Cosmopolitan Practical Theology
and the Impact of the Norming of Whiteness
on Chapel Cosmopolitanism

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of
the University of Chester
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Blessed are you, Holy God, for people of every language and culture and
for the rich variety you give to life. (Methodist Worship Book, 1999: 44)

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Cosmopolitan Practical Theology and the impact of the Norming of Whiteness on Chapel Cosmopolitanism

Jill Marsh

Thesis Abstract

In the context of increasing cosmopolitanism across the UK many church congregations are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, creating what I am calling 'chapel cosmopolitanism'. This lived experience of congregations calls for a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. I use Nowicka and Rovisco's definition (2009:2) of cosmopolitanism as "A practice which is apparent in things that people do and say to positively engage with the 'otherness of the other'". From my professional experience I outline the factors that make a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology and argue for a positive engagement with the 'otherness of the other' in order to live out the Gospel imperative to 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.

In an ethnographic study of the chapel cosmopolitanism of one particular church, I observed the complex layers of interpersonal dynamics within one congregation. In particular I engaged with the work of Marti (2010) on 'havens', and also the work of Jagessar (2015) on 'intercultural habit', observing the inter-play between the needs for both of these practices. Using a multi-method approach I began to notice the reluctance of older White participants who chose not to be interviewed. While recognizing the need for both 'havens' and 'intercultural habit' my fieldwork data showed me that, while all my participants had these two needs, yet the need for havens of their own was not recognized by many of my White participants. This White privileging of their own experience as the 'norm' prevented the 'mutual inconveniencing' that Jagessar considers to be an essential component of intercultural habit.

After consideration of the impact of the invisibility of White privilege within this particular congregation, I conclude that the norming of Whiteness becomes an obstruction to the development of a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. In my conclusion I spell out some of the implications of my research for church life, Practical Theology and my own practice.

Summary of Portfolio

The portfolio of work which precedes my thesis shows the way that my research has developed through the programme of the professional doctorate.

My research question originated in my personal and ministerial experience of intercultural life. It was my simultaneous encounter with two 'multi-cultural' congregations which crystallized my interest in why some churches become more cosmopolitan and yet others do not. Coupled with this was the Belonging Together project[1] of the Methodist Church in Britain which also set me wondering what helps and what hinders the sense of 'belonging together' in intercultural congregations. I began to ask whether a Cosmopolitan Theology is possible in practice.

My Literature Review (Module 8002) drew me into the intersection between Human Geography and Practical Theology and, due to my professional context, it also triangulated with Methodist Studies. I identified a gap in congregational studies of British Methodist Churches, and also of UK intercultural congregations.

For my publishable article (Marsh 2016) (Module TH 8003) I undertook a survey, and conducted some interviews based on the results, exploring the practices which help and which hinder people from belonging together within one ethnically-diverse congregation. I concluded that intercultural churches need to introduce a sharing of power during which those already in the church are willing to be changed by those joining and becoming part of it.

My Reflective Practice paper (Module TH 8004) studied the impact of Whiteness on my personal and professional intercultural practice, and influenced my subsequent practice as an academic, making me more consistently careful to read academics from differing perspectives and to bring my own White experience to the fore as I reflect on my relations with the situations and data about which I am writing. In my design of the fieldwork, I was careful to choose a methodology which made it more likely that I would

[1] Detailed on p. 12

properly hear the diversity of voices and experience within the church, and I set up a meeting with a group of invited ‘critical friends’ whose experience varied from my own. At this stage, I began to name those who would see themselves as the ‘host’ community as “White” in an attempt to make visible the invisible privilege of Whiteness which I was encountering.

This growing awareness of the privilege of my Whiteness, in personal and academic life, has been one of the major benefits of my professional doctorate for my continuing practice, as a minister and an academic. The fieldwork on which this thesis rests is my contribution to the growing field of Whiteness Studies in Practical Theology.

Statement by the student

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another HEI except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

Signed:

Date: 31st August 2020

Introduction

The week that I began my doctoral research I also visited my mother-in-law (Journal, 19th October 2013):

> On the way home she asked me, 'So, what is the research for?"

This question has been important to me. My research interest began from a fascination with intercultural life and developed into a determination to work out what helps and what hinders good relationships within intercultural churches.

In this thesis I argue for a 'Cosmopolitan Practical Theology' which can emerge from the experience of what I describe as chapel cosmopolitanism[2]. However, I also argue that this Cosmopolitan Practical Theology is possible only when the impact of the norming of Whiteness is acknowledged and addressed, so that there can be mutuality in relationships. I describe a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology as depending on both the creation of 'havens' (Marti 2010), in which people are able to relax and to gather confidence, as well as the development of an 'intercultural habit' (Jagessar 2015) which embodies the living out of the biblical commandment to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. I examine the interplay between havens and intercultural habit in one particular congregation. While I acknowledge the kindness and the cosmopolitan approach of many of the church's members, I focus on the impact of the Whiteness of many participants, with an accompanying lack of self-awareness and with assumptions about their right to control the norm. I conclude that the norming of Whiteness leads some people mistakenly to identify what are actually 'White safe havens' as 'the Church'.

a) My understanding of Whiteness

During my research my understanding of my own Whiteness became key in recognizing my own positions of power and privilege, and also the impact these could have on

[2] This phrase is explained in Chapter 1.

others. While I did not set out specifically to research the attitudes of my White participants, yet it became essential to reflect on the effect of their Whiteness on them and the congregation. It is important, therefore, at the beginning of this thesis, to explain what I mean by 'Whiteness'. There has been a growing field of Whiteness Studies in academic circles, but White Theology is a new field, arising in response to the challenge of Black Theology. Perkinson writes (2004: 41):

> Any white attention paid to Black theology merely as 'black' and thus 'different' - no matter how appreciative - without correlative attention to the theological meaning of Whiteness (as that which blackness differs from), already fails to take seriously the meaning of Black Theology's message.

In my previous theological thinking and ministerial experience I, too, had attempted to take seriously the emphasis of Black Theology on the reality of the lived experience of Black people, and the assertion of the need for theology to value this experience and the theological insights from it, and yet I had not recognized the corresponding need to consider my own theology as White, and the implications of that coming, as it does, from my own White perspective.

In attempting to understand what it means to be white, I was helped by the work of Jennings (2010, 2018) who traces the creation of the concept of Whiteness during the colonial period of European history. He argues that Europeans began to use the concept of Whiteness during the construction of criteria by which to classify human beings observably different from themselves, as a justification for the removal of people from their own lands. He also describes the subsequent fusion of Whiteness and Christianity, concluding that this has an impact which is impossible to over-estimate. Jennings describes "a theological act of displacement" (2010: 31) which accompanied the enslavement of other human beings and sought to interpret and justify the practices of slavery and the slave trade, according to the soteriological imperative to 'make disciples' of all people. He says (2010:59):

> With the emergence of Whiteness, identity was calibrated through possession of, not possession by, specific land" and argues that as Europeans began to develop a spectrum of categories, for the people they encountered in their colonizing pursuits, they identified 'Whiteness' as having "embedded facilitating powers.

I have recognised, during my research, this tendency, elaborated upon further by Beaudoin and Turpin (2014), for many White people still to believe that they have particular powers of facilitating 'others'.

I agree with Jennings' statement (2018: 34) that "Nobody is born white" and with Frankenberg (1997: 16) that Whiteness is a construct which is constantly being modified through processes of inclusion and exclusion. Nevertheless, I also agree with Jennings (also 2018:34) that "Whiteness is real". In other words, while I am not referring simply to skin colour in this thesis, I recognise that White people's skin colour is often accompanied by an un-examined assumption of facilitation over others, believing that 'other' people need to become, or to behave, like themselves. As my research continued, I became aware of a dynamic which is recognized by Jennings (2018: 34), arguing that the concept of Whiteness includes a necessarily destructive force which categorises, delineates and puts down those who are seen as 'not-white' writing:

> Whiteness is… a form of agency and a subjectivity that imagines life progressing toward what is in fact a diseased understanding of maturity, a maturity that invites us to evaluate the entire world by how far along it is toward this goal."

While building on the work of Jennings in understanding the origins of the construct of Whiteness, Perkinson writes, with a polemical style (2004: 153), "Most simply put, Whiteness is a power of opposition." He focuses on the continued impact of the sin of categorising people, in his own context of the United States, arguing that the concept of Whiteness has become normative. He writes (2004: 161):

> White identity assumed the form of a hegemonic force within the social and cultural organization of political space in the country that admitted no easy

> alteration…. Once it had emerged as a 'commonsense' category, Whiteness could then begin to disappear and operate in an increasingly covert fashion as the underpinning of racism.

In my own participant-observation research I was very aware (as mentioned in Chapter 5) that this was the case for many of my White participants. They knew themselves to be 'white' and that other congregational members were 'black' or 'not-white', but they would assume their own Whiteness without any sense of how this impacted on their lives, or the lives of others. I agree with Perkinson, that, where there is a majority white population, Whiteness has become, (2004: 162) "a largely invisible norm of adjudication". This was one aspect of Whiteness which I worked with in the interpretation of my data.

While Jennings' work on Whiteness gave me background understanding, Perkinson's emphasis on the constant need for 'race conscientization' by White theologians gave me the persistence to develop this as key in the interpretation of my own data.

b) Cosmopolitan Practical Theology

Throughout my research I used literature from the fields of Human Geography, Sociology and Practical Theology, as I responded to the need for engagement between studies of cosmopolitanism and of lived religious experience. Rovisco and Kim (2014:1) comment:

> Although emerging scholarship in the social sciences suggests that religion can be both a source of (Kim and Kim 2008) and a potential catalyst of cosmopolitanism and global citizenship (Levitt 2008), few attempts have been made to bring to the fore new theoretical positions and empirical analyses of how cosmopolitanism as a philosophical notion, a practice and identity outlook can also shape and inform concrete religious affiliations. Key questions concerning the significance of cosmopolitan ideas and practices in relation to particular religious experiences and discourses remain to be explored, both theoretically and empirically.

My own research interest in these key questions grew over several decades of experience of life, teaching and ministry in multi-cultural[3] contexts. Garces-Foley (2010: 68) comments, about multi-ethnic churches, "More ethnographic research is needed to identify what makes them work, though the number of pastoral books offering advice is growing quickly". Through my fieldwork I sought to contribute towards understanding of how everyday British congregational life does, or doesn't, engage with the 'otherness of the other'.

I began my research with an understanding of Cosmopolitan Practical Theology which had evolved from my professional experience. This can best be described as the practical living out of the command to 'love your neighbour as yourself' which consciously extends to neighbours of any and all the different cultures in our globalized societies. My initial understanding of this Cosmopolitan Practical Theology included five features which I, then, considered crucial[4]:

- Decision to celebrate diversity as God-given, whether this is an initial or an evolved intention
- Confidence for each person about their own cultural identity in the light of, and growing from, experience of intercultural congregational life
- Willingness of the church's leadership to face and address the spatial, cultural and theological differences which threaten to keep separate, or to divide congregational members or groupings
- Commitment to speak honestly through 'misunderstanding stories' (McGarrah Sharp 2013) and to create opportunities for exploration of mutual understanding
- Care across potential cultural barriers which is honest about each other's needs, yet outweighs concern for own preferences

As my research progressed, I added to this understanding a sixth feature:

[3] I have used here multi-cultural because all the contexts I am referring to were those where many cultures existed together, alongside each other, with varying amounts of interaction. For the remainder of this thesis I will refer to inter-cultural as my research interest is about how people of differing cultures, relate to one another.
[4] Presented to the Oxford Institute for Methodist Theological Studies in August 2018 and available online at https://oimts.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/2018-07-marsh.pdf

- Recognition by White people of White privilege and a determination to relinquish that privilege

c) Engaging with other 'others'

As I introduce my work, I need to position myself in relation to these research questions. In my professional experience, as a Methodist minister, since 1997, I observed and supported congregations living out their aspiration to be 'the Body of Christ', when the members of the body came from very different experiences, cultures, locations and perspectives. In 1985, against the social background of growing ethnic diversity, Walton published the only other study of ethnic diversity within British Methodism[5]. At that time, I was teaching in a secondary school which had seventy first languages represented among its students in Forest Gate, East London. This was, then, very unusual but higher levels of diversity have become much more the norm across England over the last three decades[6]. In the 1990s, living in Sheffield, each of our children began school as the only white children in their own class, and further questions arose for me personally, about how we relate to those different from ourselves. Following my training as a new minister I was sent to work in Rawmarsh, a town just outside Rotherham, where our children learned a dialect that we, as their parents, could not always understand. This was intercultural Whiteness in which we, as a family, learned the ways of those who had welcomed us. My questions continued. In particular, as I moved to be a minister in Leicester, I was asked to work with two Methodist congregations, both initially described to me as "multi-cultural". One of these was really mono-cultural, clinging to 1950s Methodist culture which was then common to both the Caribbean and the UK. While the second church became more and more diverse, the other seemed unable to change and diversify despite newcomers asking to join and to belong. I began to ask myself why one congregation was able to develop and to change in its own culture and approach, whereas the other seemed to cling to one particular way of life. I

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[5] Walton, H. (1985). *A Tree God Planted: Black People in British Methodism*. Nottingham: Ethnic Minorities in Methodism Working Group.

[6] Jivraj, S (2012). How has ethnic diversity grown 1991- 2001- 2011? Economic and Social Research Council. Accessed 14.6.15, from www.ethnicity.ac.uk

began to recognize, and to work with, an understanding of the features needed for a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology and to ask myself what helped or hindered this.

d) Belonging Together

As my own experience is within the Methodist Church, I decided that my research would be most effective within this tradition. Just as I was deciding to apply to do doctoral studies, in 2010 – 2013, the Methodist Church in Britain conducted a project called 'Belonging Together', designed to report on its ethnic diversity and to commend what would help Methodists to value this diversity. The report (2013) concluded:

> What Belonging Together has demonstrated is that ethnic inclusion cannot be left to chance or choice, nor indeed be reduced to quotas or compliance. This agenda will need to be owned and championed at all levels of Church governance and leadership, and of fellowship and meaningful interaction across the Connexion[7]. The core questions that remain are: how can the Methodist Church do this meaningfully and intentionally? And what would meaningful/intentional inclusion look like?[8]

My thesis makes a contribution towards answering these questions. My initial research question was about how people were being helped, or hindered from, feeling that they belonged together within a single Methodist congregation. While there are several studies of this kind in the United States (De Ymaz 2007, Fulkerson 2007, and Garces-Foley also 2007!) there were none that I could find about ethnic diversity in UK churches and so my research is written into this gap in the literature. I first considered my research question by undertaking a survey, for my publishable article, about what congregational practices ministers had found to help, or to hinder, ethnically diverse congregations in belonging together. The results of this early research helped me to

[7] Connexion is the word used to describe the national Methodist Church in its connectedness. It has been used since the earliest days of Methodism.

[8] The Methodist Church (2013). Embedding the Ethos of Belonging Together. Accessed 26.2.16, from http://www.methodist.org.uk/news-and-events/news-archive-2013/embedding-the-ethos-of-belonging-together-(1)

focus on the need for power-sharing within congregations, and for willingness to be changed by the 'others' who shared congregational life[9]. My research question was thus sharpened to ask what Cosmopolitan Practical Theology might look like and what is required for this to develop in congregational life. I was helped in this by Lartey's work (2006) on pastoral theology in intercultural settings, as well as by Fulkerson (2007) who carried out a detailed study of one particular ethnically diverse American Methodist congregation, and by McGarrah Sharp (2013) who studies in depth what happens within intercultural relationships.

The practice of reflexivity (Bennett et al, 2018:42) has been key and I have been aware throughout of clear personal reasons for wanting to undertake this research. I am a middle-aged White English woman who has never lived anywhere except England and speaks no other language but English. My childhood was influenced by feeling a strong sense that I 'did not belong', and that I always had 'the wrong accent', having moved often with my family, because of my Dad's work as a Methodist minister. My adult life has been lived in situations where intercultural awareness has helped with life and work. My life has been an 'insider-outsider' debate (McCutcheon 1995) in action, and I have often worked and lived in contexts where I was in the minority as a White person, although always within England which is still generally heavily White-dominated (Jivraj 2012).

e) My Methodist experience

During this research I have been working with the understanding of Cosmopolitan Practical Theology outlined above and seeking to recognize where and when these features were present in my study church. I began my research with a conviction, from my own personal experience of Methodism, that there were strands within the Wesleyan tradition which predispose Methodists towards a cosmopolitan care for neighbours. In my Journal (17th October 2013) I wrote:

> I'm starting with some key concepts that matter to me: we meet God in all people, we are all made in the image of God, we are brothers and sisters in

[9] Marsh, J. (2016). Towards an ethnically diverse British Methodist church. Holiness: The Journal of Wesley House Cambridge, 2:1, pp. 23 – 52. Accessed 5.2.16 from www.wesley.cam.ac.uk/holiness

> Christ, the Church is God's, not ours, so we are all 'hosts' together, we are all part of 'one body'.

While none of this is specifically Methodist, but more generally Christian, I have learned it through the Methodist Christian tradition and have argued in other places[10] about the specific elements of Wesleyan heritage that link to the experience of cosmopolitan Methodists today. As one example, Runyon (1998: 33 – 34) states:

> Wesley is convinced that God's Spirit is at work everywhere in the world extending God's prevenient graciousness among all people…. This conviction concerning God's presence in every human life gives each person infinite value as the object of God's caring.

Another piece of research, which is outside the parameters of this study, would be about the way in which the hymnody of Methodism, reaching back to the Wesley brothers themselves, has impacted on Methodist understanding of cosmopolitanism. Frost and Jordan (2006) narrate how the cosmopolitanism of London Methodism developed through particular 'pioneers' of cosmopolitanism in the past who, in turn, I suggest, would have been inspired by the singing of their traditions. Whilst ethnic diversity was welcomed in some geographical districts of British Methodism, and was in part created and prepared for by the Methodist Missionary Movement I would highlight Davey's comments (1988: 222), at the end of his history of Methodist mission:

> We must be as ready to receive the gospel as our forefathers were to send it to others. Only [then] shall we understand and experience the fullness of Christ in all his grace and power.

This thesis is an in-depth study of the extent to which this has been a reality for one particular congregation. Although my experience has all been lived in England, I would

[10] Including in an as-yet-unpublished paper, *Cosmopolitan Methodists*, delivered to the Methodist Research Conference at the University of Durham, 27th April 2016.

agree with Lartey (2006: 7), who, after writing, “My African heritage constitutes the root of my existence…” goes on to say:

> My Christian heritage has provided the wings for my journey in life. This heritage has influenced me to value not only the richness of the Christian tradition but also that which John Wesley described as its ‘catholic spirit’. That is to say there is something of worldwide significance in this way of understanding God and the world.

While there are these positive correlations of experience across cultures, my conclusion will show that, despite a strong level of goodwill and genuine concern to ‘love the neighbour’ within my study church, Reddie (2009a: 355) is right in saying that, within British Methodism:

> the gains of a more radical and socially engaged form of theological underpinning (that has been able to engage with Black theology in a meaningful fashion) is negated by a continuing allegiance to White, Eurocentric cultural norms.

f) Black and White? An explanation of my use of capitals

Throughout this research I have used capitals for White and Black as they refer to people. I recognize that people’s identities, and the issues involved in thinking about them, are very complex and multi-layered. Nevertheless, I am following Reddie (2003, 2009, 2019) and Shannahan (2010, 2016) in using capitals for Black and White because of my awareness that racism plays a crucial part in our understanding of each other. As I wrote in my earlier piece[11]

> I am using Black and White not because the issues are black and white, but because I choose, along with Reddie (2014: 11), the intentionality of using the term Black which makes “a subversive and thematic challenge to the notion of ‘White’ and Whiteness.”

