. The importance of understanding this method means that you, the participant, may be asked to provide names for additional interview candidates. The participant, however, is not required to refer other names in order to be interviewed.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

- Sensitive subjects concerning race, religion, community and worldview.
- Personal information that may not be known by others.
- Recording of interview
- Interview may be concluded by the interviewee at any time.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY: Concerning religious institutions, including the United Methodist Church as a whole, this study will provide insight about the ongoing practices of utilizing immigrants as pastors in mostly white congregations. The processes of what goes on in this relationship have not been scientifically analyzed, and with new information, may aid the reception of foreign born pastors in current and new appointments. This opportunity, additionally, aids social research by observing and interviewing a community who has received, been led by and seemingly developed trust with a foreign-born pastor which may lead to important results in understanding the processes of developing trust as well as examining ideas about immigration and leadership.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

All interviews will be recorded, transcribed and destroyed by Jan E. Todd. Notes and recordings will be locked and contained in a file cabinet at researcher's home. Additionally, the digital recorder has an assigned password for protection. If subjects wish to remain anonymous, a fake name will be assigned. Additionally, all interviews will be assigned a case number if the information shared requires anonymity. All data collected including notes, digital recordings, documents such as bulletins and sermons will be kept until dissertation is defended. If data and results are kept for further study, they will be kept in a locked cabinet. All interview notes and digital recordings, however, will be destroyed after the dissertation is defended.

Consent:

I have read the previous description and procedure of this study and to the best of my knowledge, understand its purpose and chose to comply to the parameters of the interview. I understand that this interview is for research that will be used for dissertation research as overseen by the Kansas State University Graduate School and the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work. I understand that I may conclude this interview at any

time. I realize that my name may be used in this study unless otherwise specified. I consent to participate and/or allow a minor of my charge to participate in this research.

I am 18 years or Older: ___yes ___no

Name of Participant: _____

Is Participant the Pastor of Caldwell United Methodist/Belle Plain United Methodist Church? __ yes __no

Interview # ____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date:_____

If Minor Name of Parent/Guardian_____

Date:_____

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE (PROJECT STAFF):

_____ Date:_____

Appendix G - Interview Guides

Interview Guide for New Religious Immigrants on the Great Plains: A Study of Mostly White Congregations Receiving

Foreign Born Pastors

Congregational Interview

Greeting and welcome

Questions to be asked during the interview:

Demographic Questions:

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Member of Caldwell United Methodist Church

Qualitative Questions:

- Tell me about your history in Caldwell. Did you grow up here?
 - If so, what was it like growing up? What were your parent's occupations? What do you think the "typical lifestyle" was/is for community members? Why did you stay?
 - If not, when did you move here? What drew you or your family to Caldwell? What do you think the "typical lifestyle" was/is for community members? Why do you stay?
- What do you like about the community? What do Caldwellians do together?
- **If member of the Church community:** How long have you attended Caldwell United Methodist Church? Did you grow up in the church?
 - If so, what was it like growing up in the church? What are some of your favorite memories of the church? Did you have a favorite pastor that you can recall? What made them special? Why is it important for you to be part of this church community? What makes this church special?
 - If not, what drew you to this church? What are memories you've developed here over your time? Did you have a favorite pastor that you can recall? What made them special? Why is it important for you to be part of this church community? What makes this church special?
- How important is this church to the Caldwell community and surrounding area?
- How important do you think it is to have a full-time pastor at the church? What are the expected roles of a "good pastor" when leading a church?
- Pastor Jacob has been here for five years, going on six; what was it like before Pastor Jacob was appointed here? What were your thoughts/feelings when you first heard that your/the new pastor was originally from Zimbabwe? Can you describe what went through your head?
- Can you remember what it was like to welcome Pastor Jacob and his family as your new pastor and meet them for the first time? Were there any uncomfortable moments?
- Can you remember how Pastor Jacob and his family connected to the church and the community in the first few years? How do you think the community at large received the family?
- What does it mean to belong to a community, in your opinion? How does one know when they belong or are accepted?
- As far as you can remember, have there been many non-white church members? Community members?
 - If so, how did they fit into the community?
 - If not, is it a "new thing" for this community to have a family from outside of the United States living here?
- How important is your faith to your everyday life? Does it shape your decisions? Where do you learn most about your faith? Where do you put it into practice?
- What do you think your faith tells you about accepting people who might be different than you?
- Do you use your faith to make decisions on how to treat people?
- Does your faith inform your political views? If so how?
- You don't have to answer this question, but it might help with understanding the community in more detail; do you tend to vote for a particular party? I'm asking this because I am curious about the impact of faith on political decisions. Political parties tend to disagree on immigration matters and since this study involves an immigrant as a leader of faith, this seems relevant to me. I understand, though, if you'd rather not answer this question.
- How does it feel to learn from an immigrant pastor? Is there a difference compared to learning from a pastor who was born in the United States? How so?
- Do you feel like you've had the opportunity to learn new things from Pastor Jacob as compared to pastors from the United States?
 - If so, what have you learned?

