What factors shape the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries in London? An exploration of missional formation in 1st and 2nd generation missionaries at a London based mission organisation.

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1. Introduction

This study aims to identify the theological and cultural factors that shape the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries who work for a London-based mission organisation and explore how these factors impact the missional formation of first- and second-generation missionaries. Practical applications will then be proposed to strengthen the missional formation of African and non-African Christians in London.

First, **Chapter 2** reviews existing literature to place this study within the context of African missional identity, giving a brief overview of African diaspora Churches in Britain, African Pentecostalism and generational complexities within the diaspora.

Chapter 3 then outlines the methodology and methods of this study, which adopts a qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews to gather data from five participants.

Chapters 4-6 explore the key cultural and theological factors that shape participants' missional identity: Gospel Clarity and Theological Formation; Diasporic Identity and Contextualisation; then Community, Discipleship, and Holistic Mission.

Chapter 7 concludes with an overview of the key factors that shape the missional identity of African Diaspora missionaries, offering practical applications to strengthen the missional formation of Christians in London as they engage in effective cross-cultural urban mission.

1.1 Defining Terms

Based on the Harvard definition, a **first-generation** immigrant is a person born outside of the host country, and a **second-generation** immigrant is born in the host country to parents who were born overseas.[1]

[1] 'First and Second Generation – The Immigration Initiative at Harvard', 30 January 2021, https://immigrationinitiative.harvard.edu/topic/first-and-second-generation/.

Missional identity will be used to refer to one's understanding of the nature of God's mission in the world, and one's understanding of how God's people (individually and corporately) are to engage in God's mission within their cultural context.

Pentecostal and ***Pentecostalism*** will be used to refer to the movements that identify as Pentecostal within the African diaspora that emphasise the work and experience of the Holy Spirit.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As a result of significant international migration, London is home to communities from all over the world,[2] where *ends of the earth* people groups are not only accessible locally but also connected through transnational networks that can extend the gospel's impact to their countries of origin.[3] This presents a unique opportunity for Christians in London to reach the nations on their doorstep whilst also re-evangelising a British population increasingly shaped by secularism and religious decline.[4]

The exponential growth of Christianity across Africa,[5] coupled with a rise in international migration,[6] has led to the *diasporisation* of African Christianity. Over the past six decades African migration to Britain has grown significantly and as a result, London is home to vibrant African Christian communities. This has had a profound impact on the city's ecclesial and missional landscape, as 60% of church attendance is now made up of people of African heritage.[7] The presence of African Christians in London is not incidental; throughout human history, God has worked through migration to fulfil his redemptive purposes.[8]

Whilst it has been observed that many Africans embody the 'missionaryhood' of all believers,[9] naturally sharing their faith in everyday life, only a minority of African

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[2] Veronica Tuffrey, 'Recent Migration Trends in the UK and London', *London Data Store*, 30 January 2025, https://data.london.gov.uk/blog/recent-migration-trends-in-the-uk-and-london/.

[3] Charles Rijnhart, 'Global Gateway Cities and the Opportunity for Mission', *Lausanne Global Analysis* 9, no. 6 (2020): 1-2.

[4] Jim Memory, *Europe 2021: A Missiological Report* (European Christian Mission, 2021), 23-25.

[5] For a statistical analysis see: Gina A Zurlo and Todd M Johnson, 'Is Christianity Shrinking or Shifting?', *Lausanne Global Analysis* 10, no. 2 (2021): 1–2.

[6] The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has reported that in 2020 there were 19.5 million Africans living overseas, many of whom have migrated to Europe: International Organization for Migration, *World Migration Report 2020*, 61.

[7] Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom: Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church* (SCM Press, 2020), chap. 4, https://www.perlego.com/book/1456568.

[8] For a Biblical understanding of diaspora missiology see: Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (2014).

[9] Harvey C. Kwiyani, 'Africa Bears Witness', in *Africa Bears Witness: Mission Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century*, ed. Harvey C. Kwiyani (Langham Global Library, 2024), chap. 1, https://www.perlego.com/book/4350717.

Christians have been sent to Europe as a missionary by an African mission agency.[10] In recent years, European mission organisations have started to adapt their strategies to reflect the importance of diaspora missions,[11] but African diaspora Christians remain underrepresented in these organisations. However, this evolving context presents an opportunity to explore how mission is understood and practiced within the African diaspora, particularly amongst those who engage in cross-cultural urban mission in a London-based mission organisation.

Therefore, the first aim of this study is to identify the theological and cultural factors that shape the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries who work for a London-based mission organisation, which necessitates navigating divergent ecclesial, theological and cultural contexts. While existing literature has focussed on missional identity through the lens of African diaspora churches, there is a noticeable gap in understanding the missional identity of those whose formation is in diverse ecclesial and cultural contexts, or who work in a London-based mission organisation. The second aim of this study is to explore how these factors differ between the first and second generations. The complex cultural hybridity that second-generation Africans experience has a profound impact on their missional identity, but the factors that contribute to their missional formation have not yet been sufficiently addressed. This literature review intends to place this study within existing research on African missional identity, giving a brief overview of African diaspora Churches in Britain, African Pentecostalism, and generational complexities within the diaspora.

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[10] Harvey C. Kwiyani, 'African Christians and Missionaries in Europe', in *Africa Bears Witness: Mission Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century*, ed. Harvey C. Kwiyani (Langham Global Library, 2024), chap. 15, https://www.perlego.com/book/4350717.

[11] Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, 'World Christianity in Western Europe: Foundational Perspectives', in *World Christianity in Western Europe: Diasporic Identity, Narratives and Missiology*, ed. Israel Oluwole Olofinjana (Regnum Books International, 2020), 15.

2.2 African Missional Identity

The African religious identity has been extensively studied and the contributions of John Mbiti,[12] Laurenti Magesa,[13] Kwame Bediako[14] and Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator[15] have been drawn on throughout this study to provide relevant context for the missional formation of participants. However, the focus of this literature review will be on the formation of African missional identity in the diaspora.

David Bosch, who is widely regarded as a leading voice in contemporary missiology, emphasises the missional identity of the Church in his seminal work *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission:*

> Mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It [is] thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.[16]

Whilst he doesn't refer to the concept of *missional identity* explicitly, Bosch defines mission as participation in the mission of the Trinitarian God (*missio Dei*), who sends his church into the world to fulfil his redemptive purposes. Michael Goheen has applied Bosch's missiology to define the missional identity of the church as follows: i) its understanding of the nature of God's mission in the world, and ii) its understanding of how God's people are to participate in God's mission in relation to the cultural context they inhabit.[17] Therefore, it is unsurprising that a range of missiological emphases and expressions have resulted from interpreting the *missio Dei* in diverse ecclesial and cultural contexts.[18] Harvey Kwiyani argues that African mission theology must disconnect

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[12] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 2nd edn (Heinemann, 1990).

[13] Laurenti Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (Orbis Books, 2013).

[14] Kwame Bediako in Tim Hartman, *Kwame Bediako: African Theology for a World Christianity* (Langham Global Library, 2021).

[15] Agbonkhianmeghe. E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist* (Orbis Books, 2018).

[16] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, Twentieth anniversary ed. (Orbis Books, 2011), 390.

[17] Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Baker Publishing Group, 2011), 18.

[18] For example, see Stephen B. Bevans et al., *The Mission of the Church: Five Views in Conversation*, ed. Craig Ott (Baker Academic, 2016), https://www.perlego.com/book/1277650.

the concept of the *missio Dei* from traditional Western discourses,[19] basing his interpretation of the *missio Dei on* the Malawian concept of *umunthu*, which is primarily about *humanising* others. Therefore, he proposes that a *holistic* understanding of salvation must shape the African missional identity.[20] David Zac Niringiye offers a Biblical narrative approach to missional identity, calling the church to find its place in the story of God's redemptive history.[21] It is through this Biblical lens that Niringiye explores the identity of the Church in Africa as communities of faith, hope, and love.

In *World Christianity in Western Europe: Diasporic Identity, Narratives & Missiology,* Israel Olofinjana examines the importance of the African identity in shaping missional identity in Europe, questioning whether Africans in the diaspora ought to assimilate and give up their African culture, or segregate to maintain their African identity.[22] Olofinjana proposes an *African British Theology* that would empower the African identity, enabling Africans to meaningfully contribute to mission in the British context. However, he also recognises that the task of refining and applying such a theology is "far from over."[23] Similarly, Kwiyani has reiterated that belonging to God's kingdom should never mean the loss of one's cultural identity.[24]

This study aims to contribute to existing literature by examining the missional identity of African missionaries who have been shaped in multiple, often divergent theological and cultural contexts. Niringiye's robust missional ecclesiology, Kwiyani's holistic understanding of the *missio Dei*, as well as Kwiyani and Olofinjana's assertion that the African identity is essential for effective mission engagement will provide invaluable conversation partners in this study.

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[19] Kwiyani, 'Africa Bears Witness', chap. 1.

[20] Ibid

[21] David Zac Niringiye, *The Church: God's Pilgrim People* (Langham Global Library, 2016), chap. 1, https://www.perlego.com/book/562753.

[22] Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, 'Towards an African British Theology and Mission', in *World Christianity in Western Europe: Diasporic Identity, Narratives and Missiology*, ed. Israel Oluwole Olofinjana (Regnum Books International, 2020), 126, https://www.perlego.com/book/2802286.

[23] Ibid, 132.

[24] Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom*, chap. 1.

2.3 African Diaspora Churches in Britain

African diaspora Churches in Britain play a pivotal role in forming the missional identity of their members and equipping them to engage in all forms of cross-cultural mission in the British context. Each participant in this study has belonged to an African diaspora church in London, therefore, an overview of the literature relating to African diaspora churches in the British context is outlined below.

In *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West*, Jehu Hanciles highlights the importance of African Christian migration and its vital role in galvanising contemporary non-Western missionary movements around the world.[25] Whilst he focuses on African diaspora churches in the United States, his insights have been foundational in catalysing further research. Chigor Chike also gave prominence to African Diaspora Christianity in Britain in *African Christianity in Britain: Diaspora, Doctrines and Dialogue,* focusing on their doctrine and mission practice in the diaspora, and how they were impacted by the pressures of British culture and society.[26] However, Chike does not deal with how their doctrinal emphases relate to their missional identity in the diaspora.

The strong church-planting impulse of many African diaspora missionaries is demonstrated by its dominance in academic literature. For example, Olofinjana has provided a histography of African diaspora churches and their emergence in Britain, through the lens of *reverse mission:* that people from former mission fields are now contributing to mission in Europe and North America.[27] Subsequently, he has written on how the explosive growth of Christianity on the African continent has led a rise in African church plants in Britain, highlighting the successes and challenges faced by African missionaries.[28] Olofinjana has noted three types of African churches in Britain, all of which have varied typologies, ecclesiologies, and approaches to mission: African

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[25] Jehu Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Orbis Books, 2008).

[26] Chigor Chike, *African Christianity in Britain: Diaspora, Doctrines and Dialogue* (AuthorHouse, 2007), 4-5.