There were two potential reasons for abandoning this decision. One is that I laid myself open, as one of my participants pointed out, to the accusation: “You’re making all this seem very ‘black and white’! Surely it’s more complicated than that.” (Pauline). I agree

[11] My Reflective Practice piece, Module TH8004, 2016: 16

that there is nothing binary or straightforward about the issues and dynamics which my research covered (Beaudoin and Turpin, 2014: 254) and am careful of Abraham's warning (2015: 382): "The uncritical presentation of identity as something homogenous and static fails to acknowledge the power involved in the very act of naming." Secondly, the language of 'Black' and 'White' also lays me open to a potential criticism that I was using an essentialist view of ethnicity. Ghorashi (2004: 329) helpfully critiques "an essentialist way of studying the questions of identity, home, and belonging. The centrality of the issue of duality presumes a territorial approach in which identity is directly related to 'origin' and thus to 'roots'." I recognize that ethnicity is a social construct and I agree with Jenkins (2004: 114) that, in talking about ethnicity, "we are dealing with the negotiation of boundaries rather than with bounded entities with definitional powers, and therefore with the evaluative function of human activities, not with concretized cultures or identities."

Nevertheless, while clarifying this here at the beginning of my thesis, I continue to use the terms 'Black' and 'White' to describe my participants because of the everyday realities of racism which continue both inside and outside of the church. I argue that to stop using these terms is to keep silent about the power-dynamics which can collude in a dangerous and false reassurance that society, including the churches, has become so 'cosmopolitan', and so familiar with difference, that we are all equal now anyway. While I run the risk of being seen to over-simplify, I consider this risk worth taking as it is important to speak explicitly of negative attitudes which generally people prefer to ignore, perhaps especially within church life, and which, through their silencing, can cause great obstacles to 'loving our neighbour as ourselves'.

While considering the complexity of language and how to refer to people without labelling them, I need also to say, at this point, that I have chosen to use the terms that people use of themselves. While, again, this could lay me open to the accusation of stereo-typing, for example, by my description of somebody as 'Ghanaian', I have only done this through careful attention to how the person describes themselves. The words which people choose for themselves describe what they see as important and so, out of

respect for the participants, I have used the same descriptions which they use as self-description.

My data shows the normative experience of White people, and that this privilege is invisible to many White people, and so I want to use White as an adjective for people with this experience to equal the 'naming' of Black people as Black. My participants were not always Black or White, and those who were White or Black varied from each other in their culture, experience and outlooks (Chapter 2). However, the need for recognition that we all have an ethnic identity is strong and my contribution to this awareness is to highlight it by naming each experience on either side of the privileging that happens within congregational life.

Farnsley (2004: 35), in considering the future of congregational studies, identifies that study of congregations formed by recent immigrants and "what they may teach us about multiculturalism in British society" is "a place where congregational study may well advance social understanding in Britain." My thesis is one such congregational study and I hope that it will contribute to this learning from the experience of those who have been immigrants and are now part of the Body of Christ in British Methodism.

g) An introduction to my chapters

In order to explore the experience and the dynamics of one intercultural congregation I will first introduce my concepts of chapel cosmopolitanism and Cosmopolitan Practical Theology in more detail (Chapter 1). I will then (Chapter 2) explain my methodology and assess its effectiveness for the purposes of the research. In Chapters 3 and 4 I will engage with the concept of 'Havens' (Marti) and 'Intercultural Habit' (Jagessar) looking at the inter-play between them. This will lead to my argument about the impact of the 'norming' of Whiteness on the Cosmopolitan Practical Theology of my study church (Chapter 5) before presenting my conclusions from this research, and its implications for future study and practice.

Chapter 1: Chapel Cosmopolitanism

a) The UK context of cosmopolitan life

The wider social context of my research is the demographic change within the UK. Higher levels of ethnic diversity have become much more the norm across England over the least three decades[12] than previously. These changes have made it more likely for people to have met people from a different country of origin than their own and a bigger proportion of the UK population will now be living in areas where there is a variety of cultures.

Along with the lived experience of globalisation there has been, in academic circles, a resurgence of interest in the concept of cosmopolitanism: "a long-sidelined concept recently reactivated by a wide range of social and political theorists" (Vertovec and Cohen, 2010: 278). In her thorough consideration of the wide uses of the concept, Kang references writers as varied as Diogenes ("I am a citizen of the world", 2013:20), Beck ("Cosmopolitanism without provincialism is empty, provincialism without cosmopolitanism is blind", 2013: 21) and Appiah (who speaks of '"rooted cosmopolitanism", 2013: 40). Kang comments that, in her book, all she can offer is "a glimpse of endless varieties of cosmopolitanism" (2013: 35). However it is interpreted, though, the concept does include a contrast with political nationalism. Vertovec and Cohen (2010: 286) comment: "unlike political nationalism, cosmopolitanism registers and reflects the multiplicity of issues, questions, processes and problems that affect and bind people together, irrespective of where they were born or reside."

Geographers, in considering the cultural diversity of current life, write of 'everyday cosmopolitanism' which is now increasingly the norm, in cities, towns and villages, not only in the more traditionally 'multi-cultural' inner city areas (Vertovec 2007, Valentine 2008, Valentine and Sadgrove 2013). As an example of urban cosmopolitan life, the following excerpt from my Journal (8th August 2017) describes a typical experience for Leicester residents:

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[12] Jivraj, S (2012). How has ethnic diversity grown 1991- 2001- 2011? Economic and Social Research Council. Accessed 14.6.15, from www.ethnicity.ac.uk

> On my fifteen-minute walk from the city centre shops to the flat I have spoken with a Polish woman and her young daughter, who wanted to show me her (very pink) new doll. I've also passed a group of Somalian lads talking about the recent increase in stabbings in London. They were pretending to stab each other and then, when they spotted me waiting to pass, they parted the way with an apology for holding me up. As I approached the flats a Nigerian friend spotted me on his bike and stopped to say hello. Lastly, in the lift, a student with a Spanish accent commented on what I was carrying and asked whether the enormous Halal supermarket opposite sells any "European dinners".

This diversification of the UK population is one result of globalization, but only one part of the picture. Giddens (2012: 11) comments that, whether or not the place where we are living is cosmopolitan in nature, the world has come to us, wherever we live, through the communication revolution:

> Instantaneous electronic communication isn't just a way in which news of information is conveyed more quickly. Its existence alters the very texture of our lives, rich and poor alike. When the image of Nelson Mandela may be more familiar to us than the face of our next-door neighbour, something has changed in the nature of our everyday experience.

We now have a global experience of life wherever we live and the question of how we respond to this experience has become an urgent social and political concern. While some (Harvey 2000, Calhoun 2002) would dispute this I agree with Beck (2006:2) who says: "The important fact now is that the human condition has itself become cosmopolitan."

Much of the literature that makes up the background to this thesis is about the formation of identity in situations of migration and hybridity (hooks 1990, Appadurai 1996, Ghorashi 2004, Cantle 2005, Kyambi 2005, Sandercock and Atilli 2009, Cohen and Toninato 2010, Day and Rogaly 2014). While many people, including myself, relish the experience of this everyday cosmopolitan life, for many it seems only threatening and disorientating. Shannahan (2010:3) comments: "Cities are ambivalent places. Vibrant city-space can be experienced as confusion and its breathless excitement as threatening

disorder. The anonymity of the crowd can be the site of alienating loneliness. The diversity of the city can stimulate a fear of difference or its joyful celebration." I would argue that this is the case for diversity not just in the city but wherever it is encountered. Sandercock (2003:4) comments:

> The threats are multiple: psychological, economic, religious, cultural. It is complicated experiencing fear of 'the Other' alongside fear of losing one's job, fear of a whole way of life being eroded, fear of change itself.

When I began this research, I was surprised that much of what I was reading came from the library sections alongside studies on the threat of terrorism. This reminded me of the British context in which some politicians and media link migration, diversity and threat. Like Baker (2007:24) I want to ask how the church can engage with this sociological reality:

> The significance of interrogation (that is, asking the right questions and thus creating space for new possibilities) should not be minimized. The interrogatory nature of Third Space post-colonial epistemology is part of the performativity that is required of the church and theology if it is to engage more coherently with the complexity of postmodern urban space and civil society.

My research takes its part in this post-colonial interrogation of cosmopolitanism, and the doctoral study has given me the confidence to present and to provoke conversation in academic and church circles. My fieldwork enabled conversation about the dynamics at play within the church which I studied. Previously there had been little explicit 'interrogation' of the relationships within the congregation and, by contrast with McGarrah Sharp's 'mis-understanding stories' (2013), I often found that there were non-understanding or silent mis-understanding stories, which I will detail further in Chapter 4. This thesis contributes towards understanding how the everyday congregational life of British churches does, or doesn't, engage with the 'otherness of the other'.[13]

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[13] I am grateful to my colleague, Sharon Nugent, Learning and Development Officer in the London Team of the Methodist Learning Network, for her insistence that I always ask who is doing the 'othering of others'. In this thesis I am using this term to mean any time when anybody, of any heritage, thinks of, or refers to, somebody different from themselves as 'other'.

In the academic debate about the development and impact of everyday cosmopolitanism, there is a recognition now of what Cohen (Vertovec and Cohen 2010: 284) calls "rooted cosmopolitanism" which acknowledges the need to live within a globalized world whilst still being citizens of a particular neighbourhood. While definitions of a 'cosmopolitan' have varied (in line with the understandings of cosmopolitanism used), I consider a cosmopolitan, in the sense that I am using the word, to mean somebody who is aware of and open to different world cultures, while also being committed to mutual respect and appreciation of the culture of others. This rooted nature of today's UK cosmopolitanism is crucial, theologically speaking, as a reflection of both the universal and the particular relevance of God incarnate. It is Wessendorf (2010: 28) who describes what she calls "corner-shop cosmopolitanism": the situation in which, during the time it takes to buy a carton of milk, a person can encounter many 'other' people from a wide diversity of backgrounds. She recognizes the different dynamics existing alongside each other in parallel and that, whereas many people do develop intercultural competences in public contexts, they often keep to relationships with people like themselves within their private realm of family and close friends. She comments (2010:28):

> I have encountered countless examples of such patterns of social relations which combine parochial-realm mixed relations with much less mixed private relations… Thus, intercultural competences and corner-shop cosmopolitanism are paralleled by more homogenous friendship patterns and social milieus. These social milieus are often divided along class, ethnic, religious and age lines.

These realities of UK cosmopolitanism form the backdrop to my in-depth study of intercultural congregational life.

b) 'Chapel Cosmopolitanism'

In this research I am considering the dynamics within a single congregation which becomes diverse because of the changes in the local population, and I am using the term 'chapel cosmopolitanism' to identify this experience. 'Chapel' is a word which technically refers, in Methodism, to the building within which a congregation meets, but which has,

by popular use, the connotations of a close-knit fellowship. Often ‘chapel’ distinguishes a Methodist Church from an Anglican Church when both are present in a village, and it also conjures up the practices of a smaller group of people who enjoy the warmth of shared history. I’ve, therefore, chosen the term chapel cosmopolitanism as the juxtaposition of these two words is, for me, indicative of the tension of the current experience for many congregations, when the local becomes global unintentionally.

Congregations often experience a diversity which comes from first, second or third generation migrants arriving in their neighbourhood and looking for a local church. Through the changes in local populations (Council for Christian Unity 2004, Jivraj 2012), combined with the history of the missionary movement whereby many Christians from other countries are now looking for local churches to join in the UK (Davey 1988, Frost and Jordan 2006), congregations have become more diverse and often not by choice. It is this experience, of becoming part of one church community, regardless of previous home or family background, together with others from many parts of the world, which I am describing as ‘chapel cosmopolitanism’.

Just as Wessendorf’s participants (2010) varied in their response to corner-shop cosmopolitanism so, too, my participants varied in their response to their own chapel cosmopolitanism. Comments varied from, “We’re such a wonderfully diverse lot” (Jack) to “I wish I still knew everybody… I preferred it like it used to be” (Violet). One participant (Mae) loved the church because it gave her contact with people who could help her improve her English. Another (Benjamin, known as Ben) joined the church because there were already Ghanaians, like himself, when he first went along. All of these participants were part of the chapel cosmopolitanism of my study church. Along with Wessendorf (2010), I am interested in how the people within this everyday cosmopolitanism develop their relationships with others different from themselves.

The work that I have done is also a response to the work of Amin (2002:13) who calls for an enhanced awareness of the significance of what he calls ‘micropublics’: “spaces of compulsory dialogue and prosaic negotiation where, in a sense, people have no option but to engage with citizens from different backgrounds.” His appeal is for researchers to focus on what is already existing rather than on a utopian idea of what might be one day. My study is a response to the chapel cosmopolitanism which exists already and

focuses on church congregations as networks of relationships within which people's personal identities, and a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology, can be developed. In discussing how identities are formed Appiah (2005:68) says:

> Identification… typically has a strong narrative dimension. By way of my identity I fit my life story into certain patterns… and I also fit my life story into larger stories; for example, of a people, a religious tradition, or a race…. Around the world, it matters to people that they can tell a story of their lives that meshes with larger narratives.

During my research I heard the narratives that people told about their own lives as well as about the life of the congregation to which they belonged. The church itself was a combination of three earlier churches which had joined together and, therefore, there was a hybridity that existed from the beginning of the church's life (which is within living memory). The original church membership included people from different parts of the world and yet the questions about culture, power and identity were really not much voiced until the time when I arrived to do my research. There was, I argue, a need for a de-colonialising theology (Mayra 2007, Joy and Duggan 2012) with which to interpret this particular chapel cosmopolitanism. Space does not allow a detailed analysis of this distinction but I would argue that post-colonial theology needs to develop into de-colonialising theology as we are not yet 'post'-colonial, except in chronological terms. We are later than the time of geographical colonies and empires, and yet the legacy and impact of colonialism is still evident, and neo-colonialism is well recognized (Jeon 2018: 2). Baker (2007:25) describes how,

> The interruption of the stately flow of myth, stereotype and enlightened social policy by the voices of those liberating themselves from the colonial past creates an unstable negotiation and translation by which new hybridities emerge and existing hybridities are affirmed.

This statement helped me understand the changes that were at work within my study church and the fears which were a reality for some of my participants, as the church's life was changing. During my research time at this particular church my fieldwork

enabled conversation about the dynamics at play and allowed me to see the instabilities and new hybridities that were developing.

While it was common for my participants to say, one of the other, “She’s Ghanaian” or “One of the White ladies” these people referred to are, of course, complex and very different from one another, however convenient it can be for one member to ‘group’ others in terms of the descriptive words used (Young 1990: 186). The participants within my study church were a mixture of first, second and third generation immigrants and, of course, were individually as complex in their own identities as any other cosmopolitan community. Lartey (2006:10), in developing his study of the pastoral care needed in inter-cultural congregations says of himself, “The point is that my own reality is itself pluriform. My ‘own’ people are a whole bunch – and diverse to the core.” This helps remind us that the experience of everyday and chapel cosmopolitanism will not simply mean the same thing to differing people.

c) Cosmopolitanism and Theology

In this work I am using the word cosmopolitan to refer not simply to the ethnic backgrounds of the people within the congregation but to the approach that people take to one another. The word ‘cosmopolitanism’ has had a very chequered history (Vertovec and Cohen 2010, Agathocleous 2011) and the concept has sometimes been seen as at odds with religion (De Villiers 2014). Consequently, I have been exploring the question of whether a ‘Cosmopolitan Practical Theology’ is possible at all. In the nineteenth century the word ‘cosmopolitan’ was associated with rich people who travelled widely and, without any real engagement with the residents of those places, brought back exotic objects to adorn their homes and to enhance the reputation of their own wealth. Sometimes people who were cosmopolitan, and rich enough to travel often, were criticised for not being grounded in a particular context, and this could be argued to be contrary to the incarnational nature of Christian faith and to the very idea of contextual theology, which is so key for the discipline of Practical Theology (Reddie 2003, Veling 2005, Osmer 2008, Cameron et al. 2010, Miller McLemore 2012, Stoddart 2014, Guest et al. 2016, Bennett et al. 2018). On the other hand, as Vertovec and Cohen (2010: 281)

spell out, “in most settings cosmopolitans have been seen as deviant… refusing to define themselves by location, ancestry, citizenship or language.” This description chimes with a Christian insistence that family or tribal heritage is not enough to define whether or not a person can consider themselves Christian[14]. There is rich and thorough consideration of the biblical background to these concepts (Volf 1996, Veling 2005, Ramirez-Johnson 2018) which is beyond the scope of this thesis.[15] However, the very richness of the history of the concept, and its relevance in the current political climate[16], encouraged me to continue to think about what chapel cosmopolitanism might mean. In studying the formation of identity within cosmopolitan situations, Vertovec and Cohen (2010: 279) write:

> At a social, or more intimate personal level – many individuals now seem to be more than ever prone to articulate complex affiliations, meaningful attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, people, places and traditions that lie beyond the boundaries of their resident nation-state. This holds especially for migrants, members of ethnic diasporas and other transnational communities.

In my research I have seen this to be also accurate of people who have not migrated themselves but belong to transnational communities through travel, twinning of churches, family migration and a sense of being part of a world-wide church[17]. In asking what we mean by a ‘cosmopolitan outlook’ Beck (2006:3) suggests: “An everyday, historically alert, reflexive awareness of ambivalences in a milieu of blurring differentiations and cultural contradictions.” This description is very helpful in identifying which of my participants had this outlook and also in recognising the diversity of outlooks within the same congregation. In addition, I want to ask what a cosmopolitan practical theological outlook would be. Here the work of Veling (2005: 110) about how we encounter God in ‘the other’ has been critical to me.

[14] It also chimes with a strong tradition of non-Conformist Christianity, present in my own up-bringing, which would affirm the need for Christians to be counter-cultural where they prioritise a Gospel imperative over a need to ‘fit in’ with the surrounding culture.
[15] Additionally, Kang (2013) looks at the global theological implications of cosmopolitanism, compared to my own work which is focused on local chapel cosmopolitanism.
[16] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-37788717 Accessed 26.7.19.
[17] Chapters 3 and 4 will examine some of these features of Central Methodist Church life in more detail.

> The biblical tradition relates the originality of human personality to the originality of divine personality. The human person is 'like no other' because each person is 'made in the image of God' (Gen. 1:27). Human originality is found in divine resemblance. You are holy and like no other because you are in the image of God who is holy and like no other.

This key theological concept was familiar to my participants, even when they didn't find it easy to articulate, and helped to form my participants' responses to the chapel cosmopolitanism which they found themselves encountering as their church life evolved. Veling summarises (2005: 104), "We must engrave upon our hearts and repeat to our children: each person's existence is as holy and irreplaceable as the very holiness and irreplaceability of God." I began my research with this personal theological starting point, and set out to explore how it was manifested, or not, within chapel cosmopolitanism.

While they are not approaching this from a specifically theological perspective, I have chosen, as my definition of cosmopolitanism, Nowicka and Rovisco's definition (2009:2), "A practice which is apparent in things that people do and say to positively engage with the 'otherness of the other'". It relates not simply to the experience of living alongside diverse people, but reflects, too, the theological approach of Veling, about willingness to be open to 'other' people, because we are all made in the image of God, and we need each other to gain a fuller understanding of God. Given that all theology needs to be rooted, it is important for the cosmopolitan theology of which I write to be specific to particular human experience and to experience of lived community. Bretherton (2015: 15) comments:

> From the Christian perspective, there is no such thing as a love of humanity in general, but only a love of particular persons in particular places…. Truly loving relations necessarily involve particularity, limits and points of exchange at both an individual and communal level.

I see Cosmopolitan Practical Theology as a response to the diversity of relationships which reflect the nature of God and to the challenges that this gives to live out the

commandment to 'love your neighbour as yourself'[18], both within the congregation and within local communities.

d) "The Tree God planted"[19]

One difficulty for Methodism, in living out a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology, is the legacy of the Methodist Missionary Movement. This legacy, which I have seen in the collective culture of many congregations during my professional experience, is both positive towards people from other places but also often paternalistic, and sometimes racist. This makes it very difficult for those people whose ancestors became Christian, during this same period of history, often through the work of the Methodist Missionary Movement, to live their Christian lives in a thoroughly participative way currently in the UK. For elderly Methodists, who have always lived in the UK, and are often still in positions of power in the Methodist Church in Britain, the consistent message throughout their life-times was, in a paraphrase, "*We* need to be *generous* to those *poor people* in other places who do not know the gospel and do not have enough to eat nor shoes on their feet." This encouraged giving and fund-raising for 'overseas missions'[20] but also strengthened the perception that White British people have the answers and solutions, while those from other countries need to receive what the White people can give. Bosch (1993: 448) comments,

> By the time large-scale Western colonial expansion began, Western Christians were unconscious of the fact that their theology was culturally conditioned; they simply assumed that it was supracultural and universally valid. And since Western culture was implicitly regarded as Christian, it was equally self-evident that this culture had to be exported together with the Christian faith.