- There is a saying in the Church that goes “You know your pastor becomes *your* pastor when _____”
 - Have you had that experience with Pastor Jacob? If so, what was it like?
 - Has your relationship with Pastor Jacob given you a new opportunity to experience an immigrant relationship in your life? Have you ever had a relationship with a person who was born outside the United States?
 - If so, is this relationship with Pastor Jacob different? How? Has this relationship influenced your ideas about immigrants as they work and settle in United States?
 - If not, has this relationship influenced your idea about immigrants in the United States?
 - In closing, what impact do you think the appointment of Pastor Jacob to Caldwell United Methodist Church has had on the congregation? On the community?
 - Are there any last statements you’d like to share that you might think I’ve missed in understanding this relationship?
- Closing thank you

Interview Guide for New Religious Immigrants on the Great Plains: A Study of Mostly White Congregations Receiving Foreign Born Pastors

Community Leaders Interview

(In light of the fact that some community leaders are church members/ I will insert community leader questions into the congregational survey as indicated by *bold italics*)

Greeting and welcome

Questions to be asked during the interview:

Demographic Questions:

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Member of Caldwell United Methodist Church or Not

Qualitative Questions:

- Tell me about your history in Caldwell. Did you grow up here?
 - If so, what was it like growing up? What were your parent’s occupations? What do you think the “typical lifestyle” was/is for community members? Why did you stay?
 - If not, when did you move here? What drew you or your family to Caldwell? What do you think the “typical lifestyle” was/is for community members? Why do you stay?
- What do you like about the community? What do Caldwellians do together?
- How important is this church to the Caldwell community and surrounding area?
- How important do you think it is to have a full-time pastor at the church? What are the expected roles of a “good pastor” when leading a church? ***How do they make an impact on the community?***
- Pastor Jacob has been here for five years, going on six; what was it like before Pastor Jacob was appointed here? What were your thoughts/feelings when you first heard that the new pastor at Caldwell United Methodist Church was originally from Zimbabwe? Can you describe what went through your head?
- Can you remember what it was like when Pastor Jacob moved to the community? What were your first impressions? ***How do you think the community at large received the family?***
- What does it mean to belong to a community, in your opinion? How does one know when they belong or are accepted?
- ***As far as you can remember, have there been many non-white people who have settled here?***
 - ***If so, how did they fit into the community?***
 - ***If not, is it a “new thing” for this community to have a family from outside of the United States living here?***
- ***(If answered yes to non-white settlers) Have there been any non-white community leaders? If so, what were their roles in the community?***
- ***How do you experience Pastor Jacob as a leader in the community? Do you have certain stories of his leadership?***
- Are you a person of faith? Do you attend a church in the community?
- How important is your faith to your everyday life? Does it shape your decisions? Where do you learn most about your faith? Where do you put it into practice?
- Does your faith inform your political views? If so how?
- You don’t have to answer this question, but it might help with understanding the community in more detail; do you tend to vote for a particular party? I’m asking this because I am curious about the impact of faith on political decisions.

