Leadership in a Changing Transnational Context:
with a Case Study of Korean-speaking Young Adults in Korean Immigrant Churches

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Contemporary leaders face several common but significant challenges due to a rapidly changing context. Among those changes, one of most important but often-ignored changes is the increasingly multicultural nature of American society. Migration is a global phenomenon with particular significance for the American context. Furthermore, contemporary immigrants tend to maintain stronger links to their home country through the Internet, phones, mass media, and accessible transportation while they assimilate into their hosting country. This adds another layer of complexity to the task of understanding and leading communities with people from different cultures. Toward that end, this article highlights data and literature for understanding immigrants and offers suggestions for constructive leadership in a changing transnational context.

Introduction

Although leadership has rarely been an easy role, the challenges to its tasks have proliferated in a rapidly changing contemporary world. It is increasingly clear that the approaches which had been efficient in the past are not workable due to the changes we witness. One of inevitable changes evident in this contemporary age is global human migration and its impacts on local communities and churches.

Global Migration

We are living in "the age of migration."[1] There are few societies that evidence an exception to this rule. According to the Migration Policy Institute, there were more than 231 million international migrants worldwide in 2013. The Pew Research Center reported that the sheer number of international migrants has never been higher.[2] Stephen Castles and Hein de Haas state that "for receiving societies, the settlement of migrant groups and formation of ethnic minorities can fundamentally change the social, cultural, economic and political fabric of societies, particularly in the longer run."[3] According to World Bank projections, international migrants were expected to remit more than $550 billion in earnings in 2013, of which $414 billion flowed into developing countries. Furthermore, there are many countries in which the result of elections and political decisions have been shaped by global migration, including Europe and North America.

However, migration is not a new phenomenon. According to migration historian Robin Cohen, looking at recent history, it is possible to discern a series of major migration periods or events.[4] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the predominant migration event was the coerced transportation of slaves. About twelve million people were forced out from mainly Western Africa to the New World, as well as others across the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. After the collapse of the transcontinental slave trade, indentured laborers from China, India, and

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[1] Cf. Stephen Castles and Hein de Hass, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 5th ed., (New York: Guilford Press, 2009).

[2] Christopher Inkpen, "7 facts about world migration," *Pew Research Center,* September 2, 2014, accessed March 8, 2017,

[2] Christopher Inkpen, "7 facts about world migration," *Pew Research Center,* September 2, 2014, accessed March 8, 2017, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/09/02/7-facts-about-world-migration/

[3] Castles and de Hass, 1.

[4] Cf. *The Cambridge Survey of World Migration,* edited by Robin Cohen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) for more details.

Japan moved in significant numbers to continue working in the plantations of European powers. The next period of migration was marked by the rise of the U.S. as an industrial powerhouse. Some twelve million migrants from Northern, Southern, and Eastern Europe moved to the U.S. between the 1850s to the 1930s. The next major period of migration was after the Second World War, when labor was needed to sustain the booming post-war economies in Europe, North America, and Australia. At the same time, there was a significant movement of millions of Hindus and Muslims as a result of the Partition of India in 1947, and of Jews and Palestinians after the establishment of Israel in 1948. By the 1970s, international migration had shifted to Asia where labor migration continues to grow.

With this history of migration, Khalid Koser emphasizes that migration is not a new phenomenon, but rather that migration is associated with significant global events—revolutions, wars, and the rise and fall of empires; that it is associated with significant changes—economic expansion, nation-building, and political transformations; and that it is also associated with significant problems—conflict, persecution, and dispossession. He argues that migration has been a matter of great importance throughout history, and it continues to matter today.[5]

U.S. Context

The United States is the biggest receiving country for migrants. Immigrants to America have changed American demographics. In 2013, there were 45,790,000 people living in the United States that had been born in other countries.[6] About thirty-three million people have at least one foreign-born parent (Census 2010). This means that at least one in five people in the United States today is a first- or second-generation resident. However, in reality the rate would be even higher if we consider people with nonimmigrants visa including pleasure and business travelers, international students, temporary workers and families,[7] and undocumented immigrants.

Researchers expect that American will be even more diverse in the future. Pew Research reported, "Americans are more racially and ethnically diverse than in the past, and the U.S. is projected to be even more diverse in the coming decades. *By 2055, the U.S. will not have a single racial or ethnic majority*."[8]

As our daily lives and communities are deeply related to growing numbers of immigrants and different cultures, new changes and challenges confront our church leaders, communities, and practices. Thus, in this changing context of encountering different cultures, how to be a faithful leader is an urgent question. In this article, I will suggest some features of leadership, particularly in the context of people with different cultures. In order to do so, I will examine responses to immigrants, both in general and churches. Then I will convey a transnational approach to provide an understanding of contemporary migrants, with Korean-speaking young adults as a case study. With the understanding of contemporary immigrants, I will finally demonstrate five necessary components of leadership in a changing transnational context: 1) leadership that understands *missio Dei*, 2) leadership that listens to context, 3) leadership that respects human dignity and agency, 4)

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[5] Khalid Koser, *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4.

[6] Inkpen, "7 facts about world migration."

[7] According to the Department of Homeland Security, there were 76,638,236 nonimmigrants admitted in 2015. John Teke and Waleed Navaroo, "Nonimmigrant Admissions to the United States: 2015," *Annual Flow Report*, last modified December, 2016, accessed January 18, 2017, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Nonimmigrant_Admissions_2015.pdf

[8] D'vera Cohn and Andrea Caumont, "10 demographic trends that are shaping the U.S. and the world," *Pew Research Center,* March 31, 2016, accessed March 18, 2017, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/ (emphasis added)

leadership that creates an environment where God's primary agency and people's partnering agency are practiced, and 5) leadership that guides community to continue a cycle of action and reflection.