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[18] Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:39. This quotation, along with the parable of the 'Good Samaritan', was most often quoted by my participants when they were considering how they felt they knew how to treat people different from themselves.

[19] This is the name of the 1985 study by Walton, from a phrase which Sybil Phoenix, a well-known Caribbean-British local preacher, and racial justice campaigner, used to describe herself in the study.

[20] Still, when I visit Methodist churches or look up their websites, in my role as a District Mission Enabler, it is not unusual for a church to completely equate fund-raising for activity in other countries with their own 'mission'.

Sadly, this approach is still evident in local British congregations[21] and there is a need to bring a de-colonizing theory to the study of local church work as well as to the wider societal picture if Belonging Together (mentioned in my Introduction) is not simply to remain an optimistic vision. While there are different church models[22] operating within the everyday cosmopolitanism of Britain, I have chosen to study ethnically diverse congregations. From my professional experience, I would agree with Sheffield (2005:24) that,

> The heterogeneous congregation emphasizes the enriching aspect of culturally diverse peoples worshipping and interacting together. Thus, peoples of Anglo, European, Asian, Caribbean and African backgrounds seek to find ways that affirm, rather than sublimate, their cultural identity in the context of the church which is a community of solidarity – sharing similar beliefs and religious heritage. This is seen to be an affirmation of the gospel message of reconciliation and the concern to break down barriers of separation.

Although my personal life and ministry experience has led me to be committed to this model of single ethnically diverse congregations, I am not unaware of the dangers and pit-falls of this heterogeneous congregational model. I am also acutely aware of the need for reflexivity about my own Whiteness as a researcher (about which I will say more in the next chapter) and of the need to hear from those for whom this model is most costly. Sybil Phoenix, who described herself as 'the tree God planted' also said (Hooker and Sargent, 1991: 103):

> I've said more than once that it's the devil that kept me in the Methodist Church – I've been angry with the Methodist Church and I've said that to infuriate them. But it must be God that keeps me there because he wants me to do a job. I'm sort of there to make people think, to worry their conscience. And so I refuse to

[21] It is beyond the scope of my research to consider the impact of this colonialist missionary approach on those who have left already-existing churches in Britain, after their migration here, to begin or join churches which allow them more equality of regard and more equal access to full participation in congregational life. Olofinjana (2015 and 2017) includes important work on this subject.

[22] See Sheffield, 2005, for a summary of these models.

> disappear… I’m not giving up. I’m not going anywhere. So the Methodist Church will have to cope with me.

My following chapters will consider to what degree the participants at my study church were able to live out a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology, and first I need to describe the methodology that I used in order to carry out this research.

Chapter 2: Methodology

a) Methodology for a complexity of people

In response to the complexities of cosmopolitan life I chose an ethnographic methodology that would help me discover how the Christian commitment to 'love your neighbour as yourself' works out in practice within a local British congregation[23]. Hopewell's comment (1987:3) had a resonance with my own professional experience: "I have begun to see how astonishingly thick and meaning-laden is the actual life of a single local church." A congregational study meant that I could investigate, at close hand, how the intercultural dynamics of a congregation work (Ammerman et al. 1998, Guest et al. 2004). I chose an ethnographic study with multiple methods so that I could include participant-observation, interview and focus groups, because I needed to triangulate the data and build up a rich picture of the complexity of the church's life. It was also important to allow time for people to develop a trust that meant they could speak with me (Clark-King 2004:12). In all of this I aimed to respond to Bennett's plea (2013: 134):

> We need to pay less attention to the hunt for a transferable and generalizable model of making connections, and more attention to the discipline of seeing well those individual minute particulars that lie before us: critically, imaginatively and courageously...

Taking post-colonial theology as my starting point (Keller et al. 2004, Sebastian 2012, McGarrah Sharp 2013), and very conscious of my own position of privilege as a White researcher (Frankenberg 1997, Perkinson 2004, Beaudoin and Turpin 2014), I wanted to respect Brett's conclusion (2012: 128): "Postcolonial repentance includes not only confessing to the collusion of Christianity and colonialism, but, as a consequence, resolutely resisting new temptations to exercise mastery over others." It was vital that I settled on a methodology that would give time and attention to the variety of experiences within the congregation, where some would feel confident to volunteer to

[23] Fulkerson (2007) is an excellent study of this kind in American Methodism.

be interviewed and some would not. I wanted to avoid the danger of which bell hooks speaks (1990: 151):

> Often this speech about the 'Other' annihilates, erases: 'no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own… I am still the coloniser, the speaking subject, and you are now at the centre of my talk.

Conversations with friends, from differing ethnic backgrounds, within the church, had made me very aware of this issue and my earlier D. Prof. study of 'Whiteness'[24] had also increased my sense that we can learn from God as we learn from others different to ourselves. Scharen and Vigen (2011: 238) put it this way: "Our efforts to both respect and listen to difference within a polyphonic dialogue is rooted in our very understandings of God…. Such relationality – self-giving communion within difference – is the essence of God's own life." As I prepared for the fieldwork, I also kept the words of Abraham (2015: 398) in mind when she writes "… what ought to bear the name of postcolonial theology is fundamentally a spiritual exercise of unselving rather than the demarcation of problematic cultural or national identity."

I planned to undertake an ethnographic study, working with one church for a year, but in the end, I extended this time to twenty-one months (February 2016 – November 2017). I had originally imagined (from previous experience of people with undecided immigration status or with English as a third or fourth language) that it might be those who had migrated who needed extra time to grow in confidence. This was the case with some of my participants. Mae, for example, refused initially to be interviewed but then talked to me increasingly over the weeks and eventually opened up enough to agree to be interviewed.

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[24] Stage 1 Portfolio (Module 8004*, A Reflection on my Whiteness and its significance for my practice as a Methodist minister.*)

> (Journal, 23rd October 2016) Mae was there, and came to talk with the group of women where I was sitting. I smiled and joined in the conversation, talking about local schools, without mentioning the research as she has never got back to me about it and I don't want to pressurise her. Her English is not so fluent either.

> (Journal, 22nd January 2017) This conversation has taken about 5 months to arrange because the first mention of it was treated with suspicion and so I left it. My first letter had had no response either and I took this as perhaps she'd not want to be involved. The following couple of months I just said hello and stayed friendly. Then I talked again after I'd already met with some others who she knows. Last time we agreed we'd talk after today's service and I was very pleased that she'd clearly come expecting to do that. I think that, once we started, she was glad to be doing this, and to be telling me what she thinks. I wonder, after we've spoken about it, whether the course she's done recently at work has helped her to have the confidence to do this… or whether it's just taken her a while to decide that I'm OK. Could be either!

At the same time, however, there were also many older people at the church (all of UK origin) who refused to be interviewed throughout the process. I was reminded of Ward (2004: 132) and her comments, building on the work of Visweswaran (1994), about the need to engage with the 'silence' of those who refuse to be interviewed, and her reminder that ethnography includes participation in dynamics of power. This sub-section of the congregation chose to talk with me and to express their views, increasingly frankly, as the research continued. They were aware of what my research was about, and they wanted to share their opinions but did not want to be officially part of the process.

Extending my time with the congregation meant that I was able to engage more with those who were White, elderly, and who saw themselves as the 'host'[25] community but were less certain about wanting the diversification which was occurring. Nevertheless, this left me with a dilemma about how to include data from my multiple conversations

[25] The term 'host' congregation is not a term that I find helpful, sharing the reservations of Acolatse (Unpublished AAR paper, 2013) about the way that the term emphasizes the power of those who see themselves as able to welcome others. I will write more about this in Chapter 5.

with this sub-section of the congregation. It would have been easiest to have left them out of the fieldwork data, recognizing Sanjek's comment (2014: 66):

> As the ethnographic process unfolds, the fieldworker must constantly make decisions about where to be, who to listen to, what events to follow, and what to safely ignore and leave out.

However, I decided from my participant-observation that this potential gap in the data would have been very significant. Instead, following Bold (2012: 153) I have created two composite characters, Violet and Norman, who represent those views which were freely given to me by people who knew the work I was doing but chose not to be interviewed, in order to preserve their anonymity. Violet was not 'a shrinking violet' and wanted me to know her opinions, talking to me at coffee times and at social events I attended. Violet and Norman also helped at most of the social outreach activities of the church and so I met with them often. They did not choose to attend the focus groups that I organized but their approach to the chapel cosmopolitanism of the church became key for my conclusions. I recognise that I have needed to avoid stereotyping[26]. I cannot assume that any one or two people would voice all the comments of various older people, any more than I could assume that all teenagers at the church would think similarly on every topic. So, Violet and Norman voice, in this writing up of the research, the expressed views of several particular older White people.

As my research progressed, I realized that I was not going to be able to involve Violet or Norman in the same way as other participants, and so I began to adapt my strategy accordingly (Gilbert 2008: 279-280), as it was important to include all perspectives. Firstly, I began to ask my three older White interviewees about their own perceptions of the views of some of their generation within the congregation. This gave me three views to compare with my own. Secondly, I decided not to follow up any of the comments of this older generation with questions, as I didn't want them to feel that they were being

[26] I want to heed the warning of Hall (1997: 258): "Stereotyping… is part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological', the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them. It facilitates the 'binding' or bonding together of all of Us who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community'; and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them – 'the Others- who are in some way different – 'beyond the pale'."

‘studied’ particularly. Instead, I was spurred on to make sure that my field notes recorded as immediately and accurately as possible exactly what was said. Thirdly, I extended the length of my participant-observation time as I calculated that it would take a longer time then I had anticipated for some people to open up. There was a moment when Violet said, “You’re still here then?” (Journal, 22nd January 2017) and her smile showed that she hadn’t expected me to ‘stick around’. The fact that I had seemed to encourage her to open up with me. I was grateful for this extra time as I think the picture given by my data is fuller as a result.

Methodists are often reluctant to be explicit about beliefs or faith (Marsh et al 2004, Clark-King 2004: 8- 9, Richter 2004: 176) and I found this to be the case in my own work. Nevertheless, I agree with De Certeau (1984) about the significance of the everyday in understanding people’s culture. Punch (1998:157) writes: “Ethnography means describing a culture and understanding a way of life from the point of view of its participants” and this is what I have attempted to do. Beck (2000: 29), in writing about Methodist culture, explains that within Methodism: “Tradition depends for its transmission first and foremost on the corporate life of the Church, the shared faith of its members, communicated by casual conversation and lived example”. My participants were varied and so my combination of varied methods was designed to best ascertain how people different from one another live out the theological command to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’.

b) Identifying the study church

My study church was identified, through professional connections with Methodists, as both ethnically diverse and far enough away from where I had previously worked as a local minister. This was important in the light of the insider-outsider debates within ethnographic study (Brown and Casanova 2014, Bennett et al 2018). It emerged, in my first conversation with the minister, Judith, who is White, that the leadership team had recently begun to engage with the issues surrounding increasing ethnic diversity. This was helpful to me because I wanted the church members with whom I worked to have some choice and agency about addressing my research questions (Cameron et al, 2010:

63). I met with the Church Leadership Team (CLT), having sent a description of the research in advance, and there was clear agreement that the team would like to welcome me as a participant-observer. This meeting was my first indication that the church had generally higher educational levels than I had been used to within my own ministry thus far. As the CLT members had good levels of understanding about research we were able to agree about how to introduce my work and who might be approached for the focus groups, on that first evening.

c) Introducing myself to the church

In February 2016 I made my first visit to the church on a Sunday, taking with me a poster about my research as the church administrator advised that this was the surest way of communicating with everybody at the church. This was also put into the monthly magazine and onto one of the noticeboards where it stayed throughout the fieldwork. For the first few months I also took along fliers which explained my project, included my photo and invited people to be in touch. Even on the first visit I was approached by four people who said they would like to be involved. Participants were always given the flier, an information sheet and the consent form. The consent forms were filed in a locked filing cabinet, as they were returned.

On my first Sunday at the church the steward on duty introduced me and invited people to talk with me or with any member of the CLT if they'd like to know more. This was an agreed and helpful introduction which made my role as a researcher clear but also made it clear that the CLT were involved in the work too (Cameron et al. 2010).

It was, of course, impossible to know how much people understood, noticed or remembered about what was said. I remained conscious of Gilbert's warning (2008: 272):

> It is increasingly accepted that the most faithfully-negotiated overt approach inescapably contains some covertness, in that, short of wearing a sign, ethnographers cannot signal when they are or are not collecting data.

Unsurprisingly, I found that months later there were people who asked who I was and hadn't noticed the poster about me on the board, so it's certain that not everybody was aware. However, I am confident that our joint approach to the introduction of the research was appropriate for what was needed.

d) Central Methodist Church

The church I studied (which I will call Central Methodist Church, or sometimes simply Central) is a town centre church of 110 members (in a town I will call Hill Town) with a regular worshipping Sunday morning congregation of between 60 – 100 people. Of these, approximately one third are from backgrounds other than White British. The White British people have a mixture of English, Scottish and Irish backgrounds, with quite a variety of accents. Those who are not White British are also diverse, with a bigger proportion of them being from Caribbean and Ghanaian backgrounds, but a smaller number from Sri Lanka, Kenya and Tonga. The age-range is from 0 – 98, including families from a variety of backgrounds. The educational and income levels are relatively high and the amount of fund-raising and charitable giving is generous. The church building dates from the 1980s and was built as several Methodist churches sold their buildings and came together to build in the centre of the town. The church is in a prominent location and has a reputation locally because of its impressive community spirit and the premises are well used for community use. There is a focus on prayer and on members living out faith in practical ways. There is a clear commitment to be a positive part of the town's life. As Paul said to me, about the church: "There's a real buzz about this place now. A real buzz!" (Journal, 30th July 2017).

Hill Town itself is a medium sized town in the Midlands. Though it has a long history it grew to more prominent size when people moved to work on the railways and manufacturing grew up around the area. The town has gradually incorporated many of the surrounding villages and the population is currently around 100,000. The average wage in 2019 was just slightly above the average wage of the UK. People have moved here, over successive generations, firstly from different parts of the UK and then from other countries over the past fifty years, for various employment opportunities. As the

manufacturing industries of the area began to dwindle other industries have developed and, as for many parts of the Midlands, transport and warehousing has become a big employer for attracting more people to live in the area. Nearly 90% of the local population self-described as 'White British' in the last census and so Central Methodist Church, has a higher degree of ethnic diversity within the congregation than its surrounding population. This congregation reflects the migration of people from other places, in the UK and beyond, into the town, over the past 80 years, and also reflects the initiative of those who have migrated into the town for work.

e) Recruiting participants

Following the first CLT meeting I wrote letters to all the people suggested by the CLT as potential participants. It was encouraging that most of those I approached agreed readily. Mae was clearly very reluctant and I left her with the information and consent sheets but made it clear that there was no pressure to join in. Another older White woman, Brenda, expressed complete surprise that she had been suggested, and also showed some reluctance. Both of these women joined in the research at a later date, as interviewees, once they had got to know me a bit more. I did not invite them to the focus groups as I wanted to ensure that they felt no pressure. One of the Ghanaian men, Samuel, said that he'd be very happy to help, and often came to talk to me at church, but we never managed to find a time when we could meet and he was never able to attend the focus groups. I have included him among my participants as we had many conversations, while we were at church together. One of the Ghanaian women, Esther, took ill, almost as soon as I'd first met with the CLT and, to everybody's shock and distress, died quite quickly. In fact, Esther became a part of the research through an event organized in her memory (explained further in Chapter 4).

f) The 'messiness' of the research

Ward (2004) comments on the messiness of ethnographic study and certainly there were some loose ends and difficulties along the way. In particular, the focus group members were mostly not able to attend all three sessions. My rationale for organizing

focus groups as part of the research was to encourage conversation between participants about chapel cosmopolitanism and to cross-reference this with the interviews which I expected would give me their own individual ideas but not enable them to talk with one another. I knew from my earlier pilot research with ministers of ethnically diverse churches[27], that cosmopolitan congregations require opportunities for people to talk together about the issues that chapel cosmopolitanism creates. The reasons for not being able to gather the same group of people were about differences of life-style (shared and serial parenting, multiple jobs and shift-working) which effected the church's life in general. My inability to get the same, but varied, group of people together consistently for my own purposes simply mirrors an issue within the church about the inability to do this for other purposes. It, therefore, becomes part of the data. Nevertheless, the focus groups gathered different combinations for conversation on three occasions and each one contributed to my conclusions during my data analysis.[28] At the first focus group a grandma brought along her granddaughters. I had actively planned not to include children but their presence was safe (because the grandma had parental responsibility) and was a useful reminder of the other diversities within the church. As part of my participant-observation I got to know some of the young people a little and the conversations I had with them also became part of my data.

In my ethics proposal (approved Feb. 2016) I wrote:

> Where there are details which potentially give away the identity of the church or of individuals and without which the data cannot be used I will need to leave this data out of my arguments, however useful it may seem, unless I have the specific permission of the participants involved and their understanding of what the risks to themselves might be.

In the event there was one person, who I am simply mentioning now, whose story was difficult and who could not be anonymised and, therefore will not appear among the participants. While this was disappointing, as the data would have been very useful, and

[27] Marsh (2016)
[28] Appendix 1

at one level seems ungrateful to him as he gave his time and experience, it was a necessary decision.

Despite the 'messiness' above, all of the experience contributed to my learning and all of this sharing in this particular chapel cosmopolitanism was a privilege. My time at the church included a lot of laughter. Ben, for example, often made us laugh during a focus group. Marilyn can be hilarious. Chris, who seems very dry and serious in many respects, often made gentle and humorous remarks to people. While I would have loved to include a study of the use of humour in congregational life, this was not possible and the research on this remains to be done, as it was certainly a significant part of the church's congregational life.

g) Becoming a participant as well as an observer

There were limitations to my availability but I attended at least monthly on a Sunday morning for worship and participated in other events and activities (including food bank, social meals, committee meetings, and fund-raising events). I decided not to try and attend any of the small group meetings for Bible Study because of the difficulty of attending more than once and the sense that this would 'disrupt' the group to the point that I would not be able to observe what usually happened. I was also not able to attend the five different small groups and so my experience would be limited to one particular group which might not have been representative of the others. Instead, I learned about the impact of these different worship and fellowship groups through the interviews and conversations that I held. Similarly, it was not possible for me to attend the various monthly worship events that were a different style to the Sunday morning or to join in with any of the family or children's activities. In all these cases I learned, again, about these by talking with the families, workers and parents about their experiences. By taking part in the Sunday worship, which was where the majority of members met regularly, I was able to build up a picture of the place of the various events and activities of the congregation within the life of the church. This general 'being around' was a key component of the research and even people with whom I had no conversation were, in this way, part of my learning about chapel cosmopolitanism (Sanjek 2014: 68).

Initially I was nervous each time I visited the church. I was not used to not being the minister. I was not used to being a researcher. I wondered how much I'd be asked and how much I would need to explain. From the beginning I found what many others, of various life-experiences, reported: that there was a warm welcome[29]. Over the months, I relaxed and began to feel that I was part of what was going on. Imperceptibly almost, I moved from being a newcomer and a stranger to being somebody who valued the prayers and support of other members of the church, and felt that I could join in as an active member of the congregation.[30] There were times when I needed my reflexivity as a researcher as I could imagine becoming 'native' to the congregation and losing my 'outsider's eye' (Bryman 2012: 445). This danger was exaggerated for me because of the difficulty all ministers face of being in some sense 'outside' the congregation, and yet also wanting to be 'within' it. I was not wearing a clerical collar and was always sitting amongst the congregation, and so it was easier to feel that I could just be part of the church along with the other members. I found it particularly helpful to recognize the work of Brown and Casanova (2014: 212):

> The theoretically distinct insider/outsider dichotomy is complicated in practice by the fact that researchers may be simultaneously placed in both roles (matching research subjects in nationality, for example, but not in class standing). Some researchers consider themselves insiders simply because they share similar race, socioeconomic status, or cultures; however, their presence in the field as a researcher makes them an outsider.