Political parties tend to disagree on immigration matters and since this study involves an immigrant as a leader of faith, this seems relevant to me. I understand, though, if you'd rather not answer this question.

- Has your relationship with Pastor Jacob given you a new opportunity to experience an immigrant relationship in your life? Have you ever had a relationship with a person who was born outside the United States?
 - If so, is this relationship with Pastor Jacob different? How? Has this relationship influenced your ideas about immigrants as they work and settle in United States?
 - If not, has this relationship influenced your idea about immigrants in the United States?
- Do you feel like you've had the opportunity to learn new things from Pastor Jacob as compared to pastors from the United States?
 - If so, what have you learned?
- *In closing, what impact do you think the appointment of Pastor Jacob to Caldwell United Methodist Church has had on the community? Do you think the presence of his family has influenced community member's ideas about immigrants? If so, how? If not, why?*
- Are there any last statements you'd like to share that you might think I've missed in understanding this relationship?

Closing thank you

Interview Guide for New Religious Immigrants on the Great Plains: A Study of Mostly White Congregations Receiving Foreign Born Pastors

Congregational Interview for Minors

Greeting and welcome

Questions to be asked during the interview:

Demographic Questions:

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Member of Caldwell United Methodist Church

Qualitative Questions:

- Did you grow up in Caldwell?
 - If so, what was it like growing up? Who do you live with? What are your parent/guardian occupations? What do you think is a "normal" picture of a regular day in Caldwell?
 - If not, when did you move here? Who do you live with? Why did you move here? What are your parent/guardian's occupations? What do you think is a "normal" picture of a regular day in Caldwell?
 -
- What do you like about the community? What do Caldwellians do together?
- **If member of the Church community:** How long have you attended Caldwell United Methodist Church? Did you grow up in the church?
 - If so, what was it like growing up in the church? What are some of your favorite memories of the church? Did you have a favorite pastor that you can recall? What made them special? Why is it important for you to be part of this church community? What makes this church special?
 - If not, what drew you to this church? What are memories you've developed here over your time? Did you have a favorite pastor that you can recall? What made them special? Why is it important for you to be part of this church community? What makes this church special?
- Pastor Jacob has been here for five years, going on six; what was it like before Pastor Jacob was came here? What were your thoughts/feelings when you first heard that your/the new pastor was originally from Zimbabwe? Can you describe what went through your head?
- Can you remember what it was like to welcome Pastor Jacob and his family as your new pastor and meet them for the first time? Were there any uncomfortable moments?
- Can you remember how Pastor Jacob and his family connected to the church and the community in the first few years? How do you think the community reacted to Pastor Jacob?
- In your own words, what do you think it means to belong? How does one know when they belong or are accepted?
- What do you think a good pastor does?
- As far as you can remember, have there been many non-white church members? Community members?

- If so, can you tell me about them? How did they fit into the community?
- If not, is it a “new thing” for this community to have a family from outside of the United States living here?
- What do you think your faith tells you about accepting people who might be different than you?
- Do you use your faith to make decisions on how to treat people?
- How does it feel to learn from a pastor wasn’t born in the United States? Is there a difference compared to learning from a pastor who was born in the United States? How so?
- Do you feel like you’ve had the opportunity to learn new things from Pastor Jacob as compared to pastors from the United States?
 - If so, what have you learned?
- There is a saying in the Church that goes “You know your pastor becomes *your* pastor when _____”
 - Have you had that experience with Pastor Jacob? If so, what was it like?
- Have you ever had a relationship with a person who was born outside the United States?
 - If so, is this relationship with Pastor Jacob different? How? Has this relationship influenced your ideas about immigrants as they work and settle in United States?
 - If not, has this relationship influenced your idea about immigrants in the United States?
- Do you think that Pastor Jacob has made a difference in people’s lives? In your life?
- Can you think of anything else that would help me understand how Pastor’s Jacob’s coming here has made a difference?