Existing Approaches to Different Cultures

As cross-cultural encounters have increased, there have been different approaches toward people and cultures from different places. The first one is assimilation. In the United States, the concept of assimilation was pioneered by the Chicago School of Sociology in the 1920s and 1930s.[9] The classical assimilation theory claimed that acculturation and assimilation to the hosting country was an automatic process; it expected immigrants to be fully assimilated after not more than a couple of generations. Scholars portrayed assimilation as a unidirectional process.[10] However, this theory has since been widely critiqued, particularly in light of recent immigrant patterns. Studies have shown that assimilation occurs in a multi-directional process with varying degrees on a continuum.[11] Furthermore, with changing realities of migration patterns, scholars working in migrant studies have recently adapted a transnational perspective on immigrants' lives, considering not only how migrants assimilate into their hosting countries and maintain their homeland ties, but also how their transnational ties impact their local and global societies.[12]

Although there are many ways to critique the assimilation approach, one of the crucial issues is the dynamic of cultural hierarchy behind this approach. As Nam Chen Chan notes, "assimilation demonstrates harsh realities of protracted racial inequality and conflicts, and a resurgence of ethnicity."[13] Because assimilation theory assumes that migrants would eventually assimilate into the hosting country and its culture, there is no space for respecting and reflecting migrants' home cultures. In this setting, hosting cultures become the superior norm that migrants should assimilate into, while migrants' home cultures are conceived as something that needs to become civilized.

Another approach is multiculturalism. Multiculturalism appeared in public vocabulary in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when both Australia and Canada began to embrace this paradigm and declare their support for it.[14] In Canada, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau ushered in multiculturalism as official government policy in 1971 and oversaw its inscription into the Constitution in 1982. In Australia, the shift away from a whites-only immigration policy and increased Asian immigration led to official recognition in 1971 of the need to facilitate the creation of a *multicultural* society.[15] In this light, immigrants were encouraged to integrate rather than required to assimilate only.[16] In the

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[9] Nam-Chen Chan, "Interculturality in the local church: intercultural leadership effectiveness and the 'unified church identity' in Malaysian churches missionally engaged with Nepali migrants," (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2016), 31.

[10] See Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Cf. also W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

[11] See Richard D. Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). Min Zhou, "Segmented Assimilation: Issues, Controversies, and Recent Research on the New Second Generation," in *International Migration Review 31* (Winter 1997). Center for Migration Studies (U.S.), "Immigrant Adaptation and Native-Born Responses in the Making of America," *International Migration Review* Vol. 31 (Winter 1997). Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1996).

[12] See Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Transnationality and Religion in Immigrant Congregations," *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 23, no. 2 (2010). Thomas Faist, Margit Fauser, and Eveline Reisenauer, *Transnational Migration* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013). Peggy Levitt. & B. Nadya Jaworsky, "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends," *Annual Review of Sociology* 33, (2007): 129-156.

[13] Chan, 33.

[14] Rattansi, Ali. *Multiculturalism: A Very Short Introduction.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7.

[15] David Ley, "Multiculturalism: A Canadian Defense." In *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European Discourses, Policies and Practices*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 190-206.

[16] Ali, 8.

United States, the term *multiculturalism* entered into the national vocabulary in the early 1990s through the demands of ethnic minorities for cultural recognition in educational curricula.[17] However, there has also been a political and cultural trend that has assisted the development of multiculturalism, particularly through the Civil Rights movements in the 1960s.[18] Multiculturalism often has related to human rights such as the African Americans' fight against racial discrimination.[19] Throughout this history, the core of multiculturalism is a "celebration of cultural diversity and pluralism, and redressing the inequalities between majorities and minorities."[20]

Although multiculturalism respects the equality of cultures and minority rights (both of which assimilation approach failed to do), multiculturalism still could not provide a holistic approach for different cultures. Unlike its intentions, which were to celebrate cultural diversity and encourage integration instead of assimilation, multiculturalism has caused some side effects. Zygmunt Bauman states that the approach of multiculturalism leads people to become indifferent. He states, "When mutual tolerance combines with mutual indifference, cultural communities may live in close proximity but they will rarely speak to one another."[21] In other words, while multiculturalism respects cultural diversity and supports human rights for minorities, it neither leads to intentional engagement across differences nor creates mutual relationships with authentic integration. In this setting, some privileged ones might support and fight for the marginalized, but they will not maintain close relationships with members of marginalized communities.

Christian Response

Although migration is one of the most important contemporary issues, and there are growing voices of how to deal with different cultures and immigrants in politics, economics, education system and many other areas, it is rare to find Christian voices on this matter. The growing literature of migrant theology seems to be only for people who have experienced migration themselves, and this has never been a crucial voice for mainstream Christian culture. Gioacchino Campese argues that church studies have been silent about human migration.[22]

> Even the most recent studies in ecclesiology and reflections on the state of the church in Italy and the United States by well-known theologians are basically silent about immigration. They deal with the foundations of Christian ecclesiology and other very important current issues such as the crisis of the relations of the church with civil society and contemporary culture, the challenge of preaching the gospel in a secularized society, the massive exodus from the Roman Catholic church, the issue of authority within the church, and others. Nothing is being said about immigration; about the way this phenomenon is transforming our societies; about the cultural and religious diversity that it causes; its omnipresence in the political debate; and indeed in the lives of people, both native and immigrant.