I dealt with these experiences of insider-outsider self-awareness through reflection and journal-writing (Walton 2004, Moon 2004) and by talking with others, including D. Prof. colleagues.

[29] See Chapter 3 for more data and description.

[30] Even though in Methodist terms I was not technically a Methodist member of this church at any stage.

h) Keeping records and noting reflections

As part of my methodology I kept fieldnotes as I went along. I was determined not to write notes in public as this would have drawn attention to myself and I was sure that it would deter some people from talking with me. Sometimes, when a lot had happened all at once, I found a way to write things up out-of-sight and found the toilets to be a helpful place to do this! (Gilbert 2008: 274). It was also useful to me that mobile phones have become so accepted as it meant I could make very quick notes while appearing to be checking a message. On the whole, though, I did rely on developing memory strategies until after I had left the premises and found a place to type up my observations. I decided that, on every occasion I could, I would stop, before and after my visits to the church, to write my journal and to record my field-notes while they were fresh in my mind. This gave me further data to put alongside my interview and focus group transcriptions. These entries gave me opportunity to go back and re-visit the original fieldwork experiences as I have reflected further through my data- analysis (Thorne 2000: 69, Boud 2001: 14).[31]

Through the research I questioned and developed my own observations by testing them out with others in conversation. My experience at the Harvest Festival meal event (described in Chapter 5), for example, became a more helpful experience as I talked with others about it afterwards, and like the examples used by McGarrah Sharp (2013) the ‘original stories’ themselves grew in significance as I collected, later, perceptions and interpretations from my participants. I was constantly challenged by the need to ‘let go’ of what I thought I knew from decades of intercultural experience, and to be careful in observing and reflecting what was happening.

i) Interviews

After several visits to the church, and after talking informally a few times with all those who’d volunteered or agreed to be involved, I began to arrange and to conduct my first

[31] See Moon (2004: 194) on ‘double-entry journals’ and Sanjek (2014: 70) on ‘head-notes’ being added to ‘field-notes’.

round of interviews. I decided to let the interviewee determine where and when we met, as much as was possible, to encourage their sense of agency and confidence by seeing that I trusted them with this choice (Clark-King 2004: 10). Of the 18 interviews I conducted three of the interviews were with pairs of people (two married couples and one couple of friends), 8 of them were held in a space at the church, and 11 of them were held in people's homes. On 5 occasions I was given a meal by the interviewee in their home. Of the 8 held at church this choice of venue was mainly because of time pressures or because of the family circumstances in the interviewee's home[32]. One of the interviewees asked to meet at church for the first interview but then invited me to her home for the second one once she had got to know me better. The experiences of being invited into people's homes really helped me to pick up a sense of the wider culture of the host's life circumstances and it felt a privilege to be invited in this way (Clark-King 2004: 10). These experiences added to the richness of my data and the thickness of my encounters with people.

Originally my intention had been to interview each of my interviewees twice and my aim had been to put these two rounds in between the 1st and 2nd, and then the 2nd and 3rd focus groups. This did not work out as neatly as I had planned (Gilbert 2008: 279)! This was partly because of the length of time it took to conduct the first round. I could not always organise more than one interview on the same date which would have helped if it had been possible. I had to wait for people to be free and, apart from the retired people, this was often complicated because of their busy lifestyles and work patterns. Additionally, it became clear that two interviews were not always needed in the way that I had originally imagined. There were opportunities to talk with the interviewees in the context of 'normal' church life, and in some cases I had got to know them quite well before the official interview was arranged. On a couple of occasions, I phoned interviewees if there was something in the interview that I wanted to follow up and I knew that another interview would not be practical (Bryman 2012: 214). Just over half of

[32] The fact that none of the Ghanaians invited me to their homes could simply have been circumstantial or could have shown a nervousness about sharing their home-life with me. I chose not to ask about this as it was important to me not to say or ask anything that might imply disappointment or regret about the relationships we were developing for the research.

the interviewees (9 out of 16) were also people who came to participate in the Focus Groups and this gave further opportunity to deepen my understanding of their experience without a second interview. In the end, of the 16 people who I interviewed officially I went back to do a second round of interviews with 7 of these people.

The interviews varied in style and context, but the average length was 45 minutes. I was conscious of needing to adapt my style of conversation and approach to the character and the approach of the participant, mindful of the warning of Ryen (2000: 220), "If the cross-cultural dimension is underestimated or ignored… the population may become a victim of methodological discrimination." I used a semi-structured approach by starting with some general conversation first to put people at their ease. My key questions were always "What have you found helps you to feel that you belong in this church?" and "What things make it hard to feel you belong in this church?" Apart from that I allowed the interviewee to lead the conversation as they chose (Clark-King 2004:9). Even when they appeared to be 'leaving the subject' I had decided to be relaxed about this as my previous pastoral experience has taught me that I often learn what people most want me to learn by letting them choose the direction of the conversation (Sanjek 2014:68).

Sometimes, as I transcribed the interviews, I noticed that I talked more than I would ideally. The fact that I was transcribing as I went along helped me to recognise this and to discipline myself to talk less, where this was possible, during later interviews. The interviews varied a lot in terms of how hard it was to get people to talk as people's confidence and experience varied greatly, as well as people having different characters. I recorded each interview on two separate devices because I decided not to take notes at the time. I am aware of the way in which some people see note-taking as threatening and decided that if I had two recording devices then I could be sure of getting at least one recording to transcribe. This worked well. I was surprised at how easily most people agreed to the recordings and that, even when people seemed nervous at the beginning, they very quickly forgot it was happening. I was also interested in how liberating I found this experience as I am usually something of an addictive note-taker. I was often exhausted at the end of a session, especially as I attempted to transcribe as soon as I could after the interview. However, by transcribing soon after the interview I was able to

capture more of what I heard and saw and understood of the tone of voice, the pauses and the laughter.

j) Analysis of the three focus groups

My research design included three 'focus groups' where I expected to glean a fuller picture of the complexity of relationships while participants were talking about the issues of diversity within the church. Planning three focus groups was intended to give enough time for people to relax with each other and to think and pray in between meetings, before the next opportunity to build on earlier conversations. Although there were changes to the plans, mentioned above, I am pleased that they did achieve these aims. My participants were committed enough to the process that we did get some continuity and the conversations included more personal and open debate by the later meetings, which may not have been possible if we had just met once.

It is also note-worthy that the older White participants tended to reply quickly to emails about the focus groups, and interviews, and to be able to plan ahead with precision. Those who were younger, including the Black participants, often did not reply until I texted them, or replied but were unable to commit, for work and family reasons, until a day or two before. All of the adult participants showed commitment to the process and I'm grateful for this. They were simply not all able to prioritise it equally in terms of attendance. This pattern is familiar in other areas of the church's life too.

The three focus groups showed the part that humour plays in the way that people get together: there is a lot of kindly and gentle laughter at this church. I wonder whether it creates, or is the product of, the various positive relationships that are found in the congregation. The fact that some people knew each other quite well added to the relaxed nature of the conversations that we were able to have and it felt a privilege to be there.

In the first gathering (October 2016) I outlined my research and explained what I mean by Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. I then presented a variety of photos of objects around the church premises as a focal point for conversation (photo elicitation as

described in Bryman 2012: 455, 547). In the second one I used Bible passages and hymn verses that I had previously found to have significance for some people in relation to these issues. In the third I presented the five original features for a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology which I had been working with during the research (outlined in my introduction). In each case these prompts worked as good conversation starters and we moved on to other topics as people showed an interest.

The middle focus group (February 2017) was a very small group of four, despite having the date arranged in advance. The reasons, however, were unavoidable and are indicative of the kinds of difficulties that make it hard for the church to get consistent attendance at other kinds of meetings too. This smaller gathering was a diverse combination of people and they engaged quite closely with one another on subjects which they had not discussed with each other before, including a conversation about gay relationships within the church.

When we talked about the church's worship, and a recent questionnaire (organized by the CLT) which had led to some difficult conversation around the difference of style in worship, there was a 'hedging around' of the conversation and an agreement that nothing had really changed. One participant said that he feels the recent 10 – 10.30 a.m. worship 'experiment' (Chapter 3, pp. 67- 68) had not been communicated properly and so it had caught people off guard and not really helped people who didn't want change to approach it positively. During the conversation there was a sense of deepening engagement and genuine interest in, and care for, each other which I found moving.

There was an unplanned long gap between the second and the third focus groups. This had allowed time for me to finish the extra interviews that I wanted to do, over the Summer, following on from conversation in the first two groups, and for second interviews with some participants. On Sundays, and other visits to the church, I had been keeping in touch with participants and assuring them that we would have a third and final focus group. Seven participants came to the third group (October 2017). As this focus group approached, I was concerned, and disappointed, as it became clear that there may be only one or two of the Black participants with us. One sent apologies as she was in Ghana, due to the death of her father and her father-in-law. One sent a text earlier in the day saying that he was needed unexpectedly for child-care due to his wife's

unplanned change in work pattern. I had hoped that the Black British participant would come but in the end she didn't and I later received a very, very apologetic email saying that she had completely forgotten and that she was feeling 'gutted' about it. It was, however, good to have the two Sri Lankan participants for the first time. As well as the fact that they had had real health issues at the time of the first two focus groups I had also had the sense that they were initially reluctant to join in an open conversation about my research topic. However, by the time of the third focus group they had hosted me at their home twice, for two separate interviews, and during those two conversations they had become more open about their experiences so I was pleased that they felt able to come to this final focus group.

On this third and final occasion I explained, as a focus, the five components of a 'Cosmopolitan Practical Theology' that I'd been working with through the research, and then asked for comments about whether, or not, the participants felt that this church exhibits these markers. There were some clear signs that participants had been considering some of the material from our conversations in earlier focus groups, as well as drawing on their own observations of their church's life.

Overall, I was pleased with my decisions to use focus groups as part of my ethnographic study, but also glad that I had decided to include a variety of methods for gathering data. Being able to triangulate what I was told individually in interviews, with the joint conversations in the focus groups, and my own reflections as a participant-observer has given me confidence that I have a rounded picture of the congregational life of my participants[33].

k) Final service

As my ministry has developed, and I have moved on to various new roles, I have been very struck by how important helpful 'endings' can be. Initially I had not related this to the fieldwork, but as it came towards its end, I noticed that I needed to encourage this

[33] Notwithstanding that I am the filter for all of these perceptions and therefore what I pass on to you, the reader, is limited by what people were willing to share with me, and coloured by my interpretation of what I experienced.

very helpful congregation by appreciating their involvement and acknowledging that I would not be attending any longer. As the congregation experiences fairly frequent change, with a locally mobile population, I wanted the church to be clear that it was not for any negative reason that I would no longer attend. I arranged with the CLT to speak briefly at the end of my last service (19th November 2017), to thank people and explain that I was leaving. I was very glad that I did this. The experience of standing at the front facing the congregation, the only time that I had this perspective, was quite overwhelming. It was very moving to face so many faces who had all contributed in some way or other to my research. It also struck me very forcibly what a different role I have had in this church, from the one I usually have. At the beginning of the research I had been concerned that I would feel like I was the 'minister' and, as I have mentioned, the change of role was initially quite a challenge. Facing the congregation, at this last service, I realized how very different this participant-observer research experience had been for me. I was also personally very moved to see so many kindly people who had encouraged and supported me with their prayers and conversation.

My final reason for being glad that I asked for this opportunity to address people together was that two people approached me as soon as the service was over, having not spoken to me before, and talked to me about their perspective on my research topic. While this was, in one sense, quite frustrating as I imagined how the conversations could have gone deeper over time, it was a helpful reminder that there would have been no more appropriate time to stop as there would always have been more to discover.

l) Transcriptions and re-listening

From the beginning I was determined to transcribe my interviews and focus groups myself. This gave me many hours of listening, and re-listening. After a couple of months, during a supervision, I decided it was not necessary to transcribe every single word and that I would make some choices about the significance of various bits of the conversation. Where the interview or focus group wandered right off topic I did not necessarily transcribe this.

I was very glad that none of my participants objected to me recording the interviews. Unexpectedly, time driving and at the gym both proved to be excellent contexts for re-listening to recordings and I enjoyed becoming very familiar with their content in this way. Perhaps the most surprising experience of the research was that I found the careful listening experience to be almost mystical in its attention to detail. It felt, as I heard the exact phrases, intonation, and accents of my participants, as though they were present to me in a different way and it was a huge privilege to be trusted with these recordings. Walton (Bennett et al. 2018:27) writes,

> There is much to be gained by engaging again with that tradition of social research which has emerged through anthropology and cultural studies and which gazes with wondering attention upon particular instances in everyday life and celebrates the amazing creative resources of persons in mundane and everyday contexts.[34]

I was, by the end, satisfied that I had rich data that would honour the complexity of this congregational life.

m) Data Analysis and Writing Up

I have been very influenced by McGarrah Sharp's *Mis-understanding stories* (2013) and her method of writing multi-layered narratives, each time returning to the same original story but with a new layer of information or perspective. I am also influenced by Beaudoin and Turpin (2014) who critique the Western research approach of control by analysis and categorization. In my own analysis and writing up I have tried to be attentive to the 'messiness' of life and to the differing perspectives that I became familiar with, as well as those that I became aware of but were less explicit or obvious in my data. I was inspired by Visveswaran of whom Ward (2004: 130), says,

[34] While there has been, rightly, concern over the colonial gaze of a subject researcher upon a passive participant (Goto 2017 and 2018) I think that Walton's approach here of 'wondering attention' and the 'celebration' of people, is to be affirmed, as long as it is paired with a commitment to share the conversations and a humility that always admits the need to learn, acknowledging the researcher's own limited perspective.

> It is to the silences and interruptions that she is drawn as a feminist ethnographer. She is interested in those who did not want to speak with her. She struggles with her failures, for she believes it is in the times of incoherence and in the gaps between meanings that the other is to be found.

I did carry out an analysis of the data I was given in interviews and conversations but I tried also to be attentive to those who did not join in the research actively, and to those who expressed lack of understanding about what they thought they knew that others thought. Appendix 1 describes the coding process that I went through to identify themes but, in the end, it was my learning about the relationships between people, and the intangible, invisible and unspoken differences of understanding which were most significant as I sought to study chapel cosmopolitanism.

In terms of the writing up of this thesis the biggest dilemma has been how to introduce my participants and the data which they have provided. I do not want (as outlined above) to stereotype people, nor to 'label' them, and so their words will speak for themselves.

Chapter 3: Marti's 'Havens'

Having introduced the concept of chapel cosmopolitanism and outlined my methodology for researching into Cosmopolitan Practical Theology within one congregation, I will now introduce more of my data. The next two chapters focus on two particular concepts, that of 'havens' from Marti (2010) and that of 'intercultural habit' from Jagessar (2015). In the fifth chapter I will then outline how my data led me to see a complex relationship between the practice of these two concepts in my study church, leading to my conclusions about how the norming of Whiteness creates an obstacle for Cosmopolitan Practical Theology.

Early in my research I found Marti's work (2010) helped me to identify what I had seen happening in my professional experience of cosmopolitan congregations. Writing about the United States, Marti's work spells out how people within ethnically diverse congregations need to develop 'havens' which he defines as "situationally specific arenas of interaction". In particular, in his research about how African-American Christians integrate into diverse churches, he summarises (2010: 202):

> In the end, while religious imperatives can prompt members to participate in racially diffuse congregations, the distinctiveness of the African-American experience in white-dominant American society appears to require multiracial congregations to construct diversity-affirming "havens" such that blacks are affirmed, protected, and even entertained in ways that acknowledge a shared African-American heritage.

As my research progressed, I recognized, in my fieldwork, these havens which people create and which others are welcomed to feel safe in. These havens offer opportunity for people to be themselves and give emotional space for people to develop confidence in their own identity, enabling them also to enter into intercultural relationships more confidently.[35] I was struck, as I analysed my data, by the variety of types of havens which

[35] In British Ghanaian Methodism this has been researched by Fumanti (2010) and in Methodism in Birmingham by Smith (2007).

featured within this one congregation, similar to those described by Marti (2009: 7-11) and will comment on my findings in this chapter.

a) "I was welcomed" (… by somebody like me)

The development of the havens offered within Central Methodist Church begins with a welcome. My participants often described their appreciation of the welcome and friendship which they had received. Mae, for example, in conversation about her Christian experience thus far:

J So you were already Christian, you were Catholic, in Tonga?

M Yes, from a baby … I was baptised before I knew what was going on (laughs and, as her laughter is infectious, we both laugh). And when I started talking to people here I thought "I have a family"… they were very nice to me… caring…. and I didn't experience that behaviour before… I feel like, you know… to me it's a different feeling… more on the Bible…. It changed me.

One of the older participants, told me after worship one day that as a child, having moved from Ireland in the 1940s, she was taunted in a playground because of her accent and told to "Go back to Ireland". She said how different it was at the church which she attended (which later joined with Central) and how "at home" she felt there by contrast. This experience from long ago interestingly chimes with the more recent experience of newer migrants to the area, including the Black British participants. Marilyn (herself born in Britain with Jamaican-British parents) told me a bit about her family history over a coffee (Journal, 24th July 2016.) as we discussed Brexit[36]:

> As a family we haven't been too bad. Obviously, you get the idiots, as you're growing up through school, but you can just ignore them. But I think that the EU situation has caused a little… you know…little acts of aggression. I worry about the grandchildren.
>
> I've found it quite interesting simply because you know people are speaking out now. There is every kind of discrimination. But here, for example, people feel safe,

[36] For a full theological exposition of the theology surrounding Brexit (the term used for the decision to withdraw the UK from the European Union in 2019) see Reddie (2019).

> everybody feels safe at Central. We know we are completely safe. There's no need for anybody to be frightened. I like that about this place.

Lucy, a White participant who had migrated to this town from another part of the UK as a young Mum said, of her arrival at Central, "They were nice people and… it just felt comfortable, and we could be in a community and the spiritual side of it, and everything, it all just came together" and she specifically mentioned the experience of finding other families, like her own, with young children, who welcomed them.

In Chapter 1 I referred to the extent of the threat that some people find in everyday cosmopolitan society. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010: 42) comment,

> People's sense of identity used to be embedded in the community to which they belonged, in people's real knowledge of each other, but now it is cast adrift in the anonymity of mass society. Familiar faces have been replaced by a constant flux of strangers. As a result, who we are, identity itself, is endlessly open to question.

This experience of UK society can be particularly stark for those who have moved from places with a culture of stronger community relationships. Organizations such as the British National Party and the English Defence League highlight the urgency of recognizing Veling's suggestion (2005: 219) that:

> Perhaps nothing comes as close to humanity's most original sin than its desire to construct borders - borders that determine who is 'in' and who is 'out', those who own and possess, and those who are deprived and dispossessed.

For many people who have migrated they are aware not just of national borders but of borders which differentiate between cultures. I'm reminded particularly of Gladys, a Ghanaian member, who did not offer to be interviewed but chatted to me over coffee towards the end of my research. She spoke of how threatening and alienating she found British culture. I recorded (Journal, 30th July 2017):

> She told me she'd been in the UK 14 years but hasn't picked up British culture and doesn't want to… She said that she has a neighbour who's never spoken to her in the 7 years she's lived there, and how she has another neighbour who doesn't seem to

> want to know her. She feels as though none of them want to know her really. She said, “The culture here, the society, is so selfish. We, as a Ghanaian culture are so self-less. If somebody needs something then we help them with it.