Closing thank you

Interview Guide for New Religious Immigrants on the Great Plains: A Study of Mostly White Congregations Receiving Foreign Born Pastors

Pastor’s Interview 1: Life in Zimbabwe Prior to Moving to the United States

Greeting and welcome

Questions to be asked during the interview:

Demographic Questions:

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Status in the United Methodist Church
- Immigrant Status
- Other churches served

Qualitative Questions:

- Where did you grow up in Zimbabwe? Was that the only place you lived as a youngster? What was it like to growing up? What was the environment like? What was your family like? How many members were in your immediate family? Was family life important? What values did your family adhere to? Did you practice those values? Do you still practice them today?
- What work did your family do? Were your parents educated? Was education important to them? Was it important to you?
- What languages do you speak? How long have you spoken each language? Was it important to know more than one language growing up?
- What were some of the primary values you learned as a child from leaders other than your family? Who were some of those leaders?
- Would you consider yourself a leader or a follower as a child?
- Was your family always Christian?
 - If so, were they Methodists? How were you expected to practice your faith? Did you have faith growing up? Describe what your earliest memories were of the Church?
 - If not, how did they become Christians? Were there missionaries? Pastors? If so, who were they? Did your family change from another religion or were they non-religious?
- When did you encounter United Methodism first? Tell me about the ways this denomination became important to you before you decided to become a pastor?

- Where were you educated as a child? What was your Secondary Education like? I know that you came to the United States to go to Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas; before that, did you go to college in Zimbabwe? What degrees have you acquired and from where?
- What prompted you to go to college in the first place? Did your religious life play a part in determining where you went?
- Were you a good student? What was most important to you as a college student?
- How did your education shape your values? Did you learn new things? What were the top three most important things you learned?
- I know that you didn't work as a pastor after college – where did you work and what was your vocation?
- When did you meet your wife and get married? Was that before going to college in the United States? Where were your children born?
- What were your first impressions of the United States from your perspective in Zimbabwe? Had you ever thought about moving to the United States as a child?
- Remembering back, how did you envision where you would be in the future?
- What were your first impressions of the United States when you first came to the U.S. to live? Had you visited the United States before?
- Have you always thought of becoming a pastor or was this something that came later in life?
- Social Capital comes from our connections to other people and our ability to gain access to places and opportunities through those connections; who are the people who helped you come to the United States to come to college?
- How did you know these people? Are you still connected to these people?
- Finally, what was it like to leave Zimbabwe for the first time and live long term in the United States? Can you remember and describe the feeling? Can you reflect on what you anticipated?
- What did you think Americans were like? Where did you get those images?
- Are there any last things you want me to know about your life growing up in Zimbabwe?

We will continue the interview over several sections.

Closing thank you

Interview Guide for New Religious Immigrants on the Great Plains: A Study of Mostly White Congregations Receiving Foreign Born Pastors

Pastor's Interview 2: Life in the United States Seminary Until Caldwell

Greeting and welcome

Questions to be asked during the interview:

Demographic Questions: Answered prior

Qualitative Questions:

- What prompted you to attend Southwestern College? How old were you when you attended? Had you considered other colleges and universities in the United States?
- Did you come to college alone? Did you know anyone at Southwestern beforehand?
- What was your major? Why did you pick this major? Were you a good student? What was most important to you as a college student?
- In your own words, describe to me what it means to belong to a community? Did you feel like you belonged in the community at Southwestern College? How did you navigate belonging and being part of the community?
- Did you feel like you were treated differently as an immigrant student? If so, how?
- Did you ever sense people judging you based on:
 - Race
 - Immigration status
 - Language
 - Other

If so, which was more prominent in causing problems and challenges?

- In College, did you encounter blatant racism, prejudice or xenophobia? If so, how did you deal with it?
- What were some of the challenges of going to school in the United States other than possible discriminations?
- Did living in the United States as a college student impact your values?
- Would you consider yourself a leader or a follower at college? Tell my why.
- Would you have considered yourself religious in college? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Did you stay in the United States after college? What did you do?
- When did you decide to become a pastor? What prompted you to pursue that line of calling?
- When did you decide to go to seminary?