In the same light, there is a serious lack of study and reflection on church leadership in multicultural settings. Since ecclesiology, which also includes authority and leadership in the church, does not reflect upon migration, it may be expected that there are not many resources on church leadership in multicultural settings. However, considering the reality of migration and its multiple

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[17] Chan, 35.

[18] Ali, 11.

[19] Ali, 11.

[20] Ali, 12.

[21] Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 59.

[22] Gioacchino Campese, "But I See That Somebody is Missing," in *Ecclesiology and Exclusion*, edited by Bazzell (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2012), 79.

impacts on ministry contexts, it is a somewhat sad and significant issue that there has been such a lack of studies and resources available for leadership in church.

Existing research and resources about church leadership in multicultural settings, which is still limited, are either from a missionary perspective (how Christian leaders can engage with people in foreign lands) or at best urging cultural sensitivity at home.[23] Chan concludes that the existing works on intercultural leadership are replete with illustrations of intercultural interactions that are influenced by the different value assumptions that underlie both the behavioral expressions and motivations of different cultures.[24] These references are somewhat helpful, but they do not demonstrate how local church leadership should engage with this reality practically.

Campese offers four possible reasons for the silence of current church studies on human migration, even though it is a crucial matter in contemporary ministry and daily life. First, he states that ecclesiology is often too inward looking, and it does not give enough attention and consideration to the real world to which it has been called to announce the good news. It often sounds like a theory disconnected from daily reality. Second, he points out that ecclesiology is often too *Western-centric*. It is not yet completely ready and willing to listen to voices, experiences, and reflections that come from outside, especially from outside cultures that are often considered as somehow inferior to Western civilizations. Third, Campese lays out the suspicion that ecclesiology sometimes follows the lead of non-exemplary church authorities who prefer to be silent or to speak as little as possible regarding controversial issues, because silence and diplomacy could buy the church political privileges and economic support. Lastly, he points out that ecclesiology often does not take into consideration the fact that God could be speaking to the churches through the "foreign" and "strange" voices of the immigrants.

Thus, the question we have to ask is how can we as leaders in Christian community be attentive of our cross-cultural context, beyond a narrow, western-centric perspective, beyond fear about sustaining our status when dealing with controversial issues, and listen to strange voices? In other words, how can we be faithful leaders in this changing cross-cultural context? Before moving to process this question, we must understand more about contemporary immigrants who we meet in our daily life.

A Closer Look at Immigrants from a Transnational Approach[25]

A transnational approach to migration has emerged and provided a more helpful understanding for contemporary migration. In order to engage the questions relating to leading a community of people from different cultures, I offer a closer look at contemporary immigrants through an analysis of transnationalism.

The term *transnational* appeared in the early 1970s to describe the proliferation of non-state institutions and governance regimes acting across boundaries.[26] Years later, transnationalism began to be used for migration studies by the anthropologists Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton in

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[23] Cf. Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting in Around the World.* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), Sherwood Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), Sherwood Lingenfelter, and Mayers Marvin, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, 2nd ed, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 2008), Jim Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008).

[24] Chan, 47.

[25] This section is adapted from Jin's research. Jinna Sil Lo Jin. *Ignored: A Practical Theology Inquiry of Korean-Speaking Young Adults in a Transnational Congregational Context.* (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2017), 83-85.

[26] Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1972).

1992.[27] Nina Glick Schiller and her colleagues insisted on significant differences in today's immigrants. They demonstrated that although immigrants of earlier years had broken off all social relations and cultural ties to their homeland, and thereby relocated themselves solely within the socio-cultural, economic, and political orbit of the receiving society, today's immigrants are composed of those whose networks, activities, and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies.

After that, transnationalism has become the most prevalent contemporary framework for approaching migration studies.[28] It has been integrated with economic, social, political, and even religious fields to understand and analyze migration and cross-cultural activities. Although the transnationalism discussion is vast in many areas, there are four important themes that will help to elucidate this study. First, researchers have highlighted the crucial role of technological development. Although there is some debate as to whether the transnational aspect of migration is a new phenomenon or not, scholars generally agree that technological development, including the Internet, accessible international calls, and international trips, reinforce or bring about a different level of transnationality for migrants. Second, the transnational approach brings about a different level of understanding about migration and migrants' lives. Compared to a traditional understanding of and approach to migration, which mainly focused on immigrants' assimilation to hosting countries, transnationalism tries to compensate for the limits of micro- and macro-levels of analysis. It also countervails against unidirectional assimilation thinking by demonstrating how migrants carry not only the culture of their new context but also their homeland culture. Third, although there are some transnational elements in the experiences of all migrants, the degree of connectivity between home and host countries—transnationality[29]—can vary depending on an individual's own given context with transnational activities and spaces. Fourth, although there is lack of research, it is clear that religions have played a crucial role in migrants' lives by providing transnational religious spaces. Studies agree that religious communities help migrants not only adapt and settle into the hosting country but also continue to make an impact back on their home country.[30] With her term *transnational religious space*, Olivia Sheringham with Brazilian migrants in England argues that religion's role is crucial not only for migrants themselves, but also for migrants' friends and families that do not migrate, but which send and receive people and remittances.[31]

From this brief summary of the transnational approach to migration, we learn that today's immigrants have instant and consistent links to their home country as technology develops while they assimilate into their hosting country. Additionally, their transnationality might be different

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[27] Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration," in *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered,"* eds. Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (New York, NY: New York Academy of Sciences, 1992).