Gladys went on to describe the shock of being ignored when she took ill and needed help at a bus-stop, to get to hospital and, as she spoke, her hands kept coming down over her face, repeatedly, as though she were describing a fog descending. In the context of this difficult experience of migration into British society, Gladys’ experience at Central was a contrast (Journal, 30th July 2017):

> The conversation led onto how she doesn’t have family of her own here in Hill Town, but that the other families (and she waved around at a few of them, indicating that she was thinking of church families) help each other out. “We’re all family, we’re family to each other”.

All of these examples, and many others told by older participants about when they first arrived at the church, describe stories of welcome and of being included into friendship groups, or activities of the church that were already running.

Some people were explicit about how good it was to find people who were like themselves. I recorded (Journal, 19th June 2016) a conversation with a student who was back at home on holiday:

> His parents came here when they first moved to this town and they were attracted by the fact that “it was more diverse than most” but also “it’s got more diverse since”. “I remember sitting near the front and then turning around in the singing and thinking, “Oh well… so there’s quite a mix here then.””

Ben (Focus Group 1, 19th October 2016.) also described his first time of coming to the church:

> So I used to go there [to a different church]… and I used to drive past here and one day I saw and thought “Oh there’s a Methodist church there’. And then I came and I saw Dorcas, and I thought ‘Oh, Ok, so there’s a Ghanaian there”

These positive experiences of being welcomed, of encountering people similar to themselves, has then led to my participants developing a sense of safety and belonging

within the church. Recent research on growing Methodist churches, Orton and Hart (2017: 11) has shown that churches grow when a welcome is followed by the congregation being "responsive and actively inclusive of a wider range of people" as new people arrive. As I began at Central some of the leadership team were concerned that for some people this progression from a welcome to an 'involvement' wasn't happening. In particular there was concern over an aspect of church life which seemed divisive. I will call this 'Coffee Apartheid', and consider it now, as a case study, in relation to Marti's reference to 'havens' within ethnically-diverse churches.

b) 'Coffee Apartheid': "Do you take it black or white?"

At the time of my research[37] with Central Methodist Church there was the very awkward experience of an unofficial 'Coffee Apartheid'. One of the most apparent impacts of the diversity of people's backgrounds was that people split up into particular groupings to enjoy each other's company after worship. The refreshments consist of tea, coffee, squash or biscuits, sometimes with birthday cake and sweets, and sometimes left-overs from one of the church events the day before. The reason for gathering after worship is for friendship and many at the church would say for 'fellowship'. Beck (2000: 26) comments, "Fellowship is an overworked word in Methodism, and at its worst may represent little more than jollity over the teacups." While I will say more, later, about fellowship within Central, the 'coffee time' (as it is known here, along with nearly all Methodist Churches) is a time for a range of conversation, from hilarious to moving, and superficial to profound.

People are served from the kitchen which has two serving hatches at right angles, out into the two spaces. Each area was too small for the whole congregation (which is usually between 60 – 120 people) to gather together and so, as long as these two spaces were the ones used for refreshments after worship, then there needed to be more than

[37] Since the time of my fieldwork this situation has changed as the buildings have been adapted and the welcome/café space is now big enough for more people, from differing cultures, to mix within the 'coffee area'.

one space used. The ‘coffee lounge’ accommodated about 40 people and the ‘foyer’ about 16 people sitting down.

In Fulkerson’s research (2007: 4, 15) she describes the visual impact of first attending her study church, and her own physical and emotional responses to being in a minority among a majority of Black people. My own personal experience of life meant that, as I began my study, I was comfortable with being in the minority as a White person and, indeed, actually felt that the presence of Black people within this church was less obvious than in the churches with which I was familiar. However, the visual impact of moving from the worship area and being faced with a choice between a ‘coffee lounge’ where the mainly-elderly people who gathered were nearly all White, or a ‘foyer’ where the mainly-younger people who gathered were nearly all Black, and needing to decide which space to walk into, was very striking. The physical layout of the building influences the relationships within the chapel’s cosmopolitanism and the choice of spaces felt a stark choice. It was a difficult choice for any visitor as I recorded (Journal, 11th September 2016):

> As we left the worship area, shaking the hand of the preacher as we went past, a young, tall, Black man ahead of me turned right into the Coffee Lounge. I think my sharp intake of breath must have been audible and I waited, wondering, “What will happen now?” Sure enough, as anticipated, he was in there perhaps 10 – 20 seconds and emerged quite rapidly, before re-joining the queue and heading for the door. An older man caught him to say hello before he disappeared, but he quite obviously couldn’t wait to escape!

On further analysis of who habitually gathered in each space, the division between social groupings was not as stark as it first appeared. In the coffee lounge, around the edges of the room, which was set out with ‘nursing home style’, low, comfortable chairs, there were usually the few elderly Black British Windrush generation members, and when Kavindu and Kalpani stayed for a chat then this is where they would gather too. It is mainly the older members, and those who have been coming for a long time, who feel comfortable there and this is partly because they have been sitting in that space for a long time. Edwards (1998: 147- 167) writes of the impact of sharing a ‘history’ together and some of the older Black members feel they ‘belong’ in the coffee lounge, and are

considered by the others there to 'belong' too, because they *have* been there for so long. Equally, in among the Ghanaians who gathered in the foyer, often chatting in Twi, were some of the younger White parents, and one or two of the older White people coming and going, with a friendly 'hello' here and there.

This gathering in the foyer, after worship, of those from a Ghanaian background, is a way of enjoying meeting to talk together in Twi (Fumanti 2010a: 31). The foyer is ahead as you come into the church premises and is a kind of 'waiting room' area, midweek, used for parents collecting children from after-school activities, or for a 'drop-in' when the Foodbank is in operation. It has a much more thorough-fare feel than the Coffee Lounge and has high square tables with plastic chairs, in fours, around them. It opens, on one side, into the main exit, on one side towards the main hall (where the children meet during service times and often stay to play energetic games afterwards), and in a third direction to the corridor which leads to the premises at the back of the building. It is ironic that one of the tablecloths is white linen and embroidered with the signatures of all the members from the 1980s[38]. While those represented on this table-cloth, and still living and present, are gathering in the 'Coffee Lounge', the members gathering around the tables in the foyer are mainly those whose background is Ghanaian, or are relatively-speaking 'newer' arrivals at the church, certainly since the table-cloth itself was created! Due to their life-styles (including serial parenting, working two jobs and/or shift patterns, and often studying as well) the best time to catch up is while they are already at church for worship. As I observed the Ghanaians greeting each other after worship I was reminded of Brown (2015) who cites the reminiscences of Korean-American, Mihee Kim-Kort:

> When I think back to it now, I remember how clear it was that something different happened to my parents on Sundays. I saw the tension melt from their faces as they settled into the pews and chairs. I saw the comfort and familiarity in which they carried conversations like a burden being lifted from their shoulders. I saw the way they laughed easily, and happily talked and share with

[38] This tablecloth was, at the time, created as a symbol of the inclusion of all the different people coming together from the previous three church congregations, into one new church, and so it is ironic that it now excludes most of those who have more recently joined the same church.

> other church members. My parents and I immigrated to the U.S. from South Korea when I was just a baby, so this church was a slice of home for them.

Similarly, I observed participants for whom the havens that they enjoyed within Central Methodist Church became 'like family' and the church itself then represented to them a link with 'home', meaning the country and culture from which they had migrated, or with other people who were still worshipping in Methodist Churches in other parts of the globe. Brazal and De Guzman (2015: 97) argue that:

> The church as family, and in a more fundamental way the family as church, might prove to be of great value to peoples on the move and in search of home – physically, emotionally, morally and legally. Such an offer takes into account not only the predicament of many migrant workers of being separated from their families but also the problems of the economically advanced and technology-based societies where the migrants work…. To this situation there is an urgent need for the 'renewal of home', understood as the 'recovery of the primacy of the concrete, constitutive, and intimate – in sum, organic – ways of being and acting, of relating to others, proper to the family (in its nature as communion of persons).

Some of my participants who speak English as their first language, showed some empathy for the need of others for this language 'haven'. There was also acknowledgement that the Ghanaians stop speaking Twi, so as not to exclude those who don't, whenever others walk into the area. Some, however, are clearly left uncomfortable and wondering what the conversation is about as it shifts from one language to another (Brenda, 20.6.17):

> You see, what they do is they go and sit outside now and talk their own language, so that… you know? I mean… they'll switch, but I wonder…

There is some reason for this wondering, as Dorcas, who acts very much as a matriarch for the Ghanaian community, mentions to me that this after-worship gathering is where people who have occasionally felt upset, or offended, will share this with her and where she'll offer advice and support on how to deal with this (Dorcas, 18.2.17):

D We all sit down, at the end of the service, when we all finish… and we talk about things generally… like I said… we do talk about things. Maybe I'm giving the wrong thing here. We do talk about things… erm… and there have been times when people have made comments… because people upset things and we've talked.

J So do people come to you to talk about these things?

D Well, when we've just been chatting. You know "Oh… this person said this, and that person said that and it made me feel like "Whoa…" It's just reassuring people that "they don't understand", stuff like that, but …

Conversation in this space is often about working life, about funerals and visits back to Ghana, or about family life and the children of the church. This shared interest in a common stage of life (compared to the older members in the coffee lounge) is also part of the reason for this group gathering in the foyer. My participants are aware both of the need for people to enjoy speaking in their own first language and of the need for the parents to be near where the children play. Barbara (19.9.16) said:

> But, there's another reason for them [referring to the Ghanaian members] being around in that area… because they have children and the children play in the hall and it's necessary for them really, to be around and to be available.

I, myself, commented on the patterns of 'child-care' at the church, and the impact on me trying to work out which children belonged to which parents (Journal, 13th November 2016),

> The children, who are mainly, but not all, from Ghanaian families, come and go, in differing combinations to collect biscuits through the serving hatch or to leave things with adults, and it is hard for me to learn which children belong with which parents as they are usually in groups, and are cared for by an 'extended' family kind of grouping of adults, connected by family or friendship ties.[39]

[39] This childcare provision acts as a recreation of what would be expected 'back home' but is also needed in the UK for economic reasons as parents share the childcare needed to allow them to work.

The cameo I have described here shows clearly the complexity of the multiple identities of cosmopolitan life, and the intersectionality of diversity which is involved. Whereas, at first sight, the spaces appear to be overwhelmingly 'Black' or 'White', in fact the backgrounds of the people present are more varied than that and the colour of people's hair, showing their age in general terms (with the exception of Violet's blue rinse, and Dorcas' occasional purple hair-dye) is more precisely the gauge of who is likely to choose which room to chat in!

Two younger participants, Ben and Lucy, talked about the Coffee Lounge, in the first focus group. My oldest White participant, Jack, in his eighties, was also present and this snippet of conversation showed kindness, humour and a relaxed approach to the issues:

Ben	We were talking about what kind of people use this room for tea and coffee

Lucy	We both commented that we don't come in here on a Sunday!!

[lots of laughter]

Dorcas	Is that because you don't want to be associated with Jack?!

[more laughter]

Lucy	'Cause you sit out there (nodding to Ben and pointing to the foyer) and I tend to wander… but out there.

This exchange shows that the apparent 'apartheid' is by no means absolute (Ben and Lucy, from different backgrounds, both prefer to be in the foyer), but skin colour was such a strong visual aspect of the church's life that the appearance of 'coffee apartheid' came up in conversation with my participants regularly through the fieldwork, in the focus groups and interviews, as well as being a prominent feature in my participant-observation. For the first few months that I attended the church I had to make this choice, on every occasion, about where to sit, and who to sit with, after worship. Young (1990: 186)[40] says that a social group is:

[40] Cited in Brazal and De Guzman (2015:102)

> a collective of people who have affinity with one another because of a set of practices or way of life; they differentiate themselves from or are differentiated by at least one other group according to these cultural forms.

These two coffee areas were physical spaces where particular social groups felt more, or less, at home, and 'housed' physical havens for people to meet with their friends, who they felt to be 'like them' for one reason or another: but these reasons were themselves varied.

c) Havens for all?

I found the concept of 'havens' helpful as a way of understanding how people at Central identified places and relationships in which to gain confidence. However, I would argue from my data that it was not just those considering themselves, or those considered by others, to be in need of 'diversity-affirming havens' for cultural or linguistic reasons who did, in practice, need to develop these havens for themselves. People of different ages, for example, needed these havens too (Marti 2009: 10). I have already commented on the need I observed for the families to find other families to share care and conversation with. Additionally, Barbara commented to me that the reason a 'holiday at home' programme had been developed was that some of the older people were feeling increasingly marginalised within the congregation. I was reminded too, of the situation in many congregations, sadly beyond the scope of this research, when those who struggle with technology at work resist technology in church because church has become for them a haven away from the pressure to change and to grow in technological ability.

I am arguing, from my data, that members of *all* the potentially different 'groupings' of Central were looking for havens which helped them to feel they belonged to the church. For some people the fellowship groups which the church runs operated in this way. I will now consider these 'havens' and their impact on the chapel cosmopolitanism at Central.

d) Fellowship groups

In making his warning about the concept of fellowship within Methodism (quoted, p. 52, above) Beck (2000: 26) continues:

> Fellowship is an overworked word in Methodism, and at its worst may represent little more than jollity over the teacups. But at its best it is an understanding of the Church in which our shared baptism is translated into a reciprocal ministry of prayer, friendship and pastoral support to which every member contributes.

Central is a Methodist Church, albeit one with members from very varied denominational backgrounds (including Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Presbyterian), and Methodism has, within its heritage, a strong emphasis on getting to know the other members of your church in depth and supporting each other as people who 'belong' to one another[41]. One of the factors in the chapel cosmopolitanism of Central is that many of its members have arrived from other countries with a Methodist background which has encouraged them to come looking for a Methodist church. In his own research Fumanti (2010 b: 208) quotes one of his participants, Auntie Abena, a Ghanaian Methodist who says about her Methodist women's association: "This is the happiness of the association. If I join and I fall I will be picked up." One of my own participants, Kalpani, who had been brought up in a Methodist family in Sri Lanka, described coming to look for a Methodist Church when she moved to the town:

K Yeah, wherever we lived we tried to find the Methodist Church, isn't it? (to Kavindu) In Nigeria, of course, we went to the interdenominational church in the University campus … We had Methodist ministers and Anglican ministers.

J So being Methodist is part of your family background as well is it?

K Yes, my parents and my grandparents they were going to the Methodist Church. My father was a lay preacher in the Methodist Church.

[41] For a full exploration of membership and connectedness within Methodism see Drake (2004)

For those who are familiar with Methodism world-wide they are likely to expect to find local fellowship groups[42]. Richter (2004: 181) quotes a participant who described the system of Methodism:

> as an individual Methodist, you were a member of a class, which was part of a society, which was part of a circuit, with its visiting preachers [lay and ordained] who were a means of communicating what went on elsewhere.

As well as connecting people together within the wider denomination the local fellowship groups[43] provide opportunity for people to get to know each other more deeply. Central has a variety of these, some meeting within homes and some at the church premises.

In talking about his own study church, Oasis, Marti (2010: 213) says:

> Oasis creates racially diffuse arenas of religious involvement that encourage interaction and identification apart from racially specific group membership such that the "integration" of races at Oasis occurs in the act of creating religious affinity in ways supplementary to their racial identities.[44]

There were some ways in which I saw this happening at Central Methodist Church. Where members have chosen to belong to a fellowship group this has become a 'haven' for many of them. It is mainly the older, and longer-standing members of the church, whatever their ethnic background, who belong to fellowship groups within the church, and these have clearly helped people to get to know each other, by name, as friends. For example, when I asked Brenda, an older White participant who has been part of a

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[42] It is worth pointing out that the linguistically-specific and ethnically-specific 'Fellowship Groups' (e.g. the Tamil Methodist Fellowship or the Ghanaian Methodist Fellowship) which have been set up in relevant contexts across the Connexion, to support Methodists from other cultural backgrounds than White British, are now often known as 'The Fellowship Groups'. Previously, 'fellowship groups' were the local smaller groups within which members of a church got to know one another better, usually midweek and in homes, through Bible Study and prayer at regular weekly or monthly gatherings. Here I am referring to the latter, locally run groups, which are a way of people getting to know each other within cosmopolitan congregations.

[43] Fellowship groups are the current version, in many Methodist Churches, of the historical 'class system'. See David Lowes Watson: *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance.* Wipf and Stock (2002)

[44] I would not use the phrase 'racial identities' myself as I would argue that there is only one human race. However Marti's use of this phrase, as an American, is referring to the variety of ethnic heritages that people might have within one congregation.

fellowship group since she joined the church more than twenty years ago, about whether any of the Black members were in her group she initially told me that it was all White people. She then remembered Charlie, who is older and from Kenya but, even at this stage, forgot some of the others as she thought of her friends within the Fellowship Group, which is one of her own havens.

B Oh yes! Wait a minute… Yes! … Charlie used to come you see but he's got a regular commitment now on a Thursday, so he can't come anymore… Oh! And, of course! There's Kalpani and Kavindu … I forget they're not…

[she clearly doesn't know how to say that they're not White but gives me a look to check I've understood. I nod to say I have.

So, now, there you are you see… Rose comes to Thursday meeting, and so does Marilyn… but I forgot that completely… I know them so well I don't think of their colour. They come really regularly.

Kalpani herself, in talking about the fellowship groups explained how her first introduction to fellowship within the church was being encouraged to stay for drinks after the worship, and then later she joined two fellowship groups.

K Yes, for those first few services we were at the back and then gradually migrated forward. Yes, and then after the service we had this kind of fellowship after the service, where we had tea and coffee. Well I think it was… she's moved away now the woman who invited us to the fellowship group first. There are the fellowship groups. I attend two of them.

J So you get to know the other people in your fellowship groups quite well?

K Well yes, we are only 7. There's the Thursday fellowship which takes place in the church. I know everyone there and then we have the other evening fellowship and we are only 10 there and I feel that I get to know them all well.

One of the relevant factors, in terms of who attends the fellowship groups, does seem to be the lack of availability of the younger people, whatever their background, to attend midweek events with any consistency. However, for the people who do attend

fellowship groups their experience is clearly affirming and offers a sense of belonging. Jack said in his first interview:

> It's interesting. I think only as a church steward did I start to see how Central is built up… of the people who came from different churches. The Thursday Fellowship used to be 'Railway Terrace' Methodist Chapel people, for example.

This insight is not one which I would have known from any other source, but there were older people, including Jack, Barbara and Paul, who remembered which previous church members had attended. Paul told me of how, when the previous church congregations joined together, they were given, effectively, a 'haven' within the new amalgamated church, by meeting with others from their previous congregation in a fellowship group within the church's wider life. This haven helped those friends from previous churches to feel they belonged to a smaller group while they began to forge new relationships with people from other churches.

Paul, who describes his own Methodist background with huge fondness and some pride, expressed surprise and a value judgement about those who do not attend Fellowship groups:

> There's quite a split I think between people who value fellowship, and are maybe able to belong to fellowship groups, and there's a very large faction that don't reckon that at all, as far as we can see.

This lack of understanding about why people do not join Fellowship groups is a source of sadness to Paul and he tries hard to 'make excuses' for those who do not join a group, while apparently feeling critical of those who don't share his own commitment to this practice as an outworking of Christian life.

The minister of the Church, Judith, is also somebody who believes in the need for a deeper fellowship experience within church life, and she has actively tried to encourage new members to join a group as she welcomes them to become members of the church. This has worked well with new White and Caribbean British members but not with those from Ghanaian backgrounds. It is outside the scope of this thesis to investigate the reasons for this although, from my own data, I do think it is safe to conclude that family

and work patterns are one serious factor. Since my fieldwork has been completed Judith told me that the church is now trying a pattern of pastoral groups meeting for Sunday meals, as a way of encouraging deeper friendships to develop across cultural and linguistic differences, and that this seems to be working better as a way of helping people to get to know each other better. This is, according to Judith, and to the pastoral secretary who I contacted again at a later date, proving successful as a means to providing what I call here 'havens' within which new members can belong and begin to feel confident enough to venture out into more new friendships[45].

e) 'Like Home'

Within the Ghanaian members at Central there is a clear and acknowledged practice that the wife of a married couple is expected to go to whichever denominational church the husband's family comes. For some of the women, therefore, there has been some learning to do about Methodist 'culture'. On the whole, though, the practices of the church have been recognisable to those coming to Central from other countries, especially to those of the older generation, who arrived when British Methodism was still recognisably the same Methodism which Methodist missionaries had exported with them.