- Why did you pick Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Kansas? Did you know people at Saint Paul?
- Tell me what it was like to be theologically educated in the United States at a United Methodist Seminary? Did the values of the seminary align to the values you grew up with? Explain.
- Did your values change in seminary? Did you learn new things? What were the top three most important things you learned? Were there any challenges?
- Continuing the thought on belonging, did you feel a sense of belonging at Saint Paul School of Theology? If so, how was that different or the same to your experience in college? Did your wife and children have any problems belonging?
- Did you encounter any racism, xenophobia, prejudice in your seminary experience?
- What was the overall feeling from your relationship to The United Methodist Church in the United States while you were in seminary?
- What did you plan to do after seminary?
- At what point did you think about being a pastor in the United States?
- What was your first appointment to a church in the United States? What was it like? Describe the congregation and the setting?
- How did you become a part of the Great Plains United Methodist Conference? What drew you here?
- Had you had a lot of experience working with mostly white populations before you pastored? If so, where? What was it like?
- What do you think are the most important factors that lead you to becoming a pastor – first, at all, second in the United States?
- In your opinion, how did your wife and children adapt to your life as a pastor?
- Since being a pastor, have you experienced racism, prejudice or xenophobia from communities, groups or individuals?
- How have you been treated since coming to the Great Plains Annual Conference as a pastor?
- What are some of the challenges of being a foreign born pastor in the United States?
- Why do you think we have so many mostly white churches being served by foreign-born pastors?
- What do you think foreign born pastors bring to the table in serving with Native born pastors?
- Have you experienced any racism, xenophobia, prejudice from colleagues? Conference leadership?
- Do you connect with other foreign born pastors for support? If so, what is that like? Do they have similar challenges?
- Continuing with the idea of belonging, what do you think it means to trust a person? Have you learned to trust people along the way when it comes to belonging to a community in the United States? Are there common factors to that trust?
- How do you build trust with others? From your many experiences, how have you learned to teach people to trust you?
- Do you think a common faith-base, such as being Christian or United Methodist automatically influences the initial trust people have for each other or does it matter?
- What do you think are the most important things a pastor does?
- Do you think that pastors, in the current day and age, in the United Methodist Church are doing those things?
- Do you think congregations automatically trust their pastors or is that a process?

We will continue the interview over several sections.

Closing thank you

Interview Guide for New Religious Immigrants on the Great Plains: A Study of Mostly White Congregations Receiving Foreign Born Pastors

Pastor's Interview 3: Life in Caldwell, Kansas

Greeting and welcome

Questions to be asked during the interview:

Demographic Questions: Answered prior

Qualitative Questions:

- Describe how you first received the appointment to Caldwell, Kansas? Where were you serving beforehand? Did you know where Caldwell, Kansas was?
- What were your first thoughts about serving this community? Did you know that it was mostly white? Did that matter to you? Why or why not?
- Remember with me what it was like to do your first introduction to the church: Tell me the overall feeling and experience.
- Remembering your first year at Caldwell United Methodist Church, what was it like to build relationships with the congregation? Were you their first foreign born pastor? How were you, your wife and the kids welcomed by the congregation?
- Did you feel like you were treated differently than a native born pastor?
- Were you intentional about building trusting relationships with church members? If so, how did you do this?