[28] For more information on transnationalism, please see these authors: Thomas Faist, Margit Fauser, and Eveline Reisenauer, *Transnational Migration* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013). Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Peggy Levitt. & B. Nadya Jaworsky, "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends," *Annual Review of Sociology* 33, (2007): 129-156. Peggy Levitt & Nina Glick Schiller, "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society," *International Migration Review* 38, no. 3 (2004): 1002-1039. Alejandro Portes, "Introduction: The Debates and Significance of Immigrant Transnationalism," *Global Networks* 1, no. 3 (2001): 181-193. Steven Vertovec, "Cheap Calls: The Social Glue of Migrant Transnationalism." *Global Networks* 4, no. 2 (April 2004): 219-224.

[29] Thomas Faist, Margit Fauser, and Eveline Reisenauer, *Transnational Migration* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 15.

[30] See Ebaugh, Helen Rose. "Transnationality and Religion in Immigrant Congregations." *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 23, no. 2 (2010): 105-119.

[31] Olivia Sheringham, *Transnational Religious Spaces: Faith and the Brazilian Migration Experience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

depending on their background and context. Finally, immigrants are actually impacting both their hosting country and their home country, including those who do not migrate.

To concretize this understanding of contemporary immigrants, I would like to share a story of Korean-speaking young adults, in order to provide an example of contemporary immigrants with transnational links and to demonstrate their church current practices.

Story of Korean-speaking young adults: an example of people with transnational links[32]

Traditionally, studies on the emerging generation of immigrants have been focused on only English-speaking young people, who are often called the Second generation. In the same light, Korean immigrant studies have heavily focused on English-speaking Korean American younger generation for research and ministry programs. However, English-speaking Korean Americans are not the only younger generation in Korean immigrant church. There is another group of young people who have been ignored and forgotten both in scholarly research and ministry practice—Korean-speaking young people. In my dissertation, I conducted 404 surveys and forty in-depth interviews (twenty-seven Korean-speaking young adults and thirteen pastors who are serving Korean-speaking young adult ministry). Korean-speaking young adults are people who choose to attend a Korean-speaking ministry. This does not mean that they speak Korean only or they assimilate less than English-speaking young people. Their age of arrival in America vary. Five percent are people who were either born in the U.S. or arrived before the age of four, while another seventeen percent arrived between the ages of five and twelve. Often, people who were born in the U.S. are considered to be *second generation* and people who came to America during their early teens (usually before twelve) were considered to be the *1.5 generation*,[33] assuming that they will be further assimilated into American culture (especially in using English as their primary language) than the immigrant generation that came to America at a later age.[34] Another twenty-nine percent arrived between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, twenty-nine percent between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, and twenty percent at the age of twenty-five or above.

With this particular group of Korean-speaking young adults, I would like to indicate one of today's immigrants and their reality with transnational links. Furthermore, I would like to show how church community deal with them with the current practices of Korean immigrant churches.

Demographic Background

Historically, immigrants have been considered people who left their home and moved to a hosting country for good. However, there are growing numbers of migrants who do not stay permanently, but rather who hold temporary visas including travel, students, and work visas. According to the Department of Homeland Security, there were 76,638,236 nonimmigrants

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[32] This section is adapted from Jin's research. Jinna Sil Lo Jin. *Ignored: A Practical Theology Inquiry of Korean-Speaking Young Adults in a Transnational Congregational Context.* (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2017), 90-130.

[33] The Korean 1.5 generation has been generally used for people who born in Korea and came to America before the age of 12. Danico defined the Korean 1.5 generation as those "who are bicultural and bilingual and who immigrated to the United States during their formative years. They are socialized in both Korean and American cultures and concialized in both Korean and American cultures and consequently express both sets of cultural values and beliefs." Mary Yu Danico, *The 1.5 Generation,* 2.

[34] In traditional studies, people who are born or came in their early childhood are considered mainly as English-speaking people who would be involved in English ministry in their immigrant churches. However, this survey shows that nearly one quarter of the members of the Korean-speaking departments arrived before the age of 12, and that thus there might be a different way to categorize these young people than the traditional way of categorizing them as belonging to either the 1.5 or second generation.

admitted in 2015, and this number has since increased.[35] According to my research with 404 Korean-speaking young adults in Korean diaspora churches, the proportion of members who hold a stable resident status (such as naturalized citizenship or permanent residency) is only fifty-three percent. This means that almost half of these members hold a nonimmigrant short-term status. This demonstrates a changing demographic of Korean immigrants and their churches in America. Similarly, Im and Oh argue that the Korean immigrant church is facing a change in membership from legal permanent residents and naturalized citizens to nonimmigrant short-term residents.[36] They point out that these demographic changes make possible the Korean immigrant church's stable status and even numerical growth, despite the decreasing numbers of the English-speaking generation.[37]

Transnationality
Although these growing numbers of nonimmigrant visitors could be interpreted in many ways, one prominent perspective is their transnationality. Holding a temporary visa means connecting to both worlds—the land of their current residence with their temporary visa, and their homeland with their permanent citizenship. Yet their visa status is not the only factor that demonstrates their transnationality; they have familial connection in two worlds as well. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents stated that they have close family members in Korea, and sixty-six percent indicated that they have returned to visit Korea after coming to America. Furthermore, these visits back to their home country are not one-time events; the average number of visits back to Korea is around three, while about twenty percent of the respondents stated that they made more than seven visits.

Among the twenty-seven in-depth interviewees, ninety-six percent (26) explicitly reported that they or their family members had sent or received remittances, including money and other resources to or from Korea, and thirty percent (8) said they sent or received money on a regular basis. One hundred percent (27) of the in-depth interviewees reported that they regularly use Korean social networking services and media, and all of them additionally reported that they have contacted people in Korea through the Internet, telephone, and/or online messages. Furthermore, eighty-one percent (22) said that they contact people in Korea regularly (at least once a week) via the Internet.