Edwards (1998: 148) writes about the past and 'belonging' saying:

> My interest lies in the way in which the past is mobilised in the formulation and composition of local identities and senses of belonging…. Belonging is forged through a variety of connections and a diversity of attachments, which include links to pasts and persons, as well as to places.

Some of those participants who had been in the church for a long time, regardless of their place of birth or family origin, talked to me about some of the earlier members of the church, especially those who appear to have welcomed everybody alike, and this shared memory adds currently to their sense of belonging to one another. I also

[45] Further work would be welcome on the significance of 'havens' for mission, in relation to the ability havens provide for helping new Christians, to feel part of a church when their culture will, of necessity, differ in some ways from the culture of any church which they may want to join.

detected a clear desire in many of my participants to emulate and continue this welcome, inspired by these earlier examples.

In relation to migration and memory of place, Rishbeth and Finney undertook some research with migrants to Sheffield who, together, explored outdoor spaces similar in their rural nature to where the group had migrated from. They discovered (2006: 294) that:

> Some participants expressed these familiarities as a means of providing them with a conceptual link between their homeland and their life in the UK. They suggested that they [the plants they recognized] made them feel proud to be African, and that it could help them remember and show their friends what their homeland is like. It also provided them with a situation where they were knowledgeable, and in a position to share that knowledge. At best, this built confidence in their ability to be accepted and familiarity in landscape appears to help migrants conceptualise their position in the new society.

Although people found it hard to express this, and I am relying here more on my participant-observation and wider professional experience, my data suggested that the familiarity of a church building, with its hymn-board, hymn-books, small glass communion cups, empty wooden crosses[46], and with similar hymnology, practices of lay people reading the Bible from a lectern, and even similar liturgies to those known 'back home', all provide a sense of belonging. Many of these physical features and worship practices are culturally familiar and offer a sense of 'haven' in a culture (and climate) which for some is still newly 'alien'. For Gladys, mentioned above, her experience at Central was a recovery of the extended family life she enjoyed in Ghana, and allows her family to operate similarly to how they would in Ghana, but behaving differently from the 'nuclear' families of the White Central Methodist Church members.

At the same time, though, I would argue, the same physical features and ecclesial practices also offer a sense of 'haven' for older White members in today's culture which

[46] The Methodist Church is Protestant and Methodist Churches rarely use crucifixes, but simple wooden (or sometimes brass) crosses are recognisably the same across the globe.

feels very ‘alien’ to some of those older generations, including their memory of extended family in childhood. Richter’s participant (2004: 181)…

> … characterized the Methodist Church as an extended ‘family’. He spoke of the ‘warmth in connectedness’, although times were changing, and whereas Methodism had once spoken of itself as a ‘connexion of societies’, it now tended to describe itself in terms of being ‘a church’. The ‘family sense’ in Methodism, though attenuated, was still relatively strong compared to other denominations.

This ‘family sense’ is valued not just by people from other countries, but also by those from older generations for whom today’s UK society feels to be an ‘alien’ culture.

Before I left Central, Gill, a White member who had been attending for decades but had not chosen to talk with me until the last service, asked me what I’d discovered in my time there. When I outlined this idea of the need for ‘havens’ she answered, “Well I don’t feel like I need a haven because for me the church service is enough. It feels like that is exactly what it is… it is an oasis of calm and I just feel at home.” The fact that some people are recognised as needing ‘special’ havens because of language or cultural difference, is an issue that I will return to in Chapter 5, where I will also talk further about the need for all those within chapel cosmopolitanism to have awareness of their own havens. Next, though, I want to look at the dangers of ‘havens’ for a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology.

d) Dangerous Havens

When I first met Violet, and told her what my research is about, her response was, “Well we do have lots of people from other countries here but it doesn’t make any difference to me.” While havens provide for people a sense of familiarity, security and belonging through which they can feel at home in the church, there is an accompanying threat to chapel cosmopolitanism. As Veling puts it (2005: 233): “Community can create those who are ‘in’ and those who are ‘out’, leading to exclusionary and excommunicative practices.” The havens which people at Central developed, like any havens, can be

difficult to enter and can prevent people from getting to know those outside their own haven. This corresponds to Marti's own comment (2010: 202-203):

> Individuals connect to congregations by taking opportunities for relational interactions that appeal to at least one aspect of their social selves. Diverse congregations are those that construct relational "havens"… from the interests, beliefs, values, and life circumstances that ally people together regardless of ancestral heritages. Havens therefore exhibit an interesting dualism as self-selective mechanisms that draw certain people and repel others.

The ability to 'fit in' to havens which have been constructed by others can be costly. Although she didn't speak much about it Kalpani, who was considered by Brenda (see above, p. 46), but also by other older people too, as 'an honorary White person'[47], had found it hard and frustrating feeling that she had to 'fit in'. She has a more literal view of the Bible than most at Central, and sometimes queries whether she can stay at the church, due to the conversations about 'same-sex marriage' in the Methodist Church in Britain, and her conservative views on this. She has developed a silence to enable her to stay within the church where she feels at home, but several times (in the interviews and in one of the focus groups) referred to the fact that she needed to keep quiet or she would feel 'awkward'. Her belonging to the fellowship groups, and to the fellowship of the church more generally, was costly to her as she is a person who likes to speak her mind and has strong opinions. Interestingly, she became more outspokenly angry about this dynamic when referring to Kavindu's time as a church steward. He is naturally very quiet but when they spoke about these years in an interview Kalpani said, quite vehemently, "They didn't take any notice of your contributions! They didn't take any notice of your contributions." It did not seem appropriate to push her on why she felt this as Kavindu was clearly embarrassed and didn't want further questioning, and so the details (of whether he tried to speak his contributions out loud or whether he felt

[47] This is not a term Brenda used, but there was a sense in which it was how she seemed to see things. She certainly smiled at the idea that she hadn't remembered that Kalpani wasn't White. There was one occasion when, in public, somebody seemed unsure of how to refer to Kalpani in terms of her ethnicity and she looked very awkward about it but didn't offer any suggestion. It did not feel appropriate to ask further and so that is outside the scope of this research.

unable to speak them) are unknown, but it was clear that this had caused some emotional pain.

I do not think, from my data, that most (perhaps any) of Kalpani's friends at the church were aware of the extent of her struggle with this[48]. I am reminded of Ward (2004: 134)

> Writing up such encounters and reflecting upon what I was hearing left me acutely aware of the vulnerability of black people, and other 'others', to the vagaries of the dominant culture in which they might find themselves. The reasons to be silent… echoed what Visweswaran described as strategies of non-involvement.

The participants I spoke with were keen to emphasise how friendly the church is, and how people are welcomed to belong, but I am reminded of Bonhoeffer's comment (1954: 15-16):

> He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.

Whereas some people were keen to see the church as full of community spirit, there was less willingness to look at what made the various havens of the church potentially exclusive to some people. The difficulty with havens which are based on having things in common, and helping people to feel they belong, is whether or not people can genuinely be welcomed as themselves within that haven, or whether they are expected to adapt themselves.[49] Kalpani and Kavindu's experience was that they were completely included, as long as they didn't speak discordantly or make a contribution which would change the current way of doing things.

Similarly, while some participants (including Gill, cited above, p. 65) felt that the church worship itself was a haven for them, others, while feeling naturally at home in the space,

[48] The possible exception to this was Charlie, who she knew from her professional experience and who recognized her professional expertise as well as sharing some of her experience of migration. Others at the church often appeared to be unaware of her level of professional experience.
[49] I wrote about this in my earlier doctoral work (Marsh 2016) based on a survey and on interviews with ministers about their churches' experience of chapel cosmopolitanism.

felt that they had to ‘fit in’ with the current style of worship, even when it was not their own preference. During my time at the church a ‘worship experiment’ was carried out, trying a thirty-minute slot of singing praise songs before the service of worship began. Hesmondhalgh (2013:10 cited in Roberts 2017:145) comments that the significance of music is because of its “sustenance of public sociability, which keeps alive feeling of solidarity and community.” Not to be able to sing music that helps you in worship is problematic for Christians and yet I have found, in my professional experience, that people will still belong to churches which use worship music differing from what they find most helpful, if they feel that they belong within the church. What was particularly interesting in my data was the number of older White people who assumed that the younger people wanted to sing ‘praise songs’ because of their cultural heritage, when actually it was more related to the preferences of many people their age. ‘Violet’ (Journal, 19th June 2016) said to me after worship,

> Dorcas has us singing from 10 – 10.30. I just want to sit quietly before the service. It’s what they’re used to where they came from.” Then [looking a bit puzzled] “But I don’t know because I think Dorcas has been in this country a long while really.

The relationship between these two women was not deep enough for Violet to really know why Dorcas enjoyed singing these worship songs. While it was more because of her age and theological perspective that Dorcas preferred this music, rather than (as Violet assumed) because of her ethnic heritage, the decision to stop this worship experiment was deeply hurtful to Dorcas who was hoping to find others who wanted to share a time when this style of worship could be enjoyed. While I have decided not to focus on this experience in particular it is important to mention here that this experiment was abandoned because of the opposition from those who did not want change.

One fascinating side to this threatening aspect of havens, which can be exclusive for some, is its relationship to the history of the Methodist Missionary Movement. Dorcas and Benjamin (Focus Group 1) told me that in the Methodist schools where they were educated in Ghana, they remembered being taught, “When in Rome do as the Romans

do", and how this idea affected them when they arrived in the UK, and wished that things were different within the church:

D: [To Ben] But, at the beginning I thought you can't express yourself. You just have to fit in. And you're absolutely right, hit the nail right on the head [first wobble I've ever heard from Dorcas, in her voice] You just felt "You're here. This is what they do. You be part of that."

B You sing from their hymn-sheet!

D It's taken time … you know… to try and be ourselves in that respect. But it's no… it's not… it's not necessarily any fault of anybody's.

B Mmm [laughs] Yeah!

D You just felt this is what you do… when you came… when in Rome do as the Romans do, as they say! [some laughter]

The irony of this was not lost on the focus group as Benjamin and Dorcas described how the missionary teachers themselves took, and imposed on the school, particular practices and a specific culture which was their own 'from home' and not that of the local culture.

Reddie, in conducting his own research about difference and the pressure to 'conform' to a White norm, found that people would choose something they did not really want (in his case he was referring to the choice of a meal which they loved, or one which everybody else seemed to be eating) and when he probed people for their reasons (2009a: 357-8):

> (after they had already told me how much they loved their favourite meal and would love to eat it), many remarked "We don't want to make a fuss" or "I want to be like all the others"—i.e. the ones eating the standard meal.

This highlights the concern I had from my data about how havens and the need people have to belong to them, can put pressure on people to cover up parts of their identity. In one ethnically diverse congregation that I belonged to a Jamaican mother and daughter had been part of the church for more than twenty years, but with all the White people in

the church, where they were the only Caribbean-British members, assuming that they ate “British food” at home as well as at church, and the conversation had never arisen.

These concerns lead me to another question about the development of havens within the church: how are people to get to know other people within the church’s life, beyond their own havens? Jack made clear several times in his interviews that he realized he was quite ignorant about ‘the Ghanaians’. Sometimes he was aware of this weakness:

Jack I think the house fellowships are very good. You do tend to get to know people very well, and in a church of our size you need to do that. But you have to join such things. I can’t think of any Ghanaians who belong to any of those fellowships but they probably have other reasons.

Me Well, they’re shift workers a lot of them, aren’t they?

Jack Exactly. Yes, yes, and they’ve got family as well. I tend to speak to my sister once a month, say, on the phone. Something like that… But … but… you don’t know their lives. I keep picking on Ghanaians, because we’ve got quite a bunch of them!

At other times he wasn’t aware of his own ignorance, such as when talking about why ‘the Ghanaians’ come to the Methodist service, rather than the afternoon service led by a Pentecostal church, Jack said,

> What puzzles me is why do the Ghanaians come to our service? Why do they come in? Why don’t they go to Sunday afternoon?

In the subsequent conversation it was apparent that he didn’t know either that the people he referred to are actually Methodist, and not Pentecostal, or that the afternoon service was organized by a Pentecostal church. Jack is actually one of the older members who is keen to get to know other people, so that leads me to wonder how others are likely to get to know and understand each other, by name, as friends.

In the next chapter, I will consider Jagessar’s concept of ‘intercultural habit’ and how this helps to make sense of my data, explaining the ways in which participants have not only havens in which they can express their own identity more safely and fully, but also an approach to one another through which they can explore difference.

Chapter 4: Jagessar's 'Intercultural habit'

Having outlined the need for my theological examination of the everyday experience of chapel cosmopolitanism, and how I planned to do this, my last chapter then introduced Marti's concept of 'havens' within ethnically diverse churches. I considered a variety of experiences of havens: including physical spaces, intercultural groups, opportunities for minoritized members of the congregation to support one another, and groups for new members to belong and to become familiar with others. These havens are sometimes based on a common first language or a shared life-experience, life-stage or culture. However, there are also havens in which the relationships are more clearly intercultural. I observed that the havens at Central all had some factors in common while also spanning some diversities. These havens help people to gain confidence to reach out beyond them to wider spheres of encounter. Baker (2011) comments: "Spaces of belonging and becoming can lead to spaces of participation in an extending radius of trust and confidence." Nevertheless, the havens themselves can, sometimes, be a threat to Cosmopolitan Practical Theology, as Veling (2005: 233) comments, "Welcome is extended, but only insofar as unity is preserved and not threatened."

a) Intercultural habit

In this chapter I argue that, for chapel cosmopolitanism to be transformative rather than descriptive, there needs to be what Jagessar (2015a, 2015b) calls 'an intercultural habit'. In the tradition of Bourdieu (1989) he is referring here not to particular practices but rather to an approach which becomes a life-style, through the regular practising of what I would call a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. At Central Methodist Church I recognized the intercultural habit which Jagessar sees as essential and one factor which enabled this was the awareness and experience of many church members of multi-locality (Valentine and Sadgrove 2013: 1983). Members who had migrated to the UK from other countries had vivid memories of other places where, often, they still had contact with family and friends. This was equally true of many members who had lived in the UK all of their lives and Hill Town much of their adult lives, because it was a place where many people moved, in the past and still today, for employment. Lastly there was a significant

proportion of people whose jobs had given them either awareness of, or travel to, other places and countries. Vertovec and Cohen (1999: xviii) state that, “The awareness of multi-locality also stimulates the need to conceptually connect oneself with others, both ‘here’ and ‘there’, who share the same ‘routes’ and ‘roots’.” Nausner (2004) in his work about migration talks of the Aboriginal concept of shared ‘routes’ as people cross the land and reflects on this theologically. He argues that the ‘belonging’ to a place is about the experience of passing through it, on a route, and not about the geographical boundaries that we create to consider who belongs, or doesn’t. I found this work helpful in my understanding of my participants, and of their relationship with this particular church, as many of them felt ‘routed’ through the church, rather than ‘rooted’ in it.

An interest in ‘other people’ from ‘other places’ was apparent at Central[50]. My oldest participant, Jack, came to Hill Town as a young man and is very aware of the changes to his outlook as he has moved away from the village where he grew up.

Jack Yes. My daughter, she doesn’t come, although she lives in town… says “I don’t know why you go to that church” Because I can have some moans, we all do at times… we all do... you know… quietly. So, I said “Hey, look! This is what the church is about…” and I talked to her about Charlie, you know from Kenya, and about Kavindu and Kalpani, and I told her “This place is so interesting, you know!” And it is. It’s extremely interesting!

Me And you wouldn’t get that where you grew up?

Jack That’s right!! I mean… my little village… my little village! Goodness me! No…

Me So you enjoy that experience of meeting people from different places with different life experiences?

Jack Oh I do! I think that’s lovely! I do, yeah… yeah… Because there’s a big world out there. I take an interest in Kenya because of Charlie!

[50] I am glad that I used a multi-method approach to this research because my interviewees were all particularly people interested in intercultural life, but my participant-observation allowed me to check out these interests in other people. While I didn’t collect this evidence statistically, I was able to learn that while there were some people who rarely thought beyond their immediate location (except while watching the news perhaps) the majority of people at the church did have ‘broad horizons’.

This exchange shows how Jack's life-experience encourages his sense that there is lots to 'explore' in life, including the experience of other local people from other countries, but also how his church experience encourages a sense of interest in the rest of the world.

For Jagessar there has to be a lived commitment to learning from each other's differences, which reflects the nature of Godself as well as helping to move the church from how it is now to how he believes God wills it to become (Jagessar 2015b: 266):

> An intercultural habit reminds me of a verse in Psalm 31: "You have set my feet in a spacious place" We struggle, however, to make use of this spaciousness, the opportunities it provides for the perichoretic dance – to keep turning, moving, finding new direction. Instead, we have become stuck or glued to particular spots. The adventure of intercultural habit is a call to get unstuck – moving backward, forward, outside and 'limbo-ing' to a third space or in-between spaces simultaneously in our border-crossing and transgressing journeys, unable to return to the same place.

When I first observed the apparent apartheid of the coffee spaces at Central it seemed as though the divisions between the two social groups were clear and obvious. After several months of finding this difficult, I was one day kept back in the worship space in a conversation with somebody. As I sat and watched what developed around me, I realised that many people were staying to chat (rather than filing straight through the door for coffee as I had previously done, taking my lead from others). On the subsequent few visits I decided to linger in the worship space too, and observed that perhaps two thirds of the conversations happening were between people of different social groups and cultures. I consider this a really positive and creative approach, when facing a practical challenge, and it occurs to me that, effectively, it meant there were two 'coffee spaces' but three 'conversation spaces' each week. For some people this intercultural habit of moving between social groups was very deliberate. Jack, Mae, Lucy, Dorcas, Barbara and Paul all told me that this is what they chose to do. Mae explained this saying, "All people, for me":

M Me, for myself… I… I… I speak with those older people inside but after that I have to talk to Ghanaian people too (she says this with a smile as though it's something she believes in and likes). They are nice people.

J So you mix around a bit! (she laughs). So … do you decide to do that … do you think 'I'll have coffee in the lounge first and then I'll go and talk with other people'? Or do you just see what happens that Sunday?

M No… er… er… for me… you know… for me …. All people, for me… I'm not a person who thinks (pulls a disapproving face)… Yeah… yeah… [and she indicated with her hand a moving around, in and out, with a positive smile]

In every area of the congregation's life there were people who made a real effort to 'mix' and to deepen their friendships with people who were not in their normal social circles or midweek groups. The coming and going was reminiscent of Jagessar's image of a dance, and also reminded me of Garces-Foley (2007:5) who writes:

> However the ideal multiethnic church is imagined, it will most certainly mean more than occupying the same physical space, which can so easily replicate the divisions of the surrounding society. Internal divisions must also be crossed by literally walking from one side of the room to the other.

b) Intercultural Life

In many respects (as detailed in Chapter 1) UK society has become cosmopolitan and, in these times of Brexit, it is a topical question about how intercultural Britain has, or has not, become. Both Garces-Foley in the US (2007a: 221) and Shannahan in the UK (2016: 418) point to the rapidly growing number of intercultural marriages in the last couple of decades as evidence that intercultural life is becoming more standard and more acceptable. Baker (2007:2) writes,

> Hybridity is here to stay and there is no going back… It is therefore time for theology and the church to enter into creative and critical dialogue with hybridity, and no longer to ignore it as a difficult word or unpleasant word. Above all, it is time to explore the positive opportunities that understanding

> hybridity provides for the creative connection between new forms of church and new forms of urban community.