[27] Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, *Reverse in Ministry and Missions: Africans in the Dark Continent of Europe; an Historical Study of African Churches in Europe* (AuthorHouse, 2010).

[28] Olofinjana, 'World Christianity in Western Europe', 16.

Initiated Churches (AICs), African Newer Pentecostal Churches, and African congregations within historic churches[29] Their missional approaches, particularly of planting churches, have had varied success, with African diaspora churches often being criticised for their lack of contextualisation and evangelistic success amongst white-Britons.

Again, Anderson Moyo critically evaluates the church planting strategies of African missionaries in Britain through the lens of the Antioch Church plant in Acts 13. He argues that "African missionaries migrating to Europe need to respond to a missional opportunity to plant new churches that are noticeably different but spiritually refreshing and firmly grounded in *missio Dei*."[30] Moyo casts a vision for multiethnic church plants in the diaspora, highlighting the importance of a missionary's spirituality, vision, and gospel partnerships. Whilst his analysis covers elements of missional identity, he doesn't explore how these are formed and sustained in the diaspora.

Harvey Kwiyani's extensive contributions to the conversation on African diaspora Christianity in the West is the most distinctive due to his recognition of the significant impact of African Christianity, but also his vision for missional collaboration.[31] This is seen acutely in *Multicultural Kingdom*, where he argues that "the multicultural context of (urban) Britain needs a multicultural missionary movement",[32] calling for new ecclesiologies that prioritise multicultural churches. Whilst Kwiyani suggests new habits and practices that might realise this vision, he does not explore how these practices might be formed in believers, thus shaping their missional identity. Adding to this, Kwiyani later proposes in *Africa Bears Witness* that partnerships between Africans and Brits in the diaspora would be an effective means of both helping Africans to contextualise their ministries, whilst the British church could learn from the African zeal to pray and evangelise.[33]

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[29] Olofinjana, 'African British Theology', 127.

[30] Anderson Moyo, 'Missional Strategies from Antioch: Lessons for African Missionaries in Britain', *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology* 1, no. 2 (2016): 56.

[31] See Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*, American Society of Missiology Series, No. 51 (Orbis Books, 2014); Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom*;

[32] Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom*, chap. 5

[33] Kwiyani, 'African Christians and Missionaries', chap. 15.

Similarly to Kwiyani, Johnson Ambrose Afrane-Twum has explored the theological and missiological emphases that exist within African diaspora churches in Britain, highlighting the need for intercultural mission paradigms built on partnerships between African and white-majority British churches.[34] He proposes that these partnerships would be of mutual benefit and lead to greater effectiveness in mission in the multicultural context of Britain. However, neither Kwiyani nor Afrane-Twum explore the role that missional formation could play in equipping Christians to form these multicultural partnerships and thus engage together in cross-cultural mission.

Whilst there is significant attention given to the growth of African diaspora churches and their impact on the religious landscape of their new context, the complex issue of missional formation within those congregations is relatively under-researched. Moreover, existing research demonstrates the strong church-planting mindset of African missionaries, leaving room to explore the missional activities of African's who are involved in urban mission at a London-based mission organisation. Given Kwiyani is a leading voice in African diaspora mission engagement in Britain, this study will draw significantly on Kwiyani's work as a conversation partner in this subject.

2.4 African Pentecostalism

Allan Anderson, who is widely recognised as a leading scholar in Global Pentecostalism, describes Pentecostalism as one of the fastest growing Christian movements in the world.[35] He also explores this pneumatic movement through the lens of African Pentecostalism and mission.[36] J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu in *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context* explores the key

[34] Johnson Ambrose Afrane-Twum, *Christian Mission in a Diverse British Urban Context: Crossing the Racial Barrier to Reach Communities* (Langham Publishing, 2024), chap.1, https://www.perlego.com/book/4334295.

[35] Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

[36] Allan Heaton Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Africa World Press, 2001).

theological and missiological themes that shape African Pentecostalism, which emphasises the experience and power of the Holy Spirit.[37]

Not only is Pentecostalism the fastest growing expression of Christianity in Africa, but it has also become the fastest growing movement in Britain, representing almost a tenth of church membership in 2020.[38] However, the impact of Pentecostalism, particularly African Pentecostalism, on Britain's religious landscape has not always been acknowledged by the wider church. In *Multicultural Kingdom*, Kwiyani quotes theologian Walter Hollenweger, as saying "British Christians prayed for revival, and when it came, they did not recognize it because it was black", to which he adds, "British Christians did not recognize the revival because it came dressed in Pentecostal clothes."[39] This highlights the theological, cultural, even racial tensions that exist between African Pentecostal and traditional British churches. This study intends to explore how the first- and second-generation participants navigated these tensions in their engagement with African Pentecostalism and how these can be addressed through the process of missional formation.

2.5 Generational Complexities

In contrast to the attention given to the African Diaspora church, far less research has focussed on the experience of second-generation Africans in Britain. In his pioneering work *Our Children Need Roots and Wings: Equipping and Empowering Young Diaspora Africans for Life and Mission,* Kwiyani highlights the importance of second-generation African diaspora in Britain forming both a strong sense of cultural identity and the freedom to engage meaningfully in God's mission across Britain's multicultural landscape.[40] Kwiyani's analysis is that: "The tendency for most African diaspora children is to become global citizens [...] while lacking a proper grounding and rootedness among

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[37] J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context*. (Regnum Books International, 2013), 1.

[38] Peter Brierley, *2021 UK Church Statistics. No. 4*, 2021 edition (ADBC Publishers, 2020), 7.

[39] Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom*, chap. 4.

[40] Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Our Children Need Roots and Wings: Equipping and Empowering Young Diaspora Africans for Life and Mission* (Missio Africanus, 2019), 118.

their (parents') peoples to help them understand who they really are as Africans in the diaspora."[41] Therefore, Kwiyani suggests five characteristics of effective youth ministry to equip the next generation in mission: historically aware, spiritually empowered, contextually relevant, missional shaped and biblically and theologically informed. However, more research is needed to evaluate the impact of these characteristics on the missional identity of the second-generation over time.

Caleb Nyanni has also conducted research into second-generation Pentecostals in the Church of Pentecost -UK. He has explored the identity formation and socio-cultural context of the second-generation within the Church, identifying factors that cause intergenerational tensions, such as an overemphasis on the spiritual realm by the first-generation. Whilst he provides a thorough study in his specific context, he comments that there is "little work on the [second-generation] African migrants in Europe."[42]

Joseph Ola has studied the identity of young Christians of Nigerian heritage (both in Africa and the diaspora), offering important reflections on how they self-identify.[43] Highlighting the need to foster a "healthy self-awareness [...] that is rooted in their culture and heritage", Ola demonstrates the advantages of hybridity amongst the second generation in discipleship and mission. Moreover, Ola concludes in *Africa Bears Witness* that African churches must engage a missiology that appreciates both the giftings and relevance of African young people to unlock their vast missionary potential and avoid them rejecting their African heritage, or even their faith.[44]

Second-generation Tope Bello has documented her struggle with identity in the diaspora, reconciling being both Nigerian and British. Bello's missional formation was initially shaped by the Pentecostal diaspora church of her youth, until she joined a Reformed Evangelical church after being exposed to Reformed teaching. However,

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[41] Ibid, 19.

[42] Caleb Opoku Nyanni and Elorm Donkor, *Second-Generation African Pentecostals in the West: An Emerging Paradigm* (Pickwick Publications, 2021), 6.

[43] Joseph Ola, 'African Millennial Christians in the Diaspora and the Identity Question', *Anvil: Journal of Theology and Mission* 37, no. 3 (2021): 21.

[44] Joseph Ola, 'Missiology for a Youthful Continent', in *Africa Bears Witness: Mission Theology and Praxis in the 21st Century*, ed. Harvey C. Kwiyani (Langham Global Library, 2024), chap. 12, https://www.perlego.com/book/4350717.

missional formation in this liminal space is under-researched, as Bello herself concludes, more resources are needed to help second-generation Africans in the diaspora to wrestle with their complex hybridity and faith. [45]

More research is needed to understand the identity formation of second-generation Africans in the diaspora, particularly those who are exposed to multiple theological and cultural contexts. This study aims to contribute to this by evaluating the factors that have formed the missional identity of second-generation missionaries who are engaged in cross-cultural mission at a London-based mission organisation.

2.6 Multicultural Britain

Arguably, Britain's Christian landscape could be defined by its divides. Kwiyani has estimated that over 85% of Britain's congregations are made up of people from the same race and social status,[46] concluding that our "theologies, missiologies and ecclesiologies are yet to catch up with the reality of the culturally diverse world we see in our Western cities."[47]

This diverse yet divided landscape is reminiscent of Andrew Walls' *Ephesian moment*, calling the church to embody its diverse unity: "The church must be diverse because humanity is diverse; it must be one because Christ is one."[48] Drawing from Ephesians 2, Walls demonstrates how the divides between believers from previously irreconcilable backgrounds were destroyed through Christ's death, creating one new humanity, built together as a dwelling place for God's Spirit.[49] Walls goes on to illustrate how the Ephesian metaphors of body and temple necessitate diversity: "each of the culture-specific segments [are] necessary to the body but [...] incomplete in itself."[50]

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[45] Tope Bello, 'Reflections of a Second-Generation African Christian in Britain', in *World Christianity in Western Europe: Diasporic Identity, Narratives and Missiology*, First edition, ed. Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, Regnum Studies in Mission (Regnum Books International, 2020), 35.

[46] Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom*, chap. 1.

[47] Ibid, chap. 5.

[48] Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Orbis Books, 2001), 77.

[49] Ephesians 2:14-22 (NIV).

[50] Walls, *Cross-Cultural Process*, 77.

Therefore, the *Ephesian Moment* challenges every segment of Britain's church to recognise its own inherent value within the body of Christ, and also its need of every other segment to "correct, enlarge, and focus" their understanding of Christ, "only together are we complete in Christ."[51]

[51] Ibid, 79.

3. Methodology and Methods

3.1 Research Aims

There are two main aims of this research:

1) To identify the theological and cultural factors that shape the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries who currently work for a London-based mission organisation.
2) To explore how these factors impact the missional formation of first- and second-generation missionaries.

After these aims have been examined through theological reflection, suggested applications will be proposed to strengthen the missional formation of African and non-African Christians in London.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

This study is situated within the field of practical theology and uses qualitative research methods to explore the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries. Practical theology seeks to reflect theologically on lived experience and ministry practice, making it an appropriate framework for examining how mission is understood and embodied in specific contexts.[52] Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow for a qualitative research approach, generating a contextualised understanding of participants' experiences, and a deep engagement with the beliefs and practices that inform their missional identity.