This data clearly demonstrates the transnationality of Korean-speaking young adults; they are connected not only to American culture but to Korean culture as well.

Current Practices of Korean Immigrant Church towards Korean-speaking Young Adults
Although these young people are members of their own ethnic churches, the research indicates that Korean immigrant churches neither recognize them nor know how to be in community with them. Korean-speaking young adults express that they feel lonely in their church, although they appreciate their community's many benefits, including spiritual and social supports. In the study, ninety-five percent of the young adult interviewees reported that they did not have significant relationship with the older adults in the church. Among these, more than half stated that they did not know any adults in the church at all. Although there are some church-wide events, such

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[35] John Teke and Waleed Navaroo, "Nonimmigrant Admissions to the United States: 2015," *Annual Flow Report*, last modified December 2016, accessed January 18, 2017, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Nonimmigrant_Admissions_2015.pdf
[36] Chandler Im and John Jungho Oh, "Trends and Issues from the Korean Diaspora churches in the USA," in *Scattered and Gathered: A Global Compendium of Diaspora Missiology,* edited by Sadiri Joy Tira and Tetsunao Yamamori (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 316.
[37] Im and Oh, 316.

as special services or church-wide picnics, these seem to be insufficient for building relationships. One of the lay leaders described this segregation as a sad reality:

> I think there are many things we can learn from adults in the church. It is not easy to live with faith and we need to learn how to live from adults. Churches seem to consider us as people who fill the room. They do not have any interest in us. We are so disconnected, it's as if we go to different churches. Sometimes I feel we have a different faith than the adult congregation.

Not only are Korean-speaking young adults disconnected from the larger adult community, but also they were ignored. None of forty in-depth interviewees, including young adults and pastors in Korean-speaking young adult departments, said that they were involved decision-making processes in the church. They are not invited to make any decisions, whether for church-wide or adult departments, or even for their own Korean-speaking young adult departments. One pastor said,

> Members of the elder committee or any other decision making parties for Korean-speaking young adult departments do not have any understanding about Korean-speaking young adults and the department. That's why their meeting is just empty talk and their decisions are not relevant for the Korean-speaking young adult ministry.

One of young adults said,

> I have been involved in this church and Korean-speaking young adult department more than ten years now. And we have had eight pastors during those ten years. The interesting thing is that we are always informed that we will have a new pastor one or two weeks ahead of time. You know, when a senior pastor changes, they form search committee, we vote, and listen to sermons of some of the finalists. Therefore, how come when we have a new pastor for the Korean-speaking young adult department, we are just informed, "You will have a new pastor next week?" Is it because our offering is smaller than the adult congregation? In our Korean-speaking young adult department, we have enough people who have a professional job and tithe, so what is the problem?"

With this segregation, Korean-speaking young adults do not have relationships with adults, nor do they have any power to participate in decisions for church at large, or even their department. One of the pastor interviewees stated that most of adults considered Korean-speaking young adults as temporary members who would not stay at the church long enough. However, considering the characteristics of the young adults' life stage, including seeking further education and finding new jobs, Korean-speaking young adults are not different than any other ethic young adults. Furthermore, there are enough young adults who stay long enough to be considered members. The research indicates that a little less than half of Korean-speaking respondents (forty-four percent) reported that they had stayed in the current church more than three years (nineteen percent between three and six years, and twenty-five percent more than six years).

This reality demonstrates that neither the American church and theology at large, nor their own ethnic community of Korean immigrants, know how to deal with this context of people from different cultures. Given the sad fact that there is serious lack of research about and resources for Christian leadership in transnational context and lack of faithful leadership and ministry in their own

ethnic ministry context, I would like to demonstrate some features of a leader's role in this transnational context.

Leadership in a changing transnational context

With what we have learned from global migration, the U.S. context, and Korean-speaking young adults, this section provides five components of leadership in transnational context. 1) leadership that understands *missio Dei*, 2) leadership that listens to context, 3) leadership that respects human dignity and agency, 4) leadership that creates an environment where God's primary agency and people's partnering agency are practiced, and 5) leadership that guides a community to continue a cycle of action-reflection. Although these are all important pieces for any Christian leadership in general, they are even more crucial in this changing transnational context. In this light, this section will explore each piece with implications for a transnational context.

Leadership That Understands the Missio Dei

The most crucial essence of Christian leadership is to understand who God is and who his people are. This does not change whether in Asian, Western, or African contexts. The church is not a just any gathering of people; it is an assembly of God's people who are called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28) in his name (John 14:13).[38] Thus the Christian community is to seek to participate in God's work. In other words, it is not the leaders' or the church's work to come out with plans and actions; rather it is God's work, which God has initiated and continues to sustain. God has sent his Son, his Spirit, and his people to be part of God's mission—the *Missio Dei*.[39]

Missio Dei brings some important implications for Christian leaders, particularly about power and authority. *Missio Dei* demonstrates that God is the one who initiates, continues, and completes his redemptive work, and the church is called to be part of that work. Thus that absolute power and authority belong to God, not to leaders. In this foundation, the leader's role is not exercising their power and authority for the sake of initiating or making decisions to tell people what to do, but to make God's power and work more explicit so that God's community can understand their calling. Authoritarian and hierarchical leadership cannot make God's power visible. Rather, it forces people of the community serve and follow leader's power and will.

Although this foundation of *Missio Dei* is important to every Christian community, it is even more crucial in a community with different ethnic groups and cultures. In cross-cultural settings, there is often an invisible (or even a visible) social hierarchy based on ethnicity, culture, and socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, historical narratives of mission as giving to people in need based on misunderstanding of a Western, colonial, and unilateral perspective still exist.[40] In this context, God's mission is practiced wrongly, and people from different cultures are expected to possibly follow leaders or people from the majority, assuming power and authority belong to them.