I agree with Shannahan's criticism (2016: 419) that the concept of hybridity, in its implication that there is a 'purity' which can be 'cross-pollinated' or 'merged', is so unhelpful that I would choose not to use it in relation to people.[51] Nevertheless, Baker's examination of the ways in which new identities are constantly forming is helpful and he is right to challenge the church to engage with the positive opportunities this offers. Bennett (2013: 135), comments: "We live in a world of conflict. It has ever been so, and human life, in all its richness, demands attention to 'The Other', whether human or divine." I agree that we have a theological responsibility to attend to the variety of human cultures and this thesis is my contribution to that endeavour.

Veling (2005: 159) states that "Culture… is a way of "tilling life" and bringing forth a world that is rich in human significance. It is one of humanity's finest activities". I want to emphasise here the need for *theology* to recognize, with Jagessar, the significance of the practice of intercultural habit in order to gain a fuller understanding of each other as a human race, and of God in God's fullness, and also to help each other contribute to the wider society in which church communities participate. As Osmer (2008:17) puts it, "Congregations are embedded in a web of natural and social systems beyond the church and systems are nestled within systems." How we value and encourage intercultural habit within congregations impacts on the contribution that the church system makes to other systems, as Garces-Foley (2007: 209) writes, "Multicultural churches challenge their members to engage with the ethnically 'other' and develop civic skills for living in a diverse society." An example of this in the practice of Central Methodist Church is the 'World Concert' that they hold each year, which is a big event in the community and includes 'performances' from many different cultures. It celebrates the diversity of the town's life and helps church members imagine the life of the countries from which their friends have arrived.

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[51]Shannahan argues that while the concept is helpful the word itself needs to be kept to the field of botany where it originated. Instead he uses 'dual heritage' or 'multiple heritage' when referring to people. Although this could be criticised for erring on an 'essentialist' side of interpreting culture I agree that this is the better option.

Vertovec (2007) in a piece for the Commission on Integration and Cohesion acknowledges the role of the community sector, of which churches are a part in a diverse society:

> The voluntary and community sector has always played an important role in building cohesion and promoting meaningful interaction at a local level. But its role has assumed a growing importance over the last few years, against the backdrop of increasing diversity and the different opportunities and challenges this brings. Set against this is a recognition that the sector in itself is very diverse – which is its strength.

Thinking of the community sector, in her work about super-diverse communities, Wessendorf outlines her experience of intercultural life (2013: 398-9):

> The weekly coffee morning for parents at a local primary school presents an example where contact across difference can lead to the reduction of prejudice, but where civility towards diversity is also used to limit engagement across difference… But even if differences are rarely talked about or engaged with, the existence of such spaces as the coffee morning facilitates contact across difference when needed.

Beyond this social interaction, Jagessar is calling for churches to develop a positive intercultural habit as a *theological* response to the diversity that God gives in all its fullness. In particular he calls for 'moral imagination' and 'mutual inconveniencing' as part of this intercultural habit, both of which I will look at now in more detail as I consider the role of intercultural habit in Cosmopolitan Practical Theology as found in Central Methodist Church.

c) 'Moral Imagination'

At Central I observed (and recorded in my journals) a healthy amount of laughter, a clear level of kindness and goodwill towards one another, and a regular and deliberate

attempt by many with leadership roles to cross potential 'boundaries'.[52] I agree with Jenkins (2004: 123) that, "The development of congregational studies clearly has the potential to contribute to the study of contemporary religion in the UK." He goes on to say that in order to do this it is important,

> to be especially attentive to the business of the negotiations of boundaries, and to the motivations that are expressed in them. And it is only by adopting an anthropological approach, with its recognition of the active intelligence of social actors, that these negotiations and motivations can be properly investigated and explored.

In my second focus group I discovered that, for my participants, the overwhelming theological motivation in developing their intercultural habit came from the commandment to 'love your neighbour as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:39)[53]. Participants recognized that fulfilment of this commandment includes listening imaginatively to the other person. One participant, Lucy, said,

> Jesus loved and did not condemn. So, I think we should love all those we see as 'different' and try to understand their thoughts and feelings.

Jagessar (2015b: 269) says this:

> A moral imagination is vital for becoming intercultural. Imagination evokes a 'passion for the possible' (that dissents from static) arrangements. It encourages desire. Imagination refers to the power to sort, to shape and to integrate disparate elements of varied social worlds using images, symbols, stories, theories and rituals. To imagine is to make constellations of things that matter,

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[52] This was evident in the way that pastoral visitors' meetings included both cross-cultural conversations and also conversation about cross-cultural matters, as well as the way that stewards worked together in pairs from different backgrounds. As mentioned below (p. 82) Judith, the minister, had also deliberately structured cross-cultural mentoring with new members, and more recently (since I finished the research) pastoral meals have been arranged so that people can share life in greater depth, across meal-time conversations.

[53] Brazal and DeGuzman (2015: 101) point out that the church has always had experience of intercultural life and point to the cosmopolitanism of Antioch as the cradle of Gentile Christianity. There is, indeed, a rich theme of 'exile' throughout the biblical traditions which helps to explain why many Christians have developed a moral imagination for others' experience of migration and exile. Some would argue (Volf 1996:40) that all Christian life is intercultural or counter-cultural and this is an area that I would have liked to explore in more detail if time had allowed.

> which prod, comfort, surprise, shock and give meaning. In particular, I am interested in moral imagination as a resource for churches' integrity to express their intercultural vocation in public. The moral imagination of becoming intercultural seeks to move *beyond* dialogue and inclusion to justice in the making.

A good example of moral imagination at work was the response of the congregation to the death of one of the church members. I had invited Esther (of Ghanaian background) to be one of my participants, but she took ill very early in the research and, to everybody's dismay, died within a few weeks. The Ghanaian members of the church visited, kept vigil, and cared for her children in the house with her husband. They sang hymns and prayed through the night and gathered at the church to organize the funeral.[54] The pastoral group of the church arranged a meal, on a later Sunday, in Esther's honour and in support of her family. This meal showed moral imagination and was among the clearest evidence of intercultural habit at the church.

I saw at Central the three principles outlined by Lartey (2006:3) as necessary for an intercultural pastoral care (contextuality, multiple perspectives, authentic participation) and witnessed this kind of care throughout my time at the church but exemplified beautifully through this particular meal. The pastoral team liaised with the Ghanaian members of the church through Dorcas and Benjamin (who were Ghanaian members of the pastoral team). It was agreed to have a church meal after worship one Sunday and everybody was invited to bring food of their own culture and to make donations to the family as a contribution to the funeral and other accompanying expenses, as well as showing emotional support for the family and thanksgiving for Esther's life. The family's friends gathered, along with her family. All the social groupings from the church came along, in solidarity and support. I was reminded as we ate of Brazal and DeGuzman (2015: 67): "Interculturality, in its openness to otherness and engagement, goes beyond

[54] I have not had space within this thesis to refer particularly to funeral and grieving practices in different cultures (which in my own professional experience have been the cause of much confusion but also much learning, interculturally) but the minister, Judith, showed awareness of this and had included into the pastoral leaders' sessions, before Esther's death occurred unexpectedly, opportunity to learn from each other about differing responses to bereavement and to grief. This evidence of good intercultural habit from the minister helped with this very difficult pastoral situation.

binary thinking of ‘us’ and ‘they’”. White people I spoke with later commented on how much they had learned and appreciated about Ghanaian attitudes to death. Ghanaian people I spoke with showed obvious rejoicing that “the rest” of the church members had supported in this way. The event served to provide financial support for the family, in line with the expectations of Ghanaian culture, without the awkwardness that the white people would have felt, in being asked for money donations for an individual family, in the days of Western charity laws. This meal showed me how people at Central were able to move from havens which helped them feel they belonged, to intercultural exchange which developed their understanding and care for one another. It was a good example of what Baker (2011) describes:

> The feelings of deep solidarity, trust and peacefulness engendered through these technologies of belonging help provide a safe and supportive space by which different identities - religious, cultural, ethnic and gendered - can be translated and negotiated into a functioning whole. Thus, religious participants move from spaces of belonging to spaces of becoming in ways that allow them to develop a new identity forged out of different and sometimes competing and existing identities.

A whole-church meal in support of a particular family had never happened at the church before, and was not something which either the Ghanaian members or the White members of the church had within their experience of Central MC, yet it fulfilled the needs of all the communities of the church and created a new and creative cosmopolitan theological practice, showing moral imagination. In considering the cosmopolitan theological practice at Central I was reminded of Fulkerson’s (2007: 39) comment, “Not just anything can count as a practice; what raises an activity to the status of a practice is its intelligibility in the terms of a communal narrative tradition.” This whole-church meal was a good example of a practice which became part of Central’s communal narrative tradition and was referred to many times during my conversations at the church.

Additionally, the capacity for moral imagination at Central is enhanced by many people's memories of their own experience of feeling 'new' in a culture. I am reminded of the Irish member mentioned in Chapter 3, and also of Chris, who said in an interview:

> Well, I mean… I can… I can… can remember coming myself to the Black country… it isn't anywhere near as marked now as it was then… but I remember I couldn't tell what they were saying!! It was extremely demanding! But they could understand me. I suppose my accent was more the sort of stuff that's more like what you hear on the TV!

Barbara described her experiences when, as a student in the 1950s, she had lived at a Methodist International House and met people from around the world. These decades of awareness of other cultures had given her a moral imagination so that, when invited to a Ghanaian celebration that she wanted to attend but knew she would have to leave at a certain time, she explained this to the host. That host, also a member of the church, with her own moral imagination, arranged for Barbara to be served her food earlier so that she could participate but leave at the necessary time.

For some their moral imagination was developed outside the church and then brought into the church. One white woman, who I did not speak much with otherwise said one morning, about being on holiday in Italy, "It's easier to see who I really am when I meet people who are different!" Equally, Dorcas showed moral imagination, developed through her working life in which she encountered many people in rural, settled and more monocultural settings. She told me that she could see how big a change it had been for some of the older White people to cope with as newer members had come along. When she was quite deeply hurt about the response of some of the White people to the 'worship experiment' which was of personal significance to her, her moral imagination helped her to see the perspective of those who were trying to keep things as they already were. I was able to observe in these participants the moral imagination needed as an element of Jagessar's intercultural habit.

For many participants their life-times have included a range of experiences which have gradually changed their approach to others and helped them to develop an intercultural habit. Valentine and Sadgrove (2013:13) write:

> While we can choose how we manage our feelings in relation to the reflective judgements we make about other individuals with whom we have contact in everyday life, for such contact to change our attitudes towards the group they represent we must rethink our routine emplacements or orientation to the world.

Chapel cosmopolitanism can provide the milieu in which to develop the moral imagination needed for intercultural habit, which is 'a routine orientation to the world'. This happens as people meet, worship, listen, talk and practise their church life together.

However, I will now turn to Jagessar's second element of intercultural habit, 'mutual inconveniencing', to examine how far this was present at Central Methodist Church.

d) 'Mutual Inconveniencing'

In my earlier work (Marsh 2016) I speak of the need, within ethnically diverse churches, for congregations to be willing to be changed by those who arrive as newcomers. When attempting to 'love your neighbour as yourself' my participants at Central often showed the moral imagination of which Jagessar speaks, as they opened themselves up to those who were different from themselves, and got to know, through their new friends, something more of the world that we live in. This moral imagination is, however, less of a challenge than the 'mutual inconveniencing' which is the second part of Jagessar's 'intercultural habit'[55].

Jagessar (2015b: 261) writes, "At the heart of the intercultural project is the need to work together to enhance each other's well-being, and thus encouraging transformation through internal and mutual critique of our motives." Mutual inconveniencing requires an attitude of openness to the fact that each experience of life is limited, that knowledge comes from one particular place and could need development or even

[55] It could be argued that this mutual inconveniencing relates to the phrase 'your neighbour as yourself' in the same way as moral imagination relates to 'love'.

correction, and that personal perspectives will not necessarily be shared. Jagessar (2015b: 270) again:

> If transformation is to happen we need a larger picture than our own. Such a habit is dangerous and subversive – all will have to be converted, to be mutually inconvenienced – each called to journey beyond their particular perspective. For we are all in need!

This recognition of our own need is deeply challenging for White people and requires a discipline of silence, a giving up of power, or a recognition of powerlessness, and a giving up of the struggle to provide for others. These qualities are not easy, and yet I saw a level of them at Central, including real skill from many people in listening to each other, because of the strength of the pastoral work in the church. Veling (2005: 56) talks about the essential task of listening to one another:

> 'What are you saying to me?' is (therefore) a crucial question that signals my willingness to listen to you, to take your words seriously. It directs my attention *to you* and allows your words to speak *to me*. Interpretation cannot happen without this fundamental openness toward another that speaks to me and addresses my life.

I was moved by some of the examples I saw of people being changed by those they encountered at Central. One particular intercultural friendship was between Marilyn and Pauline who had been put in touch with each other, by Judith, when Marilyn became a member of the church, as a way of providing some mentoring and support for her. The friendship had developed and grown through the following five years and they pray with and for each other regularly as they share their family challenges in particular. At one point in a joint interview Pauline was shocked to hear that some of Marilyn's friends think she is a "traitor" to mix with White people at the church[56]. She said it had never occurred to her that Marilyn might know anybody who would think that they shouldn't be friendly with each other. The level of openness as they talked was clear, and their willingness to learn from one another was also apparent, building on a longer friendship.

[5656] A good example of when my research actually made an intervention which changed the conversations of the congregation.

This level of intercultural openness showed the opportunity for what McGarrah Sharp (2013) calls 'mis-understanding stories'. She argues that through the misunderstandings that occur in intercultural relationships deeper understanding and healthier post-colonial relationships can be developed.

My observation at Central was that the misunderstandings were more often 'silent misunderstanding stories' because people were not expressing their understandings. An example of this was one of the older white members, Doris, who told me of her upset that she and her husband had invited many people to their home for meals and that whereas the White people always went along as arranged, the Black people didn't. This appears to be a stark and difficult contrast, and Doris chose to talk with me about it but with difficulty as she clearly didn't want to 'speak badly' of others. While I have theories on why this may have been the case based on another conversation that I had with Steve[57], the point here is that the upset she experienced was not followed up because the misunderstanding and hurt were not expressed and the relationships cooled rather than deepening through this silent misunderstanding story.

Alongside this example, though, I can put the cosmopolitan experience and approach of another participant. Brenda had previously been a member of a different church experiencing chapel cosmopolitanism. It had not been an easy experience but when she and her husband had subsequently moved back to Hill Town, and begun to attend Central, Brenda had brought with her the 'bridging social capital' (Furbey et al. 2006, Cantle 2005) of her intercultural experience. She, too, like Doris, had invited people to her home and extended the offer of a meal to get to know people, but she told me that she had learned to invite people, be prepared that it might not work out, have a plan for how to freeze the food, and to invite fairly 'last minute' because people wouldn't know their shift patterns until nearer to the time. This example showed me both moral imagination but also a willingness to be mutually inconvenienced.

[57] Steve commented to me that as an African man he would always say 'yes' to an "elder" when asked to do something, even if he had not worked out if it were possible, because to say 'no' to an elder would be highly disrespectful. He could see, because of his own moral imagination, how difficult this would be but said that he found it impossible to refuse the request of an "elder", or to face them if he felt he had "let them down". Ryen (2000: 225-226) refers to this dynamic.

e) The need for spoken mis-understandings

While the interest in my research at Central showed a strong level of moral imagination and people expressed a willingness to be inconvenienced, I did not, in practice, see a lot of mutual inconveniencing between members. I will look in the next chapter at the impact of White 'norming' within the congregation which was, I argue, a significant reason for this. However, before I leave Jagessar's concept of 'mutual inconveniencing' as a crucial part of intercultural habit, I want to return to my concept of Cosmopolitan Practical Theology.

Many of my participants showed care for their 'neighbour', including those who were different from themselves, within the church. Although none were able to articulate their theological basis for choosing to do this[58] as vividly as Veling (2005: 111), they showed their agreement by their practice:

> This is a simple and yet increasingly stunning thought for me. The one image of God that will never lead me into idolatry is the human person. The human person! Those that I come across every single waking day of my life – on buses and trains, in the streets, at work, on television – everywhere, everyday, the image of God is before me.

If those who experience chapel cosmopolitanism are to develop a 'Cosmopolitan Practical Theology' this requires both the havens of Marti and the intercultural habit of Jagessar. There is also the need for explicit conversation about intercultural issues. The mutual inconveniencing in Jagessar's intercultural habit cannot develop if people are not aware of the need to be inconvenienced. The middle-class, polite and educated culture which was dominant at Central meant that sometimes the mis-understanding stories described by McGarrah Sharp were not expressed and intercultural habit could not deepen. She writes (2013:4):

> Understanding across differences is more challenging than misunderstanding because the former involves a willingness to recognize one's own complicity in

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[58] Fulkerson (2007: 10) expressed her own frustration that her participants were not able to express their theological commitment to intercultural church life as explicitly as she had hoped, and this combines with Clark-King's comments (2004:8-9) about how difficult she found it to get Methodist women in particular to talk about their faith.

> the latter. Understanding requires investing in processes of hearing, voicing, and approaching narrative with a hermeneutic of suspicion guided by the value of intercultural understanding as a good and a goal worthy of sustained effort.

I suggest that a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology needs an attention to the words of Jesus, “The truth will set you free” (John 8:32), and yet I noticed that, at Central, there was a politeness, usually born from kindness and wanting not to cause offence, which meant the truth was not always expressed. A report by the Home Office (2001: 20) acknowledged the difficulty for society when people are not willing or able to discuss difficult issues:

> It is unfashionable to speak of loving one’s neighbour, but unless our society can move at least to a position where we can respect our neighbours as fellow human beings, we shall fail in our attempts to create a harmonious society… Such respect depends, in part at least, on being open with one another about differences of belief, tradition and culture. In our anxiety to eliminate the forms of insulting behaviour and language, we have created a situation in which most people are now unwilling to open any subject which might possibly lead to uncomfortable differences of opinion. In this lies a big danger. If neighbours are unable to discuss differences, they have no hope of understanding them. Those who wish to cause trouble then have a fruitful field in which to operate.

Sadly, the years since then have proved the accuracy of this warning. In my conversations over coffee with Violet, Norman, Doris and others there was evidence that people were reluctant to say things which might reflect badly on themselves. One week, as I chatted with Violet about her experience of living in Hill Town, she began to say “coloured people…” and then stopped, unable to go on from embarrassment and not knowing which words to use, while knowing that ‘coloured people’ is now considered to be an inappropriate phrase. I encouraged her by providing the words ‘Black people’, but she didn’t want to say more and I suspect this was partly due to her nervousness about whether she should say what she wanted to say in church, or at least to me. Norman in particular, described how difficult he found it when he tried to talk with people but couldn’t hear or understand how they answered him. On another occasion, as I got to know her, Violet admitted that she couldn’t “tell one from the

other" of the Black members and was very embarrassed once when she had twice asked the same person who they were after worship on consecutive weeks. These social difficulties had prevented some of my participants from knowing how to engage with people who were 'other' than them, in accent and appearance. The misunderstandings were, therefore, often unspoken and a deepening of understanding was hindered by the dominant culture of the congregation. It was understandable that people were sometimes loathe to be inconvenienced by engaging with those who were different from themselves, given the challenges posed by this intercultural habit. For this reason, it is important to return to the theological motivation for White people to allow themselves to be mutually inconvenienced.

Jagessar (2015b: 264) argues: "An underlying motivation of an intercultural habit is about being mutually inconvenienced for the sake of the 'fullness of life project' of God in Christ." I was conscious, at Central, that this motivation did not seem to feature in some members. In Fulkerson's study (2007) of chapel cosmopolitanism in an American Methodist church, she discovered a very clear intention and commitment to being an intercultural church which prioritised this over other things that a church might want to become. By contrast the church at Central had become intercultural through the demographic changes which led to their chapel cosmopolitanism, not through an intention to become such.

f) Leadership in intercultural habit

In Fulkerson's study church the commitment to being an intercultural church was inspired, and communicated, by the minister at the church (Fulkerson 2007: 84, 121) and I found, too, that Judith's role was crucial at Central. Her sermons and contributions to the church's meetings often included explicit reference to the theological need for us to live out the love of neighbour, in church and in society. (Journal, 22nd January 2017):

> Judith led the service and included in the talk slots bits about Jesus being 'radically inclusive' and, as often, she had a strong emphasis on our response to Jesus even when we feel inadequate. That we're called, despite our failings, and because we're loved, rather than because of our competencies. She then urged

> us all to think about how we can show that love for others and encourage them to find it for themselves by what we do as individuals and as a church.