Critical Realism is the research philosophy that underpins this study and its exploration of the complex, layered factors shaping the missional identity of participants. This framework acknowledges the existence of a reality that is independent of our perceptions - namely, the cultural, theological and historical factors that shape

[52] Paul H. Ballard and John Pritchard, *Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the Service of Church and Society* (SPCK, 2020), 8.

missional formation - whilst also recognising that our understanding of this reality is mediated through individual and collective experiences.[53] By focusing on both the tangible expressions of missionary identity and the subtler, often unobservable mechanisms that shape them, Critical Realism allows a nuanced exploration of how first- and second-generation African diaspora missionaries navigate their religious identity, calling, and practice.

To guide theological reflection, Helen Cameron's four voices of theology provided an interpretive framework.[54] This model comprises four interrelated theologies:

1) The **normative voice**, exploring sources of theological authority such as Scripture, liturgy, or 'orthopraxy'
2) The **formal voice**, which engages academic theology and critical reflection
3) The **espoused voice**, reflecting what individuals *say* they believe
4) The **operant voice**, revealing theology embedded in *practice*

This framework is particularly valuable in a diaspora context, to explore how the participants' theology responds to their evolving contexts in new cultural settings, whilst still being rooted in their inherited traditions.

Although originally developed for Theological Action Research (TAR), the four voices model has been widely adapted as a tool for theological reflection in diverse research contexts.[55] Practical Theologian Clare Watkins has outlined her use of the four voices of theology as a "hidden infrastructure" that enabled moments of theological disclosure and insight.[56] Influenced by Watkins' approach, the theological reflection in this study will not use the four voices as a rigid tool, nor make explicit reference to the four voices throughout the analysis unless it provides helpful clarity. Instead, the

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[53] John W. Creswell and Johanna Creswell Baez, *30 Essential Skills for the Qualitative Researcher*, 2nd edn (SAGE Publications, Inc, 2021), 44, https://www.perlego.com/book/4792443.

[54] Helen Cameron et al., *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (SCM Press, 2010), chap. 4, https://www.perlego.com/book/1694365.

[55] See: Andrew Dunlop, 'Using the "Four Voices of Theology" in Group Theological Reflection', *Practical Theology* 14, no. 4 (2021): 297, https://doi.org/10.1080/1756073X.2021.1957075.

[56] Clare Watkins, *Disclosing Church: An Ecclesiology Learned from Conversations in Practice*, Explorations in Practical Pastoral and Empirical Theology (Routledge, 2020), 41.

researcher will ensure that each of the four voices is attended to throughout the discernment process.

3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Given the study's aim to explore the theological and cultural factors that shape the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method of data collection. This gave participants the flexibility to prioritise the experiences that seemed most relevant to them and to offer their own interpretations and insights in the moment.[57] Eight guiding questions were designed to explore the participants' formative years, theological development, understanding of mission, and experience of cross-cultural ministry in London (**Appendix 9.1**).

Interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams, allowing for video recording and ease of transcription. Whilst initially scheduled for 60 minutes, most interviews lasted between 75–90 minutes, reflecting the participants' depth of engagement. Throughout the interviews, a reflective journal was kept, capturing personal observations, questions, and emotional responses. Transcriptions were generated using Otter AI and manually edited for accuracy. These transcripts, alongside journal reflections, formed the basis for prayerful engagement and thematic analysis using Cameron's four voices of theology to guide theological reflection and disclosure. All transcripts were stored securely in a password protected drive.

3.4 Research Participants

Five participants were recruited for this study from a London-based mission organisation. Two participants identified as first-generation African diaspora and three identified as second-generation, all with cross-cultural mission experience in London. There was an age range of 40 years between the oldest and youngest participants. Whilst

[57] Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church* (Baker Academic, 2017), chap. 9, https://www.perlego.com/book/1277704.

two women were invited to participate in this study, unfortunately, one person declined, and the other was not available within the timeframe of the research. For the purposes of this research, each participant has been given a pseudonym that is introduced below and will be used throughout the study.

Benjamin (first-generation) was born in Ghana, West Africa, and was heavily influenced by the Pentecostal faith of his parents. Despite walking away from his faith in his teens, Benjamin recommitted his life to Christ a few years later, which led him to engage in ministry and theological training in Ghana and South Korea. He then moved to the UK gaining a doctorate in mission studies and has engaged in cross-cultural mission in London for over 20 years.

Isaac (first-generation) was also born in Ghana and became a Christian at the age of 22 at a local Pentecostal church. Three years later, Isaac left Ghana to go to University in Poland where he engaged in cross-cultural mission with other international students. Isaac then ministered in other West African and European countries before moving to London, taking a role as a missionary.

Femi (second-generation) was born in South London to Nigerian parents, where he was influenced by Yoruba cultural values and the Pentecostal church of his parents. Femi came to faith in his late-teens and after studying at Bible College, he co-led a church plant in London, before joining a London-based mission organisation.

David (second-generation) was born in South London to Ghanaian parents but then lived in Ghana until he was aged 5. After returning to London, David came to faith at the age of 13 during a youth retreat. David then moved to an evangelical church that was independent of his parents, which alongside Christian rap music, nurtured his interest in mission. After studying at Bible College, David became a missionary in London.

Charles (second-generation) was born in South Africa to Zambian parents, migrating to London at the age of 1. After moving from church to church, Charles came to faith at the age of 17 at a Pentecostal Church in North London. He then became an intern at his church, before feeling 'pulled' into mission.

3.5 Limitations and Reflexivity

An essential component of practical theology is the recognition that the researcher is an active participant in the research process.[58] My own background, theological convictions, and professional role inevitably shaped the way I approached this study, interpreted the data, and engaged with participants. As a practitioner within the same mission organisation as the participants, I held a position of authority over three of the five individuals interviewed. This dynamic introduced a potential power imbalance, which may have influenced how openly participants shared their experiences and how they framed their responses. I was mindful of this throughout the research process and sought to create a safe, open environment by emphasising confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the value of honest reflection.

My reflective journal became a vital tool for navigating these complexities. For example, I noted moments when participants shared painful memories from childhood or expressed theological uncertainty, which evoked strong emotional responses. These moments prompted me to pause, pray, and reflect on how my own assumptions about missional identity might be challenged or reinforced by what I was hearing. Moreover, there were times that participants shared negatively about the culture that I identify with; turning to my journal helped to suspend judgement on such comments and avoid impulsive defensiveness. As theologian Nicola Slee comments, "We have to learn to focus all our attention on the other and to get ourselves and our egos out of the way."[59]

Through the interview process I was reminded of my tendency to view certain expressions of mission as more *valid* or *mature* than others, based on my own theological preferences. Recognising this bias helped me to approach the data with greater humility and openness. Cultural differences between myself and the participants also surfaced during the interviews when I struggled to fully grasp the significance of stories, or expressions of faith rooted in the African Pentecostal context. Rather than viewing these moments as limitations, I treated them as opportunities for deeper learning and

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[58] Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission: A Companion* (SCM Press, 2013), Intro, https://www.perlego.com/book/1437183.

[59] Nicola Slee, *Fragments for Fractured Times* (SCM Press, 2020), chap. 15, https://www.perlego.com/book/1892332.

theological reflection. This posture of attentiveness and self-awareness allowed me to engage more meaningfully with the participants' narratives and to honour the richness of their lived experiences. My own identity was challenged and transformed as I engaged with the lived reality of participants in the presence of God.

4. Gospel Clarity and Theological Formation

4.1. Introduction

This chapter explores how gospel clarity and theological formation shape the missional identity of five African diaspora missionaries in London. Cameron's four voices of theology was used to guide theological reflection, ensuring that the ways in which participants articulated and embodied their faith were critically examined in the context of their traditions and academic theology. Throughout this analysis, a generational lens was used, revealing distinct patterns between first-generation missionaries Benjamin and Isaac, and second-generation missionaries Charles, David and Femi.

4.2. Gospel Clarity as a Catalyst for Missional Identity

"The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"[60] Jesus introduces the gospel as *good news*: God's Kingdom has arrived into human history, and will be established through Jesus' "life, death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Spirit."[61] The expansion of God's kingdom is recorded throughout the New Testament, as people hear the truth of the gospel and are then moved by the Holy Spirit to respond in repentance and faith. As the Holy Spirit is poured out on the day of Pentecost, Peter brings gospel clarity to a confused crowd of Jewish onlookers by proclaiming that, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."[62] After hearing this, around 3000 people were cut to the heart and believed Peter's message. Paul also experienced dramatic gospel clarity on the Damascus Road as he encountered the risen Lord Jesus face-to-face, prompting an immediate missional impulse to speak of Jesus, initiating a process of theological discovery.[63] This pattern is seen, albeit less dramatically, in the lives of each participant as they encounter gospel clarity,

[60] Mark 1:15 (NIV).

[61] Michael W. Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation: Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Baker Academic, 2018), 8.

[62] Acts 2:36 (NIV).

[63] Acts 9:1-20 (NIV).

transitioning them from a place of inherited or assumed beliefs, to a convicted faith that catalysed their theological and missional formation.

4.2.1. Encountering Gospel Clarity

Benjamin and Isaac had a strong familiarity with the gospel, being immersed in Christian environments shaped by African Pentecostalism in Ghana. Growing up, prayer, fasting and evangelism were routine expressions of faith for Benjamin. However, he describes leaving the faith in his teens, preferring worldly living to Christian fellowship. Benjamin later rededicated his life to Christ during a sermon, a spiritual encounter that "plugged [him] into the faith".[64] Similarly, Isaac grew up surrounded by the faith of his mother and aunt, who were fervent in prayer and Pentecostal practice. Isaac would resist spiritual engagement, demonstrated by his attempts to avoid a pastor who regularly tried to evangelise him when visiting his home. At the age of 22, Isaac describes feeling empty, prompting him to attend the church of the visiting Pastor. As God's word was preached Isaac responded to an altar call, having been "arrested by the Holy Spirit".[65] Despite their familiarity with the gospel, it was through the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit that they encountered a renewed gospel clarity.

In contrast, second-generation Charles, David and Femi all found gospel clarity through a process of theological discovery that precipitated varying degrees of rejection of their inherited Pentecostal traditions. All three participants spent their childhood in African Pentecostal churches where they felt the gospel was often assumed rather than explicitly articulated. In their teenage years, they then encountered a gospel message that was unfamiliar, but gave such clarity that it ignited their faith, laying the foundation for their missional identity. For David, clarity came at a youth retreat where he recalls "hearing the gospel in a [...] very clear way, in a way that I hadn't heard it before."[66] Femi also attended a youth camp where he "heard and began to understand the good news of

[64] Benjamin, 'Interview', 17 December 2024.
[65] Isaac, 'Interview', 17 December 2024.
[66] David, 'Interview', 19 December 2024.

grace."[67] Femi became resentful that his newly clarified beliefs were significantly different from those of his Pentecostal church: "the fact that I had grown up going to church and didn't understand the gospel was a big deal for me. I was quite angry."[68] Similarly, Charles encountered gospel clarity through a sermon at a friend's church, where he also became overwhelmed by the presence of God.

