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BOOK REVIEWS

Joining the Choir: Religious Membership and Social Trust Among Transnational Ghanaians, by NICOLETTE D. MANGLOS-WEBER. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018, 240 pp.; \$74.00 (hardcover).

Nicolette D. Manglos-Weber's *Joining the Choir* is about how trust works in a transnational Ghanaian evangelical community, Evangel Ministries, between Chicago and Accra. The title is drawn from the opening anecdote in which Manglos-Weber speaks to a "colleague" at church. They are both in the choir together, and they talk about the difficulties of the interviewee's life in Chicago as someone on leave from graduate school and driving a taxi. This anecdote showcases Manglos-Weber's positionality as an ethnographer: she is among the trusted, a status that she deftly maneuvers within throughout the book. In so doing, *Joining the Choir* is not only about transnational migrants between Ghana and the United States and the religious infrastructure by which social networks among them are developed. Following Manglos-Weber on her research journey, it is also about the intellectual discipline that is required to conduct research in networks where only insiders are trusted.

With the research question focused on how trust works, Manglos-Weber takes the reader on a very engaging sociological journey that moves from in-group competition to spiritual questions about how faith, as a practice in a realm that is more-than-material, brings people together. The impetus that draws Ghanaians to the United States, she establishes from the outset, is aspiration; they are, as she terms them, "aspirational migrants." Thus, a culture of competition

pervades their communities, both in terms of emphasizing personal economic successes in social interactions and differentiation from the racial formations of African Americans in the city. Evangel Ministries connects this competitive community as a transnational hub, especially for young Ghanaians who aspire toward class advancement through migration. Pentecostal religion gives them a family and a sense of belonging, sometimes a holding zone for temporary setbacks where they can lay claim to a future hope of success. In this way, the community generates social trust by appealing to the aspirations of Ghanaians in their midst, presenting them with personal examples and public advertisements of success as they move as a community toward that future. Indeed, much as Manglos-Weber's account of Ghanaians in Chicago can feel functionalist, the vivid ethnographic scenes of charismatic worship and inspirational preaching lead to a final chapter that moves beyond functionalism and gestures to the possibility of faith as an ontological state, a site of being where trust is more than a mechanism.

Locating the ethnography in the sociological literature on transnational religion, Manglos-Weber also attempts to engage sociological work that concerns how a church like Evangel Ministries might function to assimilate Ghanaians into American society, drawing frequently on "new religious economics" approaches that critique secularization theories. This theoretical move makes sense because the Ghanaians she engages are aspirational, and certainly, the aspiration to move into a permanent professional class in Chicago idealizes a future of assimilation. But this focus leaves the tantalizing element of race less examined, a topic that begs further exploration. Like those from the West Indies that Nancy Foner studied over

a decade ago, Manglos-Weber's Ghanaians differentiate themselves from the racial formations of blackness in Chicago's urban politics. There is room here for engagement, then, with insights like Aldon Morris's path-breaking argument in *The Scholar Denied*: that the liberal assimilationism popularized by the Chicago School, and mythologized as the roots of sociology, is in fact predated by W.E.B. DuBois's analysis of the color line and double consciousness, which is itself foundational to the conventions of sociological research. In other words, the analysis could have benefited from further examination of how transnational religiosity complicates racial formations in the United States.

A potential avenue for future research building on Manglos-Weber's ethnographically rich study of transnational Ghanaians in Chicago may engage the question of global Pentecostalism. Religious membership in Evangel Ministries breeds social trust through the theological and cosmological dimensions of religiosity, but the intriguing part of this religion, in particular, is that it is *Pentecostalism*, a charismatic form of worship that has seized the attention of anthropologists of Christianity and interreligious theologians alike, including those who, like Charles Taylor, theorize that Pentecostal ecstasies are the future of the postsecular in a secular age. But is it the ecstasy that produces the social capital, or is it a common transnational identity, or is it complicated? How do we speak of sociological mechanisms when the mechanics may be supernatural? What is the relationship between racial formations and what William James calls the varieties of religious experience? These animating questions are raised as Manglos-Weber brings us into her exciting case study, gesturing toward possibilities in the sociology of religion that move such studies beyond inquiries into assimilation.

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The Anglican Communion at a Crossroads: The Crises of a Global Church, by CHRISTOPHER CRAIG BRITTAI and ANDREW McKINNON. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018, 264 pp.; \$29.95 (paper).

The clue is in the title: crises. This is not an institution that has been known, or likely will ever be known, for its stability and cohesion. A single crisis can never be enough to feed what seems to be its voracious appetite for controversy. But what, the reader of this book may rightly wonder, could ever be different? The formulation itself of an "Anglican Communion" is historical fiction—a quasi-entity pasted over countries with different histories, cultures, and ways of believing and behaving that speak to vastly varied constituencies. Anglican is a term differently understood, as might be "communion." So what, one might ask, is the point of such an institution?

What indeed, and that question is much of what motivated Christopher Craig Brittain and Andrew McKinnon to conduct research and write the book as the main output. The amount of research is impressive, ranging from interviews with bishops and lay people to textual analysis. Through technologies such as Skype, the authors were able to include people in remote locations as well as urban contexts.

One of its most important contributions is to help the reader see that what lies behind and contributes to the Communion's struggles and dissent is not a simple matter of theological differences, but the result of a long and often tumultuous history, the impact of globalization, the effects of technology, and the identities imagined by its members. Is the Communion a big tent? A family? The headline-grabbing issues that occasionally dominate the media's view of the Communion are not the real issues at all, but symptomatic of deeper tensions that elude a simple soundbite.

The concept of "presenting symbol" is a powerful tool used by the authors to