- What did you do to build relationships with the community of Caldwell?
- What were some of the early challenges of serving Caldwell UMC? Were any of these challenges related to your race, immigrant status, or language? If so how?
- What was it like for your wife and the kids to find belonging in the church? Did they have any difficulty?
- What were some of the first signs of belonging to the church and the community? When did you know that you had gained some level of trust with the church?
- How about the community? Did you feel any difference in acceptance and reception in the community as compared to the church?
- As we talked about earlier, social capital can help in establishing relationships; did any of your church leaders help you establish relationships with leaders in the community? If so, how did that happen?
- Would you say that the values you adhere to align closely with the values of the congregation? If so, what are those similar values?
- Are there places where your values are different than those of the congregation? If so, do you navigate those differences?
- Do you think that you have built a relationship of trust with this congregation? If so, what are the processes that you have utilized to build that trust?
- What do you think this congregation believes are the most important roles of a pastor? Do you feel like you fulfill those roles? Have you any indication that you have done better or worse than previous native-born pastors?
- Do you feel like your theology aligns with most of the congregation's ideas about their faith; or are their differences? What are some of the biggest differences? How do you manage those differences?
- Do you think that you and your family's presence in the congregation has influenced member's ideas about immigration and relationships with immigrants? If so, how?
- What about you and your family's presence in the community? Do you think it has influenced Caldwellians ideas about immigration and relationship with immigrants?
- Have you encountered any racism, xenophobia, prejudice in Caldwell, Kansas? If so, how and what did it look like? How did you navigate it?
- How would you describe the level of trust and belonging you have with this church? With this community?
- Were there any members of the church or community who went above and beyond to aid your welcome and reception? If so, what did they do?
- In the Church, we have a saying,
 "Your pastor becomes your pastor when _____" When did you feel like you became
 their pastor?
- Do you anticipate serving mostly white congregations for the rest of your pastoral career?
- What have you learned from this particular congregation about the challenges and the expectations foreign-born pastors might face in serving like communities?
- In your opinion, what are the most important processes that a pastor and community must go through in order to build trust and be well received?
- Are there particular processes that apply only to foreign-born pastors when gaining the trust of a congregation? If so, what are they? If not, explain.
- If you were to be appointed to a new church and community that was mostly white, would you do anything differently?
- What do you think this church has learned from the experience of having a foreign born pastor? Do you think that future foreign born pastors might have a better chance of being well received as a result of their experience with you?
- Are there any final points you'd like to make or add to understanding the experience of serving a mostly white congregation and community?

Closing thank you

Interview Guide for New Religious Immigrants on the Great Plains: A Study of Mostly White Congregations Receiving Foreign Born Pastors

Pastor's Interview 4: Early Reception in Belle Plaine Kansas

Introduction: Thanks for letting me follow you to your new location and ask some questions about the transition.

- How has the transition gone from Caldwell and Corbin (duel appointment) to Belle Plaine and Conway Springs?
- As I'll be studying the reception at Belle Plaine, can you tell me a little bit about the church and its community that you are aware of?
- How is this church community different than Caldwell?
- Are you their first Foreign Born pastor? Pastor of color? How do you think people are reacting to that?

- What are some of the things you are doing to get to know the congregation and develop relationships?
- What are some of the things the congregants did or are doing to receive you and the family into the church?
- Are there any challenges that you anticipate here that are different than the challenges you anticipated at Caldwell? If so, what are they?
- What do you think this congregation believes are the most important roles of a pastor? Do you feel like you fulfill those roles? Have you any indication that you have done better or worse than previous native-born pastors?
- What do you pick up as the main concerns this congregation has and the challenges they are facing for their future? How might you help them address those?
- Have you met leaders in the community? If so, who have you connected with? How is the relationship going with the community at large?
- As we talked about earlier, social capital can help in establishing relationships; did any of your church leaders help you establish relationships with leaders in the community? If so, how did that happen?
- How is it going for the whole family as they make this transition? I know that you don't actually live in the community, does this affect the reception in your opinion?
- What do you think it will take to build trust in this community?
- Do you tend to follow the same part of relationship building or do you adjust your methods based on context?
- Have you experienced any racism, xenophobia or prejudice in the short time or residence as pastor?
- Again, you've heard this question before, but do you think there are particular processes that apply only to foreign-born pastors when gaining the trust of a congregation? If so, what are they? If not, explain.
- Are there people you think I should talk with in gaining this initial stage of reception and relationship building?
- Are there any final points you'd like to make or add about this transition and what you anticipate?

i This is based on comparing several records; Journal Records of the three former conferences, Journal Records from the GPAC from 2014-2016 and national records from Ezra website in which all conference records are compiled into my data set.