Laurenti Magessa observes that for most Africans, "people tend to live their highest ideals without seeing the need to define them in particularly clear terms [...] the experience of living is more important than notions about it."[69] Whilst 'clarity' did not appear to be as significant for Benjamin and Isaac, it had a profound impact on the second-generation participants, who were faced with a theological dissonance between their Pentecostal tradition and their newly held beliefs. David Niringiye writes in *The Church: God's Pilgrim People* of how the search for clarity can cause people to leave Christianity altogether. He recalls meeting a lady from Zimbabwe who became a Jehovah's Witness after someone "explained the way of salvation extremely clearly, something that she had yearned for but had not been offered by the other churches."[70] This example highlights the need for churches in the diaspora to preach Christ-crucified in a way that is contextualised to the worldview of the younger generations, particularly those who are influenced by the Western assumption that truth is most effectively imparted through clear, propositional teaching.[71]

4.2.2. Theological Discovery

When exploring the espoused soteriology of the participants, theological emphases emerged that were discovered or formalised in response to their encounters with gospel clarity, subsequently impacting their missional identity. Three key theologies were i) **personal transformation**, ii) the **atonement**, and iii) relating to **God as Father**.

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[67] Femi, 'Interview', 6 December 2024.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Magesa, *What Is Not Sacred?*, 16.
[70] Niringiye, *The Church*, Intro.
[71] Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures*, 2nd edn (Time Press, 2016), 61.

Each of these were emphasised and applied differently across the first and second generations.

Benjamin's early theological formation was deeply rooted in the communal spirituality of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. His Christian identity was intrinsically missional: "once you are saved, talking about your faith is very important."[72] Central to this was the link between **personal transformation** and evangelistic credibility. Evangelism was not isolated to verbal proclamation but also a testimony of God's deliverance: "you can't call yourself a Christian and still [be] practicing certain things."[73] Benjamin's emphasis on personal transformation aligns with core Pentecostal themes that include "regeneration as the way to Christian salvation, and a call to holiness as the outflow of a new relationship with Christ".[74]

During his childhood Femi was exposed to a similar emphasis on holiness at a Pentecostal church but experienced it through a fear-driven eschatology where the central concern was not assurance of salvation, but persevering till the end. This created a culture of anxiety around backsliding and moral failure, where holiness functioned more as a defensive posture than a missional impulse. Femi reflected, "our witness was our holiness, rather than our activity",[75] motivated by the call in James to avoid "friendship with the world."[76] Consequently he struggled to engage in mission, at times acknowledging a sense of moral superiority over non-Christian peers who "didn't know how to worship or to pray or to fast".[77] Whilst the theology of holiness and personal transformation were emphasised within the normative traditions of both Benjamin and Femi, their experiences highlight the need to examine the context in which they are applied, taking care to catalyse rather than inhibit mission.

Whilst neither of the first-generation missionaries explicitly referenced the work of Christ on the cross, the **atonement** became a central theological emphasis for second-

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[72] Benjamin, 'Interview'.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity,* 2.
[75] Femi, 'Interview'.
[76] James 4:4 (NIV).
[77] Femi, 'Interview'.

generation missionaries. This is unsurprising given their encounter with gospel clarity was directly related to hearing about the person and work of Jesus Christ. David retrospectively identified the theology of *Christus Victor* as a formative influence within his Pentecostal church, which reflects a Pentecostal emphasis on the cross of Christ as a symbol of power, glory and victory.[78] However, it was only when David heard the doctrine of penal substitution at a youth camp "for the first time in such a clear way" that he encountered gospel clarity that "really changed [his] world."[79] Given David recalls teaching on *Christus Victor* within his Pentecostal church, it could be argued that gospel clarity was encountered through hearing the gospel in a way that was *contextualised* to his increasingly Western worldview, rather than hearing the gospel for the very first time. This example reflects the Western fallacy that there is a "pure" gospel that is dissociated from culture;[80] rather than placing the message of penal substitution in the Western guilt-innocence worldview.[81]

Similarly, Charles and Femi both experienced a theological shift that located Christ's atoning work on the cross at the centre of their faith and missional identity. Foundational to Charles's missional identity was obedience to the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching others to obey the gospel.[82] This mirrored Isaac's conviction that proclaiming the gospel was "an instruction from the Lord",[83] although Isaac's motivation was not *explicitly* linked to the person and work of Christ on the cross. Femi's emphasis on the work of Christ was placed within the missiology of *missio Dei*, describing God as the "God of mission" who sends his church into the world as his "agents of mission."[84] Whilst there are a variety of theological frameworks that underpin the *missio Dei*, Femi's espoused framework was characteristic of missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, whose strong Christo-centrism focuses on the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus as a starting point for the Trinitarian mission of God.[85]

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[78] Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity, 109*.
[79] David, 'Interview'.
[80] Hartman, *Kwame Bediako,* 23.
[81] For an overview of the guilt-innocence worldview see Georges, *The 3D Gospel,* chap. 2.
[82] See Matthew 28:18-20, (NIV).
[83] Isaac, 'Interview'.
[84] Femi, 'Interview'.
[85] Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 69.

The third key area of theological clarity emerged in the participants' understanding of **God as Father**, particularly among second-generation missionaries Charles and Femi. For Charles, coming to know God as Father was a transformative spiritual encounter as he came to know God through a personal relationship, particularly considering the death of his father at the age of one. Similarly, Femi, who initially related to God as a "distant [...] Headmaster-type figure," came to know God as a good and wise father, recognising that "the thing that makes heaven, heaven, is [...] being in relationship with God."[86] Mission was shaped by inviting others to share in this intimate, familial relationship. In contrast, Benjamin and Isaac emphasised a Holy Spirit-led relationship with God, characteristic of African Pentecostalism. Allan Anderson places prayer at the heart of Pentecostal spirituality,[87] which Benjamin demonstrates through his repeated mention of prayer throughout his interview. Isaac similarly described experiencing God's voice in a unique way "always following the leading of the Holy Spirit" in both his Christian life and mission practice.[88]

4.2.3. Missional Zeal

A recurring theme for second-generation participants was the catalytic role of gospel clarity - in particular, the discovery of grace and the centrality of Christ's work - in igniting their zeal. David's zeal for mission was immediate: "I wanted to tell other people about what [...] I learned, because it was so clear."[89] It was paramount for David that others were given the opportunity to experience the clarity that had been hidden from him in his early church context. Therefore, David initially tried to evangelise his own family because he no longer considered their Pentecostal beliefs to be biblical. Upon reflection, David acknowledged that whilst his approach had lacked nuance, the impulse itself was not uncommon: "I think this happens a lot [with] people who come out of West African [...] Pentecostal charismatic circles [...] we just want to tell everyone that they're wrong."[90]

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[86] Femi, 'Interview'.
[87] Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism,* 188.
[88] Isaac, 'Interview'.
[89] David, 'Interview'.
[90] Ibid.

Femi's journey followed a similar trajectory. Growing up in church without gospel clarity drove Femi to ensure that the Gospel was never assumed but clearly articulated: "even people in church need the Gospel explained to them simply."[91]

Interestingly, the authoritative source of David's missional zeal was the Bible: "no one actually told me to tell people apart from the Bible".[92] This was closely mirrored by Femi's assertion: "I don't need people around me today to reassure me that what I believe is true [...] if I'm convinced from the Scriptures about something, then [...] it's true".[93] Femi and David's process of theological discovery led them to hold Scripture in highest regard, but when articulating this, they disclose signs of the impact of Western individualism, that theologising can be an individual activity independent of community and tradition.

For many in an African Pentecostal context, a Spirit-inspired calling is often the only essential qualification into ministry,[94] and it was obedience to this calling that motivated Benjamin and Isaac in their missionary efforts. Benjamin observes that "once you know Jesus, then you have to serve him and do his bidding".[95] Isaac too was convicted that one of his "core mandates, or instructions from Jesus was to go into the world and preach the gospel."[96] This missional calling was expressed communally for Benjamin and Isaac, as evangelism was embedded into the rhythms of church life, from open-air crusades, visiting neighbours, to pulpit exhortations.

4.3. Theological Education

Theological education, both formal academic study and informal training, played a formative yet varied role in shaping the missional identity of participants. For first-generation Benjamin and Isaac, formal theological training brought clarity and structure to what had previously been intuitive and experiential. For example, both organically

[91] Femi, 'Interview'.
[92] David, 'Interview'.
[93] Femi, 'Interview'.
[94] Kwiyani, *Roots and Wings,* 84.
[95] Benjamin, 'Interview'.
[96] Isaac, 'Interview'.

embodied what Kwiyani calls the "missionaryhood of all believers",[97] engaging in evangelism wherever they went. But it was Benjamin's theological education in South Korea and then Britain that introduced concepts such as the *missio Dei*, formalising his understanding of the mission of God and the church's role in mission. Benjamin's theological education had a distinctly Western influence that was not often contextualised to the African experience. This created a dissonance between how his formal theology interacted with his pneumatic Christianity. As a result, Benjamin noted that theological education had "muted" some of his Pentecostal practices.[98]

In contrast, second-generation participants engaged with theological education earlier in their theological formation, which initially became a means of deconstructing Pentecostal theology. For example, Charles's theological education initially prompted a "very Pharisaical" impulse, rejecting Pentecostalism and "pushing away everything that [he'd] ever really known."[99] This highlights the legacy of colonialism within Christian education, where "[c]olonized peoples were taught to reject their native cultures and languages and to embrace European cultures, languages, and God."[100] Charles came to realise that his teaching was "soaked [in] Western thought",[101] forcing him to grapple with the relationship between gospel truth and culture.

Whilst each participant felt that theological education was an important factor in their missional formation, experiences that dampen one's spirituality and present Western thought as synonymous with a standardised theology or missiology, contribute to the "contempt of theological education" felt by many Africans.[102] Theological education must be shaped by African theological and missiological contributions, alongside the other cultural expressions of world Christianity, and it is imperative that it embraces the pneumatic spirituality of African Pentecostals.

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[97] Kwiyani, 'Africa Bears Witness', chap. 1.
[98] Benjamin, 'Interview'.
[99] Charles, 'Interview', 19 December 2024.
[100] Hartman, *Kwame Bediako,* 11.
[101] Charles, 'Interview'.
[102] Kwiyani, *Roots and Wings,* 84.

4.4. Summary

Throughout this chapter, it has been demonstrated that an encounter with **gospel clarity** played a formative role in the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries. The theological and cultural context in which gospel clarity was encountered, whether through spiritual experience or theological formation, became the context in which their faith was established, and in which missional formation was seeded.

The formative theologies of **first-generation** participants were rooted in their orthopraxy (or operant voice), growing up immersed in a highly spiritual context, where a demonstration of the gospel's impact through personal transformation was expected and expressed in local community. Embedding mission and evangelism into the life of the church obligated obedience and service. However, for **second-generation** participants, orthodoxy (normative and espoused voices) was dominant in their formation, catalysed by the impact of the embarrassment, confusion or even anger they had felt having grown up in a church where they had not understood the gospel. The Western worldview of the gospel they encountered set the direction of their missional formation, with foundations in clear, propositional Bible teaching.