Furthermore, in a changing transnational context where different cultures encounter one another, people experience many changes and challenges. Often, leaders try to control people with their power, either by attempting to keep their tradition or creating new practices.[41] Alan Roxburgh points out that in both ways, the basic drive is to control the anxiety and ambiguity of transition by

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[38] Chap Clark, "Introduction," in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, edited by Chap Clark, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic), 1.

[39] For *Missio Dei,* see David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991) and Craig Van Gelder, *Missional Church in Context* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2007), 237.

[40] Gioacchino Campese, "Theologies of Migration: Present and Future Perspectives." In *Migration als Ort der Theologie*, edited by Tobias Kefller, (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2014), 180.

[41] Alan Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition*, (Eagle, Idaho: Allelon Publishing, 2006), 86-87.

escaping it as quickly as possible.[42] However, the first, most crucial work of leadership is not to control but to discern God, the primary agent of his ongoing mission. So that community can find their way to participate in and contribute to God's kingdom in the midst of changes.

Repeatedly, it is crucial to understand and practice *Missio Dei,* especially in a changing and cross-cultural context. Otherwise anxiety, fear, and the inconveniences that result from facing different cultures would easily lead leaders and community to seek to obtain power to control, instead of participating in God's reign and mission.

Leadership That Listens To Context

In a changing transnational context, Christian leadership requires listening to the context carefully. If we believe that God is the initiator and main agent of his ongoing redemptive mission, we come to admit that God has started his work and is already working even in our own context. This is because "God does not act anywhere and everywhere, but in a concrete place."[43] Mark Lau Branson also argues, "Observing God's current, local initiatives is a key matter for organizational imagination and leadership."[44] Thus, the given context, including people and place, is where leaders and communities need to pay serious attention in order to learn what is going on and what God is up to. Unless we learn and discern what God is doing in the context, it is almost impossible to discern what part God is calling us to play and how we may participate in his work. In this light, taking the context seriously by listening and observing implies our humble action demonstrating that our work and ministry is not for serving only ourselves, but for participating and contributing to God's kingdom by putting God's agenda first.

Listening and understanding context means taking seriously both the micro- and macro-levels of context. It requires attentively listening, observing, and understanding people and places in connection with their culture, narratives, and experiences. It also pays serious attention what is going on at wider levels (e.g., national and international) with issues and narratives related to the community. Often, the social sciences, including cultural studies, offer great help for understanding context. Chap Clark argues that whatever the source of these data sets, anything that speaks into the human condition such that believers can receive a deeper and more thorough understanding of the context in which the Gospel is to be lived out is an important part of understanding both context and God.[45]

Although understanding context is important in any setting, it is a crucial even in our contemporary church context with growing numbers of people from different cultures. Often, theology is disconnected from this reality, which introduces a barrier to God's work instead of offering support. As Campese points out, the lack of attention of current church studies to the context results in silence and ignorance of human migration; this disconnectedness from daily life marginalizes many precious and crucial people of God.[46] However, mainstream North American Christianity is not alone in its disconnectedness from context. As we see with the case of Korean-speaking young adults, even among minority communities, there are people who are easily forgotten when community do not accept their changing context as a place where God works.

Leadership That Respects Human Dignity and Agency

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[42] Roxburgh, *The Sky is Falling*, 86-87.

[43] Gerhard Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church*?, trans. Linda Maloney, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press: 1999), vii.

[44] Mark Lau Branson and Juan Francisco Martinez, "A Practical Theology of Leadership with International Voices," *Journal of Religious Leadership*, 10(2) (2011): 46.

[45] Chap Clark, "Youth Ministry as Practical Theology," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 7(1) (2008): 17.

[46] Campese, "But I See That Somebody is Missing," 79.

Leadership in a changing transnational context should respects human dignity and agency. While affirming God's primary agency, we need to understand God's intention to call all of his people (not just leaders) to be agents of his mission. In this claim, there are two important implications to be recognized. One is human dignity based on the *Imago Dei*. Beyond state and nation, beyond ethnicity and culture, and beyond gender and age, human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9). This is God's intention and a nonnegotiable truth for human identity. The other one is human agency. Because human beings are created in God's image and likeness, they have capacity as subjects and agents who are able to reflect, discern, and respond.[47]

In this light, people are important beings who have been created in God's image and have the capacity to do God's work. God has not called only leaders and pastors to be partners in his work. God has called ordinary people as well. He works and speaks through his people. Thus participating God's ongoing redemptive work requires respect for human beings as valuable in themselves, with an inherent capacity to do God's work. In other words, a leader's role in the Christian community is to treat that community's people as subjects of mission, not objects.

This is even more crucial in a context where different cultures encounter because people from different cultures faced discrimination and dehumanization in many different ways. Scholars point out that even language—which includes common terms like *refugee, migrant, forced migrant, immigrants, undocumented, internally displaced person,* and *alien*—can traffic in such limited labels which carry political, legal, and social consequences, but do not define human dignity.[48] Also, people from different cultures can doubt their capacity and ability due to language barriers, cultural clumsiness, or a poor financial background. Furthermore, in light of discrimination and dehumanization, immigrants are easily treated as objects of mission in Christian contexts as well. Historically, churches have provided help and resources to immigrants who are minority and marginalized people in need. In this context, immigrants easily become objects, such that it becomes difficult even to imagine that God can speak through them. Thus, in a changing transnational context with immigrants, leadership should intentionally and consistently give reminders of human dignity and subjectivity, contrary to our wrong and ubiquitous assumption that God would not be speaking to the churches through the "foreign" and "strange" voices of the immigrants.[49]

Leadership That Creates an Environment to Link God's Primary Agency and People's Partnering Agency

As many scholars have pointed out, a leader is not a person who tells people what to do. Rather, the role of the leader is to create an environment. Roxburgh and Romanuk state that the work of leadership is the cultivation of an environment that releases the missional imagination of God's ordinary people.[50] In the same light, van Gelder and Zscheile argue that leaders should create the conditions under which people can come together in shared life to discover their participation in God's mission.[51] Mark Lau Branson and Juan Martinez write that leadership is about shaping learning environments and connecting them with diverse resources so that a social group can engage

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[47] Thomas H Groome, *Sharing Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 8.