Throughout participants' **theological formation** and **theological education**, the destructive impact of cultural blindness and unchecked assumptions became apparent, demonstrating their ability to inhibit mission and erode one's Christian identity. Whilst it was clear that theological education was an important factor in the formation of participants' missional identity, it was experienced through a narrow Western lens that could have been broadened to reflect the true breadth of world Christianity.

5. Diasporic Identity and Contextualisation

5.1. Introduction

This second analysis chapter examines the missional identity of five African diaspora missionaries in London through the lens of diaspora and cultural hybridity, drawing on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. As before, Cameron's four voices of theology guided theological reflection, exploring how participants' missional identities adapted to new cultural contexts, discerning the tensions that arose as a result. A generational lens brought into focus the cultural hybridity of second-generation missionaries Charles, David and Femi, which facilitated cultural adaptation in their own mission contexts. The chapter then explores contextualisation in London and how the diasporic identity of participants both equips them for this challenge and provides prophetic insight to a British church facing decline.

5.2 African Diaspora Missiology

Diaspora missiology is a helpful framework for African Christians to locate their place in God's redemptive mission outside their place of origin.[103] Though there are multifaceted *push* and *pull* factors that influence migration, the movement of people has always been a central theme in the Biblical story that serves as a catalyst for the expansion of God's kingdom. Paul makes this connection during his sermon in Athens: "[f]rom one man [God] made all the nations [...] and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him."[104] Since the birth of the Church, diaspora communities have played a vital role in bearing witness to Christ across cultural boundaries, enabling the universal truths of the gospel to be translated into the culture of the gospel's recipients.[105] Just as Christ himself migrated from the glories of heaven to

[103] Sadiri Joy Tira and Tetsunao Yamamori, 'Introduction', in *Scattered and Gathered: A Global Compendium of Diaspora Missiology*, 2nd edn, ed. Sadiri Joy Tira and Tetsunao Yamamori (Langham Global Library, 2020), 2.

[104] Acts 17:26-27 (NIV).

[105] Walls, *Cross-Cultural Process*, 79-80.

take on flesh and live alongside humanity, God's people are called to be *paroikoi (gk.),*[106] to be pilgrims on the move through a multiplicity of peoples and cultures. This section explores the diasporic identity of African missionaries and its impact on the missional identity of participants through migration and the formation of complex hybrid identities.

5.2.1 Tensions between Home and Host Culture

John Mbiti observed that "the African is notoriously religious", depicting how African life is deeply intertwined with spiritual identity.[107] This intrinsic religiosity is demonstrated in the accounts of Benjamin and Isaac, who were shaped by a Ghanaian Pentecostal culture saturated with communal prayer, fasting, and evangelism. In this spiritually open context, Benjamin and Isaac engaged freely in house-to-house evangelism and open-air campaigns, sharing the gospel without restriction. This openness also extended across religious boundaries, as those from other religious backgrounds also expressed their faith publicly: "it's in your face [...] and so you have to deal with it."[108] Being exposed to public idol worship generated a missional impulse in Isaac that motivated prayer and evangelism, mirroring Paul's arrival in Athens. Paul was "greatly distressed" when observing that Athens was "full of idols" so he responds by reasoning with the Jews and Greeks in the synagogue, as well as openly addressing those in the marketplace who worshipped idols.[109]

In contrast, the religious landscape of Britain presents a markedly different host culture. While there are signs of religious resurgence,[110] the general trajectory has been one of secularisation, with public spaces increasingly suspicious of religious expression.[111] Inevitably, this creates significant tensions for first-generation diaspora like Benjamin and Isaac, whose missional practices were formed in an African context of spiritual openness. Within the British context, Benjamin experienced a gradual muting of

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[106] 1 Peter 2:11 (NIV).
[107] For an overview of the African Religious identity see: Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*.
[108] Isaac, 'Interview'.
[109] Acts 17:16-17 (NIV).
[110] See Rhiannon McAleer and Rob Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival* (Bible Society, 2025).
[111] Memory, *Europe 2021*, 23.

his spiritual expression, feeling forced to question whether it was culturally appropriate to engage in practices that were once central to his missional identity. For example, in Ghana, Benjamin's mission practice included preaching, healing and deliverance. He recalls, "I used to preach and I'll pray for people and lay hands [and] people will fall [...] when I came here [...] I don't do that the way I used to."[112] Similarly, all-night prayer vigils characteristic of African Pentecostalism, were replaced by shorter meetings as diaspora churches adapted to the demands of family life and work patterns outside of the community networks they once relied upon. As Kwiyani notes, "[t]he support systems that made life more manageable in Africa are hard to come by or sustain in Europe."[113] At times, these changes even prompted concerns about spiritual decline, as Christians in the diaspora questioned whether they were 'backsliding'. However, Kwiyani reports that many African diaspora churches find it too uncomfortable to make the changes necessary to contextualise their churches to life in Britain. There would be a need to "do things differently" to reach beyond their own community, such as shorter worship services,[114] which feels like too high a cost when these spiritual practices are integral to their religious and missional identity. Isaac similarly lamented the challenges of mission in Britain. In Ghana, outreach was highly relational and accessible, but in Britain, even interacting with neighbours proved difficult: "they won't even come to the door."[115] This new spiritual context felt subtle and complex, requiring new forms of discernment and engagement. Whilst adapting to the British context is undoubtedly challenging, a failure to do so will not only impact effective mission engagement, but also their ability to reach their own children in the diaspora.[116]

5.2.2 Cultural Hybridity

Kwiyani's research has shown that the migration of Africans into Britain has produced a "transnational generation of children who belong in multiple cultures and

[112] Benjamin, 'Interview'.
[113] Kwiyani, *Roots and Wings*, 54.
[114] Kwiyani, 'African Christians and Missionaries', chap. 15.
[115] Isaac, 'Interview'.
[116] Kwiyani, *Roots and Wings*, 12.

align with more than one national identity."[117] This cultural hybridity was cultivated for second-generation missionaries Charles, David and Femi through the interaction between their inherited cultural and religious identity (rooted in their family and church communities), and the varied 'host' cultures they inhabited. Navigating life in multiple worlds formed in them an identity that was neither wholly African nor entirely Western, but a dynamic synthesis of both.

Femi was born into a Nigerian family who lived on a diverse working-class estate in London. His home and church community were shaped by Yoruba culture and Pentecostal Christianity, characterised by all-night prayer vigils, exuberant praise, and extended church services. As Femi's awareness grew in the cultural difference between his Nigerian church and his primary school context, the evangelistic activities of his church became a source of embarrassment, because he "couldn't imagine any British person wanting to go to [his] church."[118] One example of this cultural difference was in the deeply rooted Yoruba value of respect, and the critical thinking fostered in Femi and his peers at school. This value of respect had shaped Femi's relationships with his Church leaders, as well as his relationship with the Bible. He responded to the Bible with deference, noting a "shut up and believe" attitude, which contrasted with his school environment where he was encouraged to "think carefully about what's being said and why it's being said".[119]

Later, Femi attended a secondary school whose dominant culture was noticeably British middle-class, which also permeated the culture of the evangelical churches that Femi attended from university onwards. Whilst he had felt cultural embarrassment at the thought of his peers attending his Nigerian Pentecostal church, he later recognised that people from his diverse working-class estate also wouldn't feel comfortable attending his middle-class evangelical church. Femi recalls experiencing this tension for himself when attending a wine and cheese welcome evening at Bible College: "most of the world is lactose intolerant, and in my church background, like, you don't drink alcohol[…]. So wine and cheese […] the people who need to be welcomed in this environment aren't the

[117] Kwiyani, *Roots and Wings*, 36.
[118] Femi, 'Interview'.
[119] Ibid

people who are being catered for."[120] By navigating his own moments of cultural dislocation, Femi developed a missional voice that could translate the needs of different communities, enabling him to advocate for the cultural outsider and prophetically calling those within the dominant culture to "welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you."[121]

5.2.3 Cultural and Theological Roots

Whilst Femi's experience formed in him a cultural hybridity and adaptability, it also contributed to a sense of disconnection from his spiritual roots: "in terms of [...] a theological home, I don't feel like I've got one, because it's not in my Nigerian Pentecostal church. It's not [...] Conservative Evangelical churches."[122] Both Charles and David also articulated their struggle to discern where to call *home*. Kwiyani highlights this conflict for African children in the diaspora who are "struggling to find their identity and place in the world. Are they African? Are they British? Can they be both at the same time?"[123] Research into the religious identities of second-generation Ghanaian immigrants in Amsterdam showed that when participants were able to meaningfully participate in the community of their parents' transnational church, they were able to "construct a complex ethnic identity encompassing the different spheres within which they operate."[124] This raises a question about whether more could have been done to integrate the second-generation participants into the life, service, and leadership of their childhood churches. Moreover, unlike Femi who grew up in one consistent church context, Charles and David moved from church to church, as their parents sought to maintain spiritual and communal connection with others in the diaspora. Not having established a consistent

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[120] Ibid.
[121] Romans 15:7 (English Standard Version).
[122] Femi, 'Interview'.
[123] Kwiyani, *Roots and Wings*, 15.
[124] Edmond Akwasi Agyeman and Justice Richard Kwabena Owusu Kyei, 'Religious Identities and Transnational Religious Practices of Second-Generation Ghanaian Migrants in Amsterdam', in *Migration and Public Discourse in World Christianity*, ed. Afe Adogame et al., World Christianity and Public Religion Series (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2019), chap. 1, https://www.perlego.com/book/1734468.

church community in their formative years may have exacerbated their sense of dislocation, and their ability to integrate their African heritage into their religious identity.

As a British African born in South Africa to Zambian parents, Charles described feeling as though there was a part of him that was always being tested, and the process of reconciling his African identity in a Western context was a life-long fight. David also described the struggle between wanting to stay true to his ethnic roots and a growing desire to become more Western. His theological formation became entirely influenced by Reformed Western theologians and Calvinist-inspired Christian rap music, causing him to leave his family's church: "that's what it means to put Christ over family [...] it kind of reduced my Ghanaian identity [...] but then it really strengthened my identity in Christ".[125]

Research carried out by Joseph Ola explored the identity crisis common to many African millennials, noting the erosion of African identity in the diaspora. His research shows that those under the age of 30, like Charles and David, are less likely to report that their African identity impacts their faith (if they identify as an African Christian at all), and tend to be more impacted by Western culture, theologians, and resources than their African counterparts.[126] This was illustrated by the theologians that participants referenced as formative in their theological formation; such as Tim Keller, John Piper, Paul Washer, even John Calvin. None of the participants referenced African or Majority World theologians.

5.2.4 Reintegrating African Identity

Whilst the second-generation participants initially rejected African Pentecostal theology, recent steps had been taken to intentionally reintegrate aspects of their African identity. For example, David has recognised the value of African theology in connecting with the African lived experience, subsequently visiting his mother's church and wholeheartedly appreciating what he had previously rejected. Charles has also begun to

[125] David, 'Interview'.
[126] Ola, 'African Millennial Christians', 19.

build bridges again with Pentecostalism. Rather than leading with what is right or wrong, he now "cling[s] towards learning first",[127] so that he can really understand how God is at work in a particular context before acting.

5.3 Contextualisation

To engage in London's multicultural urban context, contextualisation and cultural adaptation are essential tools for effective mission. Contextualisation, understood as the process of interpreting and embodying the gospel within specific cultural frameworks, enables the message of Christ to be meaningfully communicated within a particular community. For African missionaries in London, contextualisation is not only a means of effective participation in God's mission, but also a framework through which to speak prophetically into the cultural blind spots of the British church that may be hindering their effective mission practice.

5.3.1 Contextualisation in the Church

Elias Medeiros argues that the success of diaspora missions, even the fulfilment of the *Great Commission*, depends on all expressions of the local church living and ministering as a scattered people, who are sent out to gather disciples of all nations.[128] Living in global cities like London, churches need to wrestle with the universality of the gospel for *all people*, a universality that Kwame Bediako argues mandates the infinite translatability of the gospel into every culture.[129]

Although culturally distinct, the Nigerian Pentecostal church of Femi's childhood, and his subsequent evangelical church context, operated as though the universality of the gospel negated contextualisation. Femi's cultural hybridity taught him that contextualisation was essential: "you [need] to communicate the gospel wisely in order

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[127] Charles, 'Interview'.

[128] Elias Medeiros, 'Local Churches in Missional Diasporas', in *Scattered and Gathered: A Global Compendium of Diaspora Missiology*, 2nd edn, ed. Sadiri Joy Tira and Tetsunao Yamamori (Langham Global Library, 2020), 216.

[129] Hartman, *Kwame Bediako,* 29-30.

to be effective."[130] This motivated Femi to plant a church that translated the gospel into the cultural context of second-generation African and Afro-Caribbean communities.

Contextualisation was an attractive force for David, who left his mother's Pentecostal church to attend a church that intentionally reached "people like [him]."[131] Their approach was to contextualise the gospel through music, particularly Christian rap, which resonated with young African and Afro-Caribbean communities in London. David went onto emulate this contextual model of mission, after being discipled in mission within this community.

When Benjamin first arrived in Britain, he and his family attended a Ghanaian diaspora church, enabling them to maintain their religious identity through African expressions of worship, preaching and dress-code. However, Benjamin became unsettled about attending a mono-cultural Ghanaian church in London. Subsequently. God moved him to a multicultural church that was shaped by the multiplicity of cultures that attended. This was a formative experience for Benjamin's understanding of mission, as despite his vast ministry experience, he now focused on listening and observing how God was at work amongst the different cultures of the church. Through his exposure to "different voices" ,[132] engaging with West African, Western and other theological perspectives, Benjamin felt better equipped to navigate cultural tensions between his home and host context.

These examples highlight the level of intentionality needed within church communities to subvert their normal patterns of ministry and contextualise the gospel to those outside of the dominant culture of the church. It was through intentional contextualisation that David found a community that he felt he could belong to. Additionally, Benjamin intentionally moved outside of the comforts of his familiar African church context, to expose himself to other cultures and develop his cross-cultural competence. However, the wisdom of Niringiye adds caution to a church's effort to contextualise their ministry, particularly when narrowly contextualising ministry to

[130] Femi, 'Interview'.
[131] David, 'Interview'.
[132] Benjamin, 'Interview'.

people like oneself. He reflects: “I fear that in a lot of instances it is not Jesus gathering his own but rather us gathering those who are like us.”[133]

5.3.2. Translating the Gospel

Isaac first engaged in cross-cultural mission when moving to Poland to study in the late 1980s. Religious freedom was stifled under the influence of Communist rule which meant fellowship and evangelism were closed and private. Interestingly, when Isaac and his fellow African international students engaged in public evangelism after the Communist rule had ended, they did so in a distinctly Ghanaian form: open-air preaching; amplified worship; and an ‘altar call’ (albeit in the Polish language). Whilst Isaac had said that adaptation was critical, there was little evidence to suggest that he had translated the gospel (in form or content) into the worldview or culture of a people who had just been liberated from the Communist regime. His focus was solely "to let as many people as possible know about Jesus.”[134] Isaac’s missionary impulse connects with the Apostle Paul’s desire to preach the gospel as broadly as possible, however, Paul‘s manner of doing so was to “become all things to all people”.[135] Whilst such adaptation was prominent in Isaac’s espoused understanding of cross-cultural ministry, his practice was still dominated by his instinctive Ghanaian models of mission.

Kwiyani notes that, like Isaac, many African Christians have struggled to contextualise their ministries in the West due to a lack of cross-cultural training.[136] Therefore, it is unsurprising that it was through theological education that Benjamin gained his initial understanding of cross-cultural mission. This theoretical training was then embedded through cross-cultural mission experience in London, alongside Christians from non-African contexts. The combination of cross-cultural teaching, and practical experience in a multicultural ministry team enabled Benjamin to embody contextualisation in ways that were not as intuitive for Isaac during his time in Poland.

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[133] Niringiye, *The Church*, chap. 1.
[134] Isaac, ‘Interview’.
[135] 1 Corinthians 9:22 (NIV).
[136] Kwiyani, ‘African Christians and Missionaries’, chap. 15.

Steven Bevans describes mission as *Prophetic Dialogue*; dialogue as a posture of respectful, open, listening to others, and prophecy as *authentically* translating the life changing good news of the gospel into another culture.[137] When exploring Isaac's reflections on cultural adaptation, he spoke about the need to listen and observe when entering a new context, waiting for the Holy Spirit to reveal new insights. Bevans argues this should be a Christian's "first attitude" in mission.[138] Charles also described a cycle of observation and listening that enabled him to discern how people understood the world and related to God, a practice he has found invaluable in connecting with a diversity of people across London. Charles likened this process to learning to respond to Jesus' call to deny oneself for the sake of the gospel.[139] This highlights how participants were able to effectively draw on their spirituality as part of the contextualisation process.

5.3.3 A Call to Renewal

Whilst their contribution has not always been recognised or celebrated, the presence and witness of African diaspora churches in London is both a gift and a challenge to the British church, through its spiritual vitality, missional urgency, and theological correction.[140]. Moreover, churches and Christians in Britain *need* African Christians to challenge their blind-spots and complacencies, calling them again to contextual renewal, as Cathy Ross writes: "We need the stranger to challenge us, to help us see ourselves as others see us, to call us out of our complacencies and Christian ghettos, to offe*r us new worlds*, to break us ou*t of our* cosy domesticities."[141]

Femi observes that many British churches, especially those within conservative evangelical traditions, have adopted a theological framework shaped more by

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[137] Stephen B. Bevans, 'A Theology of Mission for the Church of the Twenty-First Century', in *Contextual Theology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Stephen B. Bevans and Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (James Clarke, 2012), chap. 7, https://www.perlego.com/book/880039.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Mark 8:34-35 (NIV).

[140] Sheila Akomiah-Conteh, 'The Gift of African Diaspora Churches in the UK', *Anvil: Journal of Theology and Mission* 37, no. 3 (2021): 30.

[141] Cathy Ross, 'Hospitality: The Church as 'A Mother with an Open Heart'', in *Mission on the Road to Emmaus: Constants, Context and Prophetic Dialogue*, ed. Stephen B. Bevans and Cathy Ross (SCM Press, 2015), chap. 5, https://www.perlego.com/book/1437278.

Enlightenment rationalism than by biblical spirituality, resulting in an "exiling of the Spirit",[142] where supernatural experience is treated with suspicion. Whilst both Benjamin and Femi caution the need for spiritual discernment, the pneumatic forms of African Christianity that holistically affirm the reality of the spiritual and sacred in all areas of life, challenge British churches to reconsider their assumptions and realign with biblical faith, rather than modernist ideologies.

Benjamin also observes that the British church does not possess the zeal for evangelism or "fire to preach the gospel",[143] typical of Ghanaian Christians, or African churches who emphasise the imminent return of Christ. Niringiye suggests that "the lack of evangelistic zeal in many churches today is a manifestation of the disconnection with the resurrected Lord", proposing a spiritual awakening, rather than mission education as the solution.[144] Therefore, the vibrant spirituality of the African church, demonstrated through fervent prayer and an expectancy on the Spirit of God, could become a missional catalyst for the British church.

5.4 Summary

Throughout this chapter, it has been demonstrated that the **diaspora experience** played a formative role in the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries in London. For **first-generation** participants, moving from the spiritually open context of Ghana to the secular, individualistic London context created tensions that heightened their cultural awareness. However, effective cultural adaptation and contextualisation ought not to be assumed by virtue of inhabiting a new cultural context. Rather, it was through intentional reflective practice, a posture of humility, and cross-cultural education that Benjamin navigated this adaptive challenge, empowering a more effective missional practice.

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[142] Femi, 'Interview'.
[143] Benjamin, 'Interview'.
[144] Niringiye, *The Church*, chap. 8.

Second-generation participants often faced painful moments of cultural dislocation as they developed varying degrees of cultural hybridity, navigating their inherited cultural identity with the divergent contexts around them. A consistent pattern of loss was observed in participants, as cultural roots and inherited identities were compromised to adapt to life in the West. However, their hybridity heightened their cultural awareness and motivated contextualisation in mission. Interestingly, the tools of contextualisation they have applied to cross-cultural ministry are now being used in their own process of reintegrating elements of their African identity.

Niringiye states: "it is the translation of the life of Jesus into the way of life of all the world's cultures and subcultures throughout history that will enable us all to correct, enlarge and focus our own understanding and experience in Christ."[145] The British, African, and non-African churches in London *need* one another. Given the cultural diversity across the Church in London, we have a unique opportunity to apply this call to both correct and enlarge our view of Christ, recognising where our culture and theological influences may "nullify the word of God for the sake of [our] tradition."[146] Moreover, strengthening the unity and fellowship between British and African diaspora churches through mutual gospel partnerships would also harness the strengths of each tradition to counter the short-comings of the other: "The Africans have the zeal to pray and evangelise while the Europeans may have a better grasp of the cultural gap that needs to be bridged in order to connect with the people."[147]

[145] Ibid.
[146] Matthew 15:6 (NIV).
[147] Kwiyani, 'African Christians and Missionaries', chap. 15.

6. Community, Discipleship and Holistic Mission

6.1 Introduction

This final thematic chapter examines the role of community and discipleship in forming the missional identity of five African diaspora missionaries in London. As before, Cameron's four voices of theology guided theological reflection, exploring how participants navigated a spectrum of communal and individualistic contexts, and the impact of the resulting tensions. This chapter will also explore how the *missio Dei* shapes participants' understanding of the breadth of mission, primarily through the lens of Jesus' command to love our neighbour, highlighting practical expressions of care for one's community.