[48] Daniel G. Groody, "Crossing the Divine: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," *Theological Studies* 70, (2009): 642-643. And Roger Zetter, "Labeling Refugees: The Forming and Transforming of a Bureaucratic Identity," *Journal of Refugee Studies 4*, (1991): 39–62, at 40.

[49] Campese, "But I See That Somebody is Missing," 81.

[50] Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World,* (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 29.

[51] Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile, *The Missional Church In Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011), 156.

in change.[52] Scott Cormode uses the term *holding environment* to refer to the environment that leaders should cultivate.[53]

Creating this kind of environment is crucial work in a changing transnational context for at least three reasons. First, we simply do not know what to do with this changing context. On the one hand, this is a new context we have never experienced before. We are encountering many different cultures, and people are now not only assimilating into their hosting culture but consistently keeping their ties to their home cultures. These are adaptive changes, not technical problems. There are no simple answers. It takes a community and an environment to identify the challenges and discern solutions.[54] On the other hand, in this adaptive change, the truth that God is the initiator and primary agent does not change. Thus, in order to learn how to respond to a changing transnational context for participating in God's kingdom, the community needs an environment where they can discern God and his call together through listening to the Holy Spirit and to one another. By paying attention to God and people in the community of believers, God can speak through each one of us, and the church can faithfully participate in and contribute to God's kingdom.

Second, people need a safe holding environment that make possible experiments in communal responses. In seeking God's will with adaptive challenges, a next faithful step can come about only through experiments. Mark Lau Branson writes, "Experiments help people check their reading of the circumstances and their discernment of the Spirit as they seek to enter into what God is doing on the ground."[55] With different cultures, expectations, and stories encounter, trying out without knowing the answer is risky work. It takes courage, support, and faith to try out new ideas and practices, with a willingness to fail. It takes an environment and a community, which provides enough safety to try new things, with the ever-present possibility of failure.

Third, it is because people need community to help them to face floating emotions as discerning God's will with taking risks of experiments of new things. The process of discerning God, listening to each other, and taking new experiments brings different emotions. There should be joy and celebration when communities sense their contributions to God's kingdom. However, there are also negative emotions that community will face when they do not know and they fail. One of them is fear. Although people frame their issues in different ways, the key problem is often fear.[56] Fear surely hinders people from listening, discerning, and experimenting. In addition to fear, Scott Cormode demonstrates that people in the process of adaptive change experience a grief process as they consider parts of the process as a loss.[57] In other words, faced with different cultures and expectations and processing changes while attempting to discern God's presence brings unexpected and often difficult feelings. Therefore, constructing an environment where people feel safe enough to express and process is one of the crucial role of leadership in a transnational context.

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[52] Branson and Martinez, "A Practical Theology of Leadership with International Voices," 27.

[53] "A holding environment is a psychological space that is both safe and uncomfortable." Cormode defined holding environment is uncomfortable enough that a person cannot avoid the problem, but safe enough that the person can experiment with a new way of being. Scott Cormode, "Constructing a Holding Environment," *The Next Faithful Step,* http://leadership.fuller.edu/Leadership/Resources/Part_4-Leading_for_Transformative_Change/III__Constructing_a_Holding_Environment.aspx

[54] For adoptive challenges and technical problems, please see Ronald Heifetz's works: *Leadership on the Line,* (Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press, 2002) and *Leadership without Easy Answers,* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994).

[55] Mark Lau Branson, "Perspectives from the Missional Conversation," *Starting Missional Churches: Life with God in the Neighborhood,* edited by Mark Lau Branson and Nicholas Warnes, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 35.

[56] Scott Cormode, *Making Spiritual Sense: Christian Leaders as Spiritual Interpreters*, (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013), xi.

[57] Cormode, "Constructing a Holding Environment."

Leadership That Guides Communities to Continue a Cycle of Action and Reflection

Creating an environment to discern God's work and experiment new practices is not the end of a leader's role. Within such an environment, leader should guide community to be involved a continuous cycle of action and reflection. Mark Lau Branson explains this cycle:
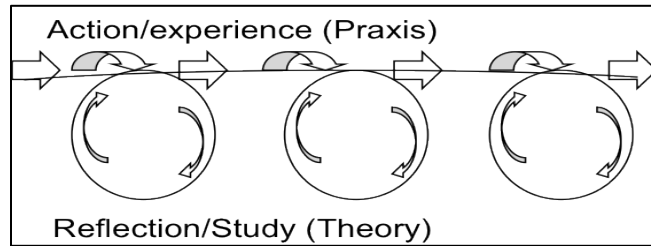
> Epistemology is not fundamentally a matter of amassing data—information—but requires a continuous cycling of action and reflection…. As individuals and as groups, we engage our environment (praxis); then we step back and reflect on ourselves, our environment, and on available theories and information; then we reengage, based on a new understanding of ourselves and our context. This is learning—this is knowledge—the action-reflection cycle that defines praxis-theory-praxis.[58]

Continuous engagement with the action-reflection cycle matters because it brings about real learning, which would result in a change in actions. Traditional assumptions about learning—that it is primarily a matter of receiving and gathering information—do not necessarily bring about true learning and changed behavior. As Roxburgh states, merely having a good idea, even a brilliant one, does not mean that it will be accepted or change the way people think, work, or act, because our habits are so strong.[59] Changes require the continuous work of action-reflection.