6.2 Community in Missional Formation

The philosophy of *Ubuntu* is foundational in many African societies, encapsulating the conviction that an individual's identity and flourishing is inextricably linked to that of their community. Ubuntu values mutual respect, hospitality and belonging, inspiring John Mbiti's expression, "I am because we are".[148] Therefore, in many African contexts, a person defines their own identity and purpose in relation to the identity and purpose of their community.[149] Although not always explicit, the centrality of community and the underlying values of Ubuntu, shape the religious and missional identity of participants in distinct ways that offer ongoing discipleship and care.

6.2.1 Family

It is important at the start of this chapter to appreciate the significant role that parents, particularly mothers, have made in the lives of participants. The prayers of Benjamin's parents were significant in his journey back to faith, and Isaac too, spoke of

[148] Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy*, 106.
[149] Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa*, 117.

his mother as an "active prayer woman."[150] In the diaspora, Femi's home was full of prayer as his parents hosted all-night prayer vigils, and David's mother would regularly gather the family together at 6am to pray and sing. Charles' father sadly passed away when he was only 1 year old, and throughout his interview he honoured his mother's consistently hard work. The prayers and witness of family members were the bedrock upon which all other community was built, and their love was no doubt an important catalyst for them in their spiritual and missional formation.

6.2.2 Church Community and Discipleship

Niringiye argues that the authentic people of God are distinguishable through their community: "It is faith that formed them into a community, and community formed their faith: belonging to God and to each other."[151] By belonging to God, we must belong to one another in community; though there are often complex theological, cultural, and social factors that impact the particular local church we find ourselves part of, and the degree to which one feels a sense of *belonging*. How participants relate to their church communities has already been explored in part through Chapters **4** and **5**. This section seeks to clarify the factors that determine the role of Christian community in the discipleship and missional formation of participants.

For Benjaman and Isaac there was an organic integration into the life of the *local* church in which they were saved; their faith was embodied in their practice, serving both the church and wider community. Their discipleship consisted of two interconnected *communal* emphases: firstly, practical training in ministry to serve their church; and secondly, demonstrating a life transformed by Christ in their community. For example, Isaac initially engaged in a discipleship course to assess his giftings, which were then utilised in the church's music team. Integral to serving in this ministry was a demonstration of God's transformative work,[152] nurtured through regular oversight by someone in the community. For Isaac, his pattern of discipleship was to meet with a

[150] Isaac, 'Interview'.
[151] Niringiye, *The Church*, chap. 1.
[152] See Section 4.2.2.

member of the church at 5am to pray in the woods for two hours of each day; Isaac remarked that he was "hardly ever idle."[153]

When they initially arrived in Britain, Benjamin and Isaac attended an African diaspora church; a choice informed through existing denominational affiliations and networks of relationships. In the diaspora, Benjamin noted that the "social engagement [had] changed dramatically" as people transition from a highly relational culture where one can "easily flow with people",[154] to a more individualistic, private society. Their diaspora church community provided vital relational support, ensuring that discipleship and practical care was offered regularly throughout the week.[155] However, it is this support and belonging that Afrane-Twum argues prevents African diaspora churches from pursuing the multicultural communities and partnerships that are needed for effective mission in the British context.[156]

Theological factors determined the relationship between second-generation participants and their church communities, illustrating a priority for 'correct' doctrine over the relational commitment typical of African communities. David demonstrates this priority when becoming sceptical about African Pentecostal theology. Leaving his mother's church negatively impacted his relationships with his extended family; David concluded, "that's what it means to put Christ over family".[157] David subsequently joined a church with which he theologically aligned. However, whilst David did not make this explicit, the sense of *belonging* he found in joining a church that was intentional in discipling people like him, was likely to have been as impactful as the theological affinity he experienced.

Through this transition from one church to another, David found community through music. Due to the significance of worship and high-quality musicality across Pentecostal churches, the Christian music scene in London gathered a community of second-generation Ghanaians that became *church-like* for David, as they weekly

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[153] Isaac, 'Interview'.
[154] Benjamin, 'Interview'.
[155] See **Section 5.3.1** for Benjamin's account of why he then moved to a multicultural church.
[156] Afrane-Twum, *Mission in a Diverse British Context, chap. 1*.
[157] David, 'Interview'.

attended worship events across the city. Going beyond a love for music, the lyrics had a *discipling* effect, generating a new depth of theological understanding through their Calvinistic influence. The lyrics also contributed to David's missional identity, which often emphasised evangelism and a desire to make God's glory known to others. Kwiyani highlights the importance of music as a language that unites second-generation African diaspora, as one young person reports: "it helps us communicate our identity and connects us to people of similar likes—our tribe."[158] However, whilst important for identity formation in the diaspora, there is a risk that young people chose to leave their churches altogether in favour of these highly contextualised communities, reducing discipleship to the independent consumption of Christian resources and losing the intergenerational care and oversight they need.

A more characteristic form of discipleship within British conservative evangelicalism is a regular one-to-one Bible Study. After coming to faith on a youth camp, one of Femi's youth leaders met him at school once a week to study the Bible and deepen his understanding of the gospel. Whilst motivated by a loving concern for Femi's discipleship, being discipled by someone from outside of his church community, embedding a different theological framework, will have arguably exacerbated the growing tensions between Femi's new theology and his community. In Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquilla come across Apollos who, whilst knowing the Scriptures well, only knew of the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila then come alongside Apollos, "explaining the way of God more adequately."[159] Whilst this mirrors Femi's experience, it raises the question of how one discerns whose knowledge of God is more adequate, particularly across the divided theological landscape of London.

Interestingly, despite having left African diaspora churches, second-generation participants all acknowledged an appreciation of their sense of *community*. Charles' assessment of the British church was that "we struggle to build relationships in church because we don't do community", being shaped by a Western culture that prioritises "me, myself and I."[160] Often church and discipleship is compartmentalised to a Sunday

[158] Kwiyani, *Roots and Wings*, 66.
[159] Acts 18:26 (NIV).
[160] Charles, 'Interview'.

or discrete times throughout the week, rarely might one see the daily, two-hour prayer meetings of Isaac's discipleship. Kwiyani hopes that the communal nature of Africans in the diaspora might "provide the antidote" to the individualism that shapes British culture.[161] Whilst the British church has much to learn about community in an individualistic society, African diaspora communities have also faced criticism. David's experience of growing up in Ghanaian diaspora churches was that they were "very insular" and struggled to be accessible for anyone outside of the Ghanaian community.[162]

6.3 Holistic Mission

6.3.1 Love your Neighbour

God is love. Therefore, love permeates every aspect of the life of the Church and is the "primary motivation for mission and evangelism."[163] When tested by the Pharisees, Jesus was asked to answer which of the commandments was the greatest. He replies: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"[164] By examining the participants' understanding of mission through the lens of *love for neighbour*, a breadth of application emerged that highlighted the importance of practical care and social intervention.

Whilst only Femi explicitly references love as a motivating factor in *evangelism*, it was key in influencing *how* participants related to their local community in mission. The call to demonstrate love was intuitive for Charles, who described an inner call to love his local community well. He demonstrated this firstly through presence, spending quality time with those he met. Secondly, by building authentic relationships and listening to the things that matter most to the other person. Through this relational approach to mission, Charles felt he had been given a "level of leeway" to share the message of the gospel in

[161] Kwiyani, 'African Christians and Missionaries', chap. 15.
[162] David, 'Interview'.
[163] Niringiye, *The Church,* chap. 8.
[164] Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV).

his community "because they know you love them first."[165] Kwiyani argues that this is integral to the *missio Dei*, which is "rooted in healthy, loving and humanizing relationships between Christians and the community in which they live."[166]

6.3.2 Social Action

When considering Jesus' call to love our neighbour, Newbigin provides a helpful distinction between the *missionary dimension* and *missionary intention* of the church. The *missionary dimension* encompasses the whole scope of the life of the church as it engages with the world around it; the *missionary intention* is the deliberate witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.[167] Whilst Femi emphasised an intentionality to make Jesus known in mission, he also understood the *missionary dimension* of his calling, to "demonstrate love for [his] neighbours in practical ways."[168] For Femi, the call to love meant that evangelism and social action were inseparable.

Through the middle of the twentieth century, engaging in social action became increasingly associated with the liberal mainline church, and thus, a loss of orthodoxy.[169] This impacted British conservative churches, with many advocating that the missional priority of the church did not include practical care or social justice. Whilst at university Femi attended an evangelical church shaped by British middle-class values. Whilst he appreciated the faithfulness of their Bible teaching, he was left feeling dissatisfied with their approach to community engagement: "there seemed to be a lack of love [...] and kind of middle-class self-sufficiency."[170] This self-sufficiency contrasted with his diaspora experience, including having grown up on a council estate and only having had the opportunity to go to university through charitable grants. Moreover, the care of his Nigerian church encompassed the whole of life, where education, career, and family life were integral to faith and the church community. For example, Femi's pastor offered

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[165] Charles, 'Interview'.
[166] Kwiyani, 'African Christians and Missionaries', chap. 15.
[167] Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 76.
[168] Femi, 'Interview'.
[169] Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2010), Intro, Kindle.
[170] Femi, 'Interview'.

£1000 to any member of the youth church who obtained a First-class degree at university as an incentive to invest in their education. Having achieved this goal, Femi used his reward to host a party for other members of the church. Later, when Femi was fundraising for ministry, the church gave a financial donation despite him having left the church. He remarked that there were "no questions asked, not even [...] are we still on the same page theologically?"[171] Despite theological disagreements, Femi was still considered part of the family, and so they continued to love him through these practical forms of discipleship; an expression of the African spirit of Ubuntu.

Kwiyani argues that the humanising influence of the *missio Dei* "leads to a Christian identification with the poor and the marginalized."[172] In this study, each participant is part of a mission organisation whose focus is on urban mission amongst marginalised communities, therefore embodying Kwiyani's sentiment. Whilst meaningfully communicating the gospel is of primary importance, this is done in the context of holistic ministry where practical, social, and emotional needs are also considered. For example, there are specialised ministries to those affected by homelessness, poverty, or social isolation.

Benjamin's observation was that the concept of social action was more formalised in the British context. In Ghana, practical care for those in need tended to a shared responsibility of the whole church community that was often more informal and organic. However, the clarity afforded through these structured, well-defined ministries helped Benjamin to engage in mission in an unfamiliar context, particularly in a closed society where relationships felt inaccessible. However, Femi cautioned that there can be an underlying colonial approach to these ministries that fosters "an assumption of doing mission *to* people rather than mission *with* people."[173] In his latest book Decolonizing Mission, Kwiyani highlights the need to rid mission of its colonial legacy, finding fresh ways to participate in God's mission in a post-colonial era. He observes how the language often used in mission, such as 'unreached people groups', or arguably the recipients of

[171] Ibid.
[172] Kwiyani, 'Africa Bears Witness', chap. 1.
[173] Femi, 'Interview'.

these specialised ministries, betrays a mindset of "the greater evangelizes the lesser."[174] Ministries to the most vulnerable in London must demonstrate humanising love and care, *Ubuntu* over domination.

6.4 Summary

Newbigin argues that Christian congregations are the "only hermeneutic of the gospel"; the credibility of the gospel and mission depends on communities of God's people believing and living out the gospel together.[175] The missional identity of participants was deeply impacted by the communities they were part of, particularly for **first-generation** participants who embodied their missional identity through discipleship and mission activities in their local community. For **second-generation** participants, discipleship and missional formation focused on correct doctrine through structured Bible teaching within the British church, in contrast to the highly relational approach in the African context, where discipleship was embedded through sharing life together.

Overall, participants deeply appreciated the depth of community and practical care that was demonstrated by African diaspora churches, suggesting it as a model for British churches to learn from. Despite having left diaspora churches, the impact of their love and care on participants' missional identity was demonstrated through their own emphasis on holistic mission and social action, at times despite the influence of the middle-class self-sufficiency found in the British church.

Each participant is engaged in mission amongst marginalised communities in London, demonstrated by their role in their London-based mission organisation. A structured approach to specialised ministries (reaching specific communities), enabled first-generation missionaries to engage in mission in an unfamiliar context. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that these structured models of ministry do not perpetuate colonial frameworks of mission that inadvertently dehumanise others.

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[174] Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Decolonizing Mission* (SCM, 2024), 163.
[175] Goheen, *The Church and Its Vocation*, 80.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Factors Shaping Missional Identity

The **first aim** of this study was to identify the theological and cultural factors that shape the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries at a London-based mission organisation. Using Cameron's four voices as a guide for theological reflection, six key factors were disclosed that shaped participants' unique missional identity, which have been explored in **Chapters 4-6**. These factors were:

- Encountering **gospel clarity**
- **Theological formation** and **education**
- Experience of **contextualisation**
- Formation of a hybrid **diasporic identity**
- The role of **Christian community** and **discipleship**
- **Holistic mission** and **practical care**

The **second aim** of this study was to explore the factors that shape the missional identity of participants through a generational lens. Whilst each of the six key factors that shaped participants' missional identity were common to both generations, the impact of their contribution was defined by their evolving cultural, theological and social context. It has been demonstrated in **Chapters 4-6** that the context surrounding these factors either *amplified* or *muted* parts of their missional identity, *catalysing* or *inhibiting* effective mission engagement in London, with notable patterns observed between the generations. For example, the missional identity of the first-generation participants was formed communally, as mission and evangelism were embedded into the life of the church. Their missional identity evolved as they migrated to Britain; at times they experienced a *muting* of their spiritual practice, but at others, they experienced an *amplification* of their understanding and practice of contextualisation. In contrast, the missional identity of second-generation participants was *catalysed* through gospel clarity, precipitating a process of theological formation. This moved them away from their Pentecostal roots, causing them to wrestle with identity formation in a liminal context. Their missional identity was influenced by their varying degrees of hybridity; shaped by both the formation of correct doctrine through structured Bible teaching (characteristic

of the British evangelical church), and the practical demonstrations of neighbourly care representative of holistic models of African community.

7.2 Applications for Mission in London

Six factors were identified that shape the missional identity of African diaspora missionaries. By drawing together how these factors catalysed or inhibited mission, three applications are proposed to help strengthen the formation of missional identity in both African and non-African Christians in London: a contextually aware pedagogy; multicultural mission teams; and teaching the Bible through the lens of mission and migration.

7.2.1 Contextually Aware Pedagogy

Encountering gospel clarity and theological formation were identified as key factors in the formation of missional identity. This study demonstrated that when these factors lacked cultural awareness, they could inhibit the missional identity and practice of participants. For example, when encountering the gospel through the Western framework of penal substitution, it was initially interpreted as *pure*, a standardised truth that led to suspicion, even rejection of other cultural interpretations. Similar experiences were shared relating to the impact of theological education in Britain, that either muted Pentecostal spirituality or taught Western theological frameworks as normative.

Bediako argues, "the Gospel can only be perceived by us in some cultural form or other – a pure Gospel devoid of cultural embodiment is simply imaginary."[176] Therefore, this study proposes cultivating a *contextually aware pedagogy* that habitually names the cultural packaging of the gospel we preach, the theology we teach, and the practices we embody. If the cultural framework had been *identified* and *named* by those sharing the gospel with second-generation participants, they may have received both the gospel *and* the tools necessary to navigate alternative cultural and theological perspectives, rather

[176] Hartman, *Kwame Bediako,* 23.

than reject them. Similarly, a contextually aware pedagogy could be a useful tool to help African diaspora church leaders to contextualise the gospel to the culture of the second-generation, as well as equipping first-generation members to navigate the cross-cultural context of London.

Developing a contextually aware pedagogy could also bring much needed clarity to theological education, which would serve to highlight both the dominance of Western theological thought, and the absence of key voices from world Christianity. Whether at theological education institutes or mission organisations, naming the cultural and theological assumptions that underpin what is being taught, and therefore *why* it is being taught, would cultivate new depths of contextual awareness in theological formation, enhancing the contextualisation competencies needed for effective mission in London.

7.2.2 Multicultural Mission Teams

This study has demonstrated that the formation of missional identity in London, was most effective in communities that represented London's diversity.[177] This was intuited by Benjamin, who intentionally moved from a mono-cultural African diaspora church to a church that exposed him to different cultural and theological perspectives, subsequently broadening his understanding of mission. This was then embedded through cross-cultural mission experience in a multicultural team, facilitated by a mission organisation. In contrast, the second-generation participants grew up in mono-cultural African diaspora churches whose mission activities were not contextualised to the diverse London context, at times causing embarrassment and inhibiting their involvement in mission.

Throughout the New Testament, Paul continually calls the church to embrace its unity in Christ, whilst celebrating the necessary diversity that exists.[178] However, London's churches remain theologically and culturally divided. This hinders our Christian

[177] This excludes the formation of missional identity in first-generation participants before they moved to Britain.

[178] Romans 15:5–6; 1 Corinthians 12:12–14; Ephesians 4:11–13 (NIV).

witness to the world and our ability to form gospel partnerships, which ultimately prevents our missional identity being rooted in the diverse unity of Christ.

Whilst it is outside of the scope of this study to suggest practical solutions to overcome these complex divides, this study has identified the unique opportunity that mission organisations[179] have to facilitate the formation of collaborative, multicultural mission teams that bring people together from across denominational, cultural, or generational divides. As Kwiyani argues, "the multicultural context of (urban) Britain needs a multicultural missionary movement".[180]

These teams would provide opportunities for cross-fertilisation in mission practice and reflection, enabling new insights and theologies to emerge. Bringing people together for mission, who would ordinarily remain divided, would catalyse opportunities for new relationships and gospel partnerships to form in local communities, as African Christians impart their prayerful spirituality and zeal for mission, whilst learning how to effectively contextualise their ministry from others.

It is important to note that these proposed multicultural mission teams are not intended to distract or detract from the ministry of the local church. But given the complexity of churches forging partnership across ethnic, cultural and theological divides, mission organisations can play a vital role in facilitating inter-denominational, inter-cultural spaces for future partnerships to emerge. Moreover, members of these multicultural mission teams could be important catalysts for transformation in their own church communities; a prophetic voice that can help their church to enjoy the privilege of being part of the multicultural body of Christ working in unity in mission.

7.2.3 The Bible through the lens of Mission and Migration

As first-generation participants migrated from Africa to Britain, and second-generation participants navigated life between their inherited cultural traditions and their

[179] Or other para-church organisations that can bring people together across denominational, cultural or generational divides.

[180] Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom*, chap. 5

surrounding British context, their evolving diasporic identity impacted their understanding and practice of mission. First-generation participants felt a sense of disorientation, questioning the application of their practice in the diaspora; were they backsliding if they could not continue to do things the way they were done back home? Second-generation participants felt dislocated from their roots, questioning whether they had a cultural or theological home. Tope Bello has highlighted the urgent need for more resources that help second-generation Africans in the diaspora to wrestle with their hybridity and faith.[181]

Olofinjana has argued that since the Bible is a book about mission and migration, "the principle of mission and migration should form the hermeneutical lens through which we read and understand the Bible."[182] Therefore, this study proposes that *habitually* teaching and preaching the Bible through the lens of mission and migration would support the integration of the diaspora experience into the missional identity of the church. For example, first-generation migrants might find solidarity and hope in the stories of Abraham, Joseph or Ruth who all faced the loss of leaving their homes for unfamiliar places yet became participants in God's redemptive purposes. Whereas the stories of Esther and Daniel could resonate with second-generation diaspora as they form hybrid identities that offer unique missional insights in the multicultural London context. Might they see that God has placed them in London "for such a time as this"?[183]

However, it is not only those who have a physical migration story who would benefit from understanding their missional identity through the lens of mission and migration. As Olofinjana highlights, all of God's people have a dual identity; we are "foreigners and exiles"[184] in this world whose "citizenship is in heaven".[185] Moreover, integrating this diasporic identity into our missional identity also helps us to understand God's heart for the most vulnerable in society. God's loving concern for the stranger and foreigner was to become the concern of God's people, they were to "Love them as

[181] Bello, 'Second-Generation African Christian in Britain', 35.
[182] Olofinjana, 'World Christianity in Western Europe',11.
[183] Esther 4:14 (NIV).
[184] 1 Peter 2:11 (NIV).
[185] Philippians 3:20 (NIV).

yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt."[186] Therefore, it is essential that church leaders are equipped to habitually teach and preach the Bible through the lens of mission and migration to root missional identity in diasporic identity, our spiritual dual-identity, as well as in a compassionate concern for the marginalised.

If African and non-African Christians in London were able to unite as both citizens of heaven and foreigners and exiles in this world, whilst also bringing our unique cultural and theological insights together, it would have a transformative impact on the way in which we holistically respond to Jesus' call to go and make disciples of all nations, as we journey towards our shared final destination, home in the New Creation.

7.3 Final Summary

This study identified six theological and cultural factors that shaped the missional identity of five African diaspora missionaries who currently work for a London-based mission organisation. These factors were then explored through a generational lens, highlighting that the context surrounding these factors either *amplified* or *muted* parts of their missional identity, *catalysing* or *inhibiting* effective mission engagement in London. By drawing together how these factors catalysed or inhibited mission, three suggested applications were proposed to strengthen the missional formation of African and non-African Christians in London:

1. Applying a contextually aware pedagogy in theological formation and education so that missional identity is formed with an understanding of the cultural and theological packaging of the truth it is rooted in and informed by a breadth of theological perspectives.
2. The formation of collaborative multicultural mission teams that are facilitated by mission organisations, bringing people together from across denominational, cultural or generational divides, and further catalysing transformation within the local church.

[186] Leviticus 19:33 (NIV).

3. Habitually teaching the Bible through the lens of mission and migration to integrate the diaspora experience and the dual identity of God's people with one's missional identity, whilst also growing our concern for holistic mission and practical care for those on the margins of society.

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