In the midst of the cycle of action-reflection, not only self-reflection but also group reflections are needed, which allow for listening and sharing with community. It is because one learns only from experience that one reflects upon and articulates.[60] In this conversation with action-reflection, people can listen and learn about story, history, different cultures, practices, expectations, accomplishments and frustrations, which all bring insights and signs of how God is at work in their context. In other words, this action-reflection process in community would finally guide the community to discover God's activity and to discern how and what to join his work practically.

This action-reflection cycle with community is even more crucial in a changing transnational context. With technological development and accessible transportation, immigrants have stronger ties with their home centuries, even as they remain in their hosting countries. In other words, immigrants are not only carrying their culture and practices, but their cultures are also reinforced and reshaped by instant and consistent contact with their home culture through Internet, phone, mass media, and even visits. This means that immigrants are potentially in a state of flux between two nations. Although everyone in general is living in a changing world, immigrants who are living in two worlds experience even more changes. In this continuously changing and negotiating state of

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[58] Branson and Martinez, "A Practical Theology of Leadership with International Voices," 32.

[59] Alan Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2009), 138.

[60] Mark Lau Branson, "Practical Theology and Multicultural Initiatives," *Churches, Cultures & Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities,* by Mark Lau Branson and Juan Martinez, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 42.

interacting with two cultures, people from different cultures and groups in a transnational context need a community and leadership that will guide them into an action-reflection cycle, in order to understand what God is up to in the midst of their encountering, learning, negotiating, and being challenged by different cultures.

Conclusion: Whose Power Empowers People?

Human migration is a crucial phenomenon, which impacts not only upon the macro level but also micro level of our context, including our daily lives. As shown in the data above concerning the growing numbers of immigrants, this is not someone else's story but our story at this very time and in this very place. This change of context with people from different cultures brings challenges and complexities for leadership. Furthermore, with technological development and accessible transportation, contemporary immigrants have strong links to their home country as well as hosting country. This is the essence of transnationality, and this entails another layer of complexity for leaders.

Among different attempts to deal with these intercultural relations, Christian churches have been passive or even silent. Although there are a few examples of research that deals with this matter, they are usually about providing resources and supports to immigrants who are in need, or at best empowering them. However, even in this Christian perspective, the bottom line is about power. Western Christianity has postured and pretended as if it has power. This is a simultaneously scary and sad assumption that Western Christianity has both consciously and unconsciously adopted. This assumption lead Western Christianity to think and practice their power to help, support, and empower immigrants, as if the latter were only objects of mission and ministry.

However, we must pause and rethink our assumption and behavior. Although there is nothing wrong with helping people in need, what are the unspoken implications of the practices that Western churches are doing toward immigrants? Whose power helps and empowers people? Are we expecting them to become like us because our culture is a norm (assimilation)? Are we just giving whatever they need from distance (multiculturalism)? Or are we willing to be in close community with them, believing they are one of us? Do we believe that God is the primary agent of mission, and that it is his power that empowers peoples, both immigrants and natives? Are we willing to listen to and accept immigrants as God's agents and subjects, who can speak and work God's will?

If we accept God as the primary agent, and immigrants and the marginalized as God's agents, we can see more clearly that it is God's power that empowers people, and that we need mutuality within our community. In this light, a leader's role is crucial in this changing transnational context. In order to lead a community that participates in God's work in contexts with different cultures with mutuality, leaders must understand the *Missio Dei,* listen to the context, respect human dignity and agency, create an environment where God's primary agency and people's partnering agency are practiced, and guide their community to continue a cycle of action and reflection.

Unanswered Questions

This article has mainly focused on power matters, which is of the essence in leadership among different cultures. However, there are still many unanswered questions to address for leadership in this particular context. In particular, due to a serious lack of study on leadership in contexts with people from different cultures (despite of growing numbers of immigrants), this changing context and its leadership need significant and sustained attention. Although there are so many unanswered questions, I would like to suggest three areas which need to be addressed in further studies.

One of the most important unanswered questions in this article concerns leadership that deals with different types of migration. In this contemporary moment, there are many different types

of human migrations along a spectrum from forced to voluntarily migration. There are also people with and without regular legal documents, as well as different types of visa status. Depending on their background, people from different cultures experience different models of transnationality, which vary in their degree of connectivity between home and host countries.

Another unanswered question concerns leadership for younger generation of immigrants. Traditionally, emerging generations of immigrants have been considered as more American, those who have already assimilated or will assimilate into American culture. However, recent research indicates that younger generations will also maintain transnational links with both countries. Often immigrants and their children's generation experience conflict due to the different expectations of both cultures. However, there are not enough resources for leadership in this arena.

Lastly, although this article points toward the ultimate goal of community, which is discerning and joining God's mission, it has not fully articulated the nature of leadership that seeks peace as a community in the midst of experimentation. When different cultures encounter one another, it is not easy to build a community. Different expectations, norms, ways of communication, and behaviors emerge as different cultures engage. There are unspoken cultural hierarchies, power struggles, conflicts, histories, and narratives that interact, both negatively and positively. All of these present challenges for leaders in building up the community as one body. Thus, further studies are required on leadership toward reconciliation and peace in cross-cultural settings.

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