Judith also has a belief that the church is intercultural because God intends it that way, saying:

> I've been saying 'look, we're all here together… God has brought us all here together... I mean we've got Catholics, and Pentecostalists, and Ghanaian Pentecostalists and a whole range of people. They could go anywhere. There's a huge choice of churches in Hill Town. But they haven't: they've come here. So, I tell them "We've been brought here together, this is where we are now. So, we have to work out, together, how to go forward with this. To find a way forward together.

The role of a minister in developing intercultural habit has been researched by others (Sheffield 2005, Lartey 2006, Fulkerson 2007, Richards 2008, Shakespeare 2014, Brazal and De Guzman 2015). Osmer (2008: 194), for example, writes: "Leaders offer members a path of discipleship in which the needs of others gradually become as important as their own." While I do not have space here to develop this further, I need to highlight the difficulty for one person, even from the minister's position of power, influencing the culture of the whole congregation. Brazal and DeGuzman (2015: 156) say, "An intercultural Church requires ministers (ordained and lay) who can function as cultural mediators. Such a big task needs a team… who think, feel and act intercultural." Jagessar (2015a: 20) writes, "Becoming an intercultural church is both a vision of what we hope to become, and the process of our faithful response to the call by our God or many-one-ness to share in a common life together." This response, and the commitment to developing intercultural habit, needs to come from more people than just the minister and I saw this commitment from many of my participants.

Although I don't intend, within the space of this thesis, to go into much detail, I conclude that there are some aspects of Methodist theological heritage which fed into the Cosmopolitan Practical Theology at Central Methodist Church. In particular John Wesley's emphasis on 'orthokardia' and 'orthopathy' as well on orthodoxy and

orthopraxis[59], although none of my participants would have put it in these terms, was evident in their perceptions that it was more important to care about each other than to share theological views necessarily. Runyon (1998: 161) says that for Wesley,

> … experience [of God] is valid only insofar as it comes from a relation with a source that transcends the subject, and it is valid only insofar as it is consistent with a community of experience that transcends the individual.

Weems Jr (1999:92) argues that since the days of Wesley's own leadership he had a talent for 'keeping things together' which might naturally have been seen to be 'at odds'. The Methodist Church report *Living with contradictory convictions* (2007) spells out the historical theological reasons in Methodism for finding ways of loving one another when deeply-held opinions vary, and Haley and Francis (2006: 165) found that,

> Methodist ministers remain convinced about the advantages of theological pluralism for the future of their denomination, believing that theological diversity and theological pluralism bring strength to the connexion as a whole, to the circuits and to the local churches.

While theological differences do not always relate to cultural difference, and may relate just as much to generational difference, the practice of loving across theological difference helps in situations of other diversity.[60] I will, in the next chapter however, return to the influence of Methodist missionary heritage on Central's everyday experiencing of chapel cosmopolitanism.

In this chapter I have outlined Jagessar's concept of 'intercultural habit' with its twin aspects of 'moral imagination', which I consider to be amply evident at Central, and 'mutual inconveniencing', which I consider to be less evident at Central. I have argued for the need for misunderstandings to be expressed for mutual inconveniencing to become a more regular challenge to the deepening of intercultural habit. I have also

[59] I consider that more research into these concepts, in the light of chapel cosmopolitanism would be very useful and rewarding.

[60] While this was not the direction I have taken in this doctoral research I was often struck by the relationships between different types of diversity, and there was evidence from my early doctoral research (published Marsh 2016) that positive experience of one type of diversity, whatever it may be, then led to further diversification of congregations.

made the point that for Cosmopolitan Practical Theology to be transformational there has to be a commitment to intercultural habit which needs strong motivation to prevail over existing previous dominant cultures. It is as though intercultural habit has to become a culture itself. For many congregations this will be a new intercultural culture developed from different participant cultures (as in the story of Esther's special meal).

Ghorashi (2004: 330) describes the dynamics of creating a new corporate identity:

> There is a shift in defining identity that focuses on the processes involved in constructing, imagining, and changing identities. These processes include a variety of cultures and identities articulated and negotiated within newly created spaces. These identities are neither static nor monolithic, but rather dynamic, complex and hybrid.

In relation to these processes Osmer argues that there is a challenge to church leaders (2008: 175): "The leaders of mainline congregations face not only the external challenge of a changing social context, but also the internal challenge of helping their congregations rework their identity and mission." At Central I found a minister and a leadership team who, together, were aware of the need for change, of the discipleship reasons to put their faith into practice as intercultural habit, and of the missional reasons to bear witness to a God who calls each person together into the church regardless of their culture or heritage.

The context of globalisation in which we live puts its own challenges to us, seen in these times of Trump[61] and Brexit. Longer than twenty years ago Volf (1996: 37) asked,

> How should we live as Christian communities today faced with the 'new tribalism' that is fracturing our societies, separating peoples and cultural groups, and fomenting vicious conflicts? What should be the relation of the churches to the cultures they inhabit? The answer lies, I propose, in cultivating the proper relation between the distance from the culture and belonging to it.

I suggest that within this one cosmopolitan congregation I saw people of different cultural backgrounds working out what their own relationship to their culture should be

[61] Donald Trump is President of the United States of America, as I write.

and how much they were willing to change their congregational culture in order to become something different and relevant to their times and their community. As Jagessar himself puts it (2015a: 15):

> The witness of churches (its message lived out) carries integrity and credibility when the world sees Christians growing and deepening relationships regardless of ethnicity and culture. We strive after the 'not yet' that one day all will be reconciled back to God in Christ.

The leadership team of Central were aware of these theological aims and motivations for a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology and were, personally, committed to an intercultural habit. In the next chapter I will, then, spell out what I saw in the data about the obstacles to a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology within the chapel cosmopolitanism that I found there.

Chapter 5: The norming of Whiteness and its impact on Cosmopolitan Practical Theology

Having used my data to examine how the concepts of 'havens' (Marti 2010) and 'intercultural habit' (Jagessar 2015) operated in practice, in my study church, I will now present some conclusions about the difficulties which the 'norming' of Whiteness presents in developing Cosmopolitan Practical Theology.[62] Crucially, I will argue that the invisibility of white privilege to many of my White participants prevents the mutual inconveniencing which is essential for the developing of intercultural habit.

a) A study of Whiteness

The use of Whiteness Studies to examine the impact of White privilege has been slow to develop in the British theological scene[63]. In this thesis I have been examining the intercultural dynamics in one particular congregation and the theological implications of White privilege for congregational life in this specific situation of chapel cosmopolitanism.[64] I begin, here, with a particular practical example of the argument that this chapter will make in more detail.

During my participant-observation I went along to a meal advertised as a 'Harvest Supper'. I was keen to be part of this because, in my professional experience, Harvest is often the one time of year where cultural difference is celebrated by a whole church community. Instead I was greeted and ushered into a room where the attendees were all White and elderly. I discovered later that there had been some communication difficulties which meant that, while this was an occasion really intended for the elderly group who have 'Holiday at Home' together in the Summer months, that had not been

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[62] For a helpful description of the processes of 'norming' see Ramirez-Johnson (2018:262)

[63] Robert Beckford (F.D. Maurice Lecture, 12th March 2019, Kings College, London) claimed there are one and a half books on this theme compared with the US where Theology is beginning to catch up with other disciplines, such as Sociology and Geography. Additionally, the booklet, *Diversity, Otherness and Privilege: a guide for conversation*, by the Susanna Wesley Foundation, states, "The term 'white privilege' is used to refer to the particular advantages connected to those who have white skin. While many sources relate this to the North American context, it's important to consider how it applies in the UK." (p. 3) www.susannawesleyfoundation.org

[64] My own choice of definition for Whiteness can be found on pp. 9-10.

made clear and so some people, including me, thought that is was a ‘whole Church Harvest Supper’. Some of this confusion, according to the organising group, came from wanting to be ‘inclusive’ and therefore not saying who it was (and implicitly was not) intended for. As I ate my jacket potato and fillings, and joined in the conversation, Norman commented to me, “It’s really frustrating that more people aren’t here. We really want the Ghanaian[65] members to come but, for some reason, they never do.” This remark stayed with me and exemplifies well some of what I need to address next.

Veling (2005: 159) writes,

> We are swimming in culture; it is like an ocean surrounding us, as water surrounds a fish. Or it is like the air we breathe. Or it is like a lens we see through, without us consciously noticing that we are wearing spectacles. Or it is like something entirely normal or “natural” to us, even though to a person of a different culture it may seem quite strange and foreign.

This Harvest meal showed the dominance of a particular ‘culture’ within the church. When I spoke later with Ben, about this Harvest meal, he knew nothing about it. Also, despite the fact that it had been promoted in the weekly notice-sheet, some of the Black members had somehow picked up the (correct) message that it wasn’t really intended for them. Samuel commented, when I asked if he’d considered going, “Well the sign-up list had all ‘White’ names on it!” and added, “And none of us like jacket potatoes anyway!” This is a ‘mis-understanding story’ (McGarrah Sharp 2013) in that one message was given about who the meal was for, other people present were bothered that people (who weren’t really invited) weren’t there, and yet it was not designed, or planned, as a ‘whole-church’ event. In terms of the intention for the event it was excellent. The food and content of the evening was enjoyed by the ‘target-audience’, and yet the event caused a sense of “Why won’t they come?” from one ‘group’ and a sense of “Well they clearly didn’t want us there anyway” from the other ‘group’. I wrote (Journal, 28th September 2016):

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[65] In this case my understanding was that he meant they wanted some of the Black members to come but, because many of the older people do not know in detail which ethnic backgrounds many of the younger Black members are from, they all tended to be referred to as ‘the Ghanaians’ by some people, knowing that there are many members from Ghana.

> My main reflection, driving home, was that this was actually a sub-section of the church, like a Youth Club for young people, but that it is a sub-section who think that they ‘are’ the church. Interesting!

While the event was an ideal haven for one sub-group to enjoy, the difficulty for this ethnically-diverse church was that those in that sub-group still considered themselves to be ‘The Church’. This meal was a traditional ‘English’ Harvest Supper, serving the same function as a pizza party for the teenagers in that it catered for one cultural grouping within the church’s life. Meanwhile, however, some of those at the event considered it to be *the* Church’s Harvest Supper and were bemoaning the absence of some they’d have liked to be there, without recognising their own cultural haven for what it is: a haven which is welcoming to them, but exclusive to others. This experience summed up for me the dilemmas facing Central as they developed a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. While some of my White participants who were in the majority, not just in their town but in this church, may have been aware of their own ethnicity, others were not, nor were they aware of the impact on others of their own culture being the dominant one.

During the course of my research, a friend of Zimbabwean family background told me that, as he went out for a Christmas event with other ministers, one White colleague commented, “I love your jacket. It’s very ethnic.”. He regretted that he had not been quick enough to reply “And I love your choice of ethnic suit too!” Often White people do not see what is normal to them as ‘ethnic’ despite the fact that every culture has its own ethnic heritage. Due to the invisibility of White culture, and because of their lack of awareness of their own ethnicity, some white members at Central were struggling to acknowledge the need they all shared for a haven in which to belong (Chapter 3) and the need they all had to develop an intercultural habit (Chapter 4) in order to develop a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology (as outlined in Chapter 1).

An added layer to this cultural dominance is the fact that the culture of the congregation is also predominantly ‘middle-class’ as well as ‘White British’. The politeness which is so much a feature of the congregation’s life leads to the mis-understandings (such as this one described here) being often unacknowledged and unable to function as a catalyst for deeper understanding (as described by McGarrah Sharp 2013). Instead, the mis-

understandings remain unexpressed, unexamined, uninterpreted and unresolved. This was the case with this Harvest meal.

A complication evident with this case-study and throughout my research, is the inter-sectionality between ethnic or cultural diversity and age diversity. The case studied here could just as easily have occurred with the cultural difference of diverse age-groups in a more homogenous congregation. In other words, the older people could have still have had something planned for them which they believed was the way 'the Church' should celebrate Harvest, and yet would not have appealed to younger generations of people who were still part of 'the Church'. In fact, this dynamic was at play here too. However, the difference in skin colour means that what could have otherwise been recognised as generational diversity was immediately interpreted as ethnic diversity by some participants. I was often reminded by some participants, Paul and Chris in particular, that generational diversity plays a key part in dynamics at Central, and they are right about this. However, I argue that my focus on ethnic diversity is not just about my personal and research interests but also unavoidable because of skin colour and racist stereotypes which operate very actively[66], as shown in my data and in this case-study.

While I did not develop this aspect of my research further there was evidence from my data that one feature of Ghanaian culture leading to the lack of challenge to White privilege was a strong respect for the experience of elders. Dorcas, for example, insisted to her Ghanaian friends that the offensiveness of some White members was due to "ignorance" (see p. 56), without necessarily believing this to be the case (as was evident in my interview with her). My research did not afford the opportunity to investigate in detail how this respect for elders contributed to the 'silence' about White privilege, and yet it clearly contributed to the intercultural dynamics and more research into this would be welcome.

In her own study of a particular ethnically-diverse congregation Ward (2004: 136) recounts her growing recognition of the difficulties faced by her Black participants and concludes that:

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[66] See, for example, Kujawa-Holbrook (2006:48-64)

> With the benefit of hindsight, I would from the beginning be much more focused on where I ended up: institutional racism within the discursive practices of the Church of England, as analysed by an ethnographic study of a congregation.

I had initially wondered whether to focus in my research on institutional racism within the Methodist Church in Britain. Instead, due partly to the lack of any available relevant statistics[67], I have focussed on the interpersonal dynamics within a particular congregation, with their own spectrum of cosmopolitan 'neighbour-love' (Kang 2013), 'colour-blindness', colonialism, racism and racism-awareness. During the late twentieth century the Methodist Church in Britain did a great deal of excellent anti-racist training[68] but I have recognized, in this thesis, that the sin of racism is never far away[69]. In an interview Judith told me, for example, of how one elderly White member bemoaned the fact that there were "no younger people" at the church. This clearly was not true as there were children (at least 20) and adults under the age of fifty (at least 10) but these people, mostly Black, were apparently invisible to the speaker. This is in stark contrast to Fulkerson's thesis (2007) about 'places of appearing' being places of redemption. My data showed that the assumptions that White people make, and blindness to White

[67] Which, of itself, is a concern to anybody considering racism within a denomination.

[68] MELRAW (MEthodist Leadership Racism Awareness Workshops) was one example of such work, in which Sybil Phoenix was very influential (Hooker and Sargant 1991: 103). Chambers (2010: 23) quotes David Udo: " I would say the work of MELRAW had contributed greatly to racial justice in the church today: by raising awareness of the issue… and recommending effective strategies to tackle racism, injustice and inequality; also by encouraging and enabling black people's participation fully in the leadership of the church. One very important aspect of MELRAW's work was Black Consciousness Raising that helped black people to be better informed about the structures of the institutions and the society in which they live, to develop greater confidence towards achieving their goals and to play a constructive role in church and society." Through the influence of many Black Methodists who constantly brought the issue of racism to the attention of the Methodist Church in Britain there were many publications aimed at helping with anti-racist training within the church (Methodist Church in Britain, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2003, 2005).

[69] In a 1978 statement the Conference asserted that "Racism is a sin and contrary to the imperatives of the Gospel. Biblically, it is against all that we perceive of the unmotivated, spontaneous and undiscriminating love of God who in Jesus Christ gave himself for all." The 1987 report to Conference, *Faithful and Equal* (which refers to the 1978 statement above) defined racism as "allowing prejudice to determine the way power is used to the personal, social or institutional detriment of ethnic minority individuals or communities."

privilege, can lead to dominance by White people, sometimes despite their best intentions, leading to unequal power and unequal opportunities within the church[70].

I recognise the work of Ghorashi (2004), Baker (2007), Fumanti (2010), and Shannahan (2010) in looking at the complexities of identity formation and I acknowledge that all people have multiple identities so that the essentialism of Black and White labels is far too simplistic (as acknowledged in Chapter 1). Shannahan (2010:142) writes of the danger of "broad-brush equation of 'Whiteness' with economic privilege [which] homogenizes plural White identities and brackets out examples of White alienation on the 'sink estates' that ring British cities." Certainly, my own White participants showed a huge diversity of experience and approach to 'others'. Nevertheless, I agree, particularly in these Brexit times, with Reddie who writes (2009a: 356):

> One of the most pressing challenges that still faces us in our contemporary postmodern epoch is the need to re-engage with the realities of racial injustice… I believe it is still the case that Black people know far more about White people than the reverse. My intention is not to traduce or attack White people in any simplified and generic sense, but Black experiences that give rise to Black theology must challenge White people to face up to the un-earned privileges accrued from their often unreflective, normative Whiteness.

Consequently, I am pleased to have persisted in the using of Black and White as a corrective because, as long as the skin colour and 'ethnic' culture of other people is labelled, as different, by White people, I argue that those of us who are White need also to label ourselves and to recognise our own ethnic culture and difference. Starr (2001: 42) argues:

> When racism is only explored through extreme acts of violence, most White people find it pretty easy to distance themselves from such behaviour. If church groups were able to think through the notion of White privilege, it would be

[70] Stringer (2016: 210) comments on a student who, when carrying out research in three churches which were chosen specifically chosen for "their high reputations for good practice on racial issues", still discovered that these same churches "were riddled with racial problems and tensions and could not be taken as examples of good practice in any but the loosest or most superficial senses."

more difficult for White Christians to deny the part they play in maintaining a racist society.

Some of my participants were anxious at the idea that I might consider there to be racism within the church[71], yet some were more able than others to see the subtleties of the power-discriminations which were still active in the church's life. I will now consider one particular feature of Methodism which I observed as influential in the dynamics of the everyday cosmopolitanism of Central Methodist Church.

b) "We're all Methodists"

One particularly strong influence from White experience that impacted on relationships at Central is Methodist mission heritage. For all of Methodist history there has been a strong emphasis on mission in other parts of the world[72]. This has meant that there has been a clear interest in, and support for, the people of 'other' countries, through prayer, monetary giving and communication channels. In some senses it was positive that my participants saw their Methodism as something which united them across the world. Nevertheless, my data, corresponding with my previous professional experience, shows that this heritage has three difficult outcomes for contemporary British Methodism.

Firstly, there is a paternalism which assumes that British Methodists are those who give and people of other countries are those who receive[73]. An example would be the desire of my White participants to 'welcome' and 'include' those from different backgrounds. This desire appears benign but hides the fact that many White members of the church see Central as *their* church, rather than a church to which everybody who attends belongs, or which they all contribute to equally. Moreover, this attitude has been unexamined[74] so that there is no awareness of the question about whose role it is to

[71] I hope I have been careful enough to describe the racism I found responsibly as, tragically, what could be said here could, I fear, be said of most, if not all, Methodist churches I have encountered where there is a White majority within the church's life.

[72] As one example, Methodism arrived in the Caribbean during Wesley's life-time and many of the Methodist Church buildings in the Caribbean are as old as some of the oldest Methodist Churches in the UK. Wesley's phrase "The world is my parish" is well-known and was often quoted by my participants (Wesley's Journal, June 11th 1739).

[73] It is particularly complicated that this is sometimes reinforced by Methodists around the British Connexion who originate from other countries and are glad of the financial benefits that come from a benign paternalism such as this, but that is a different research project.

[74] Some participants had clearly been thinking about this before my arrival as researcher but there was an expressed acknowledgement that this research gave them opportunity to talk about the issues in a way

welcome newcomers or to be welcomed. Many of the Ghanaian members had been at the church for more than ten years and yet this latest 'group' of arrivals is still often treated as though they are currently being 'welcomed in' by the White members[75] to 'their church' rather than to 'this church'[76].

There is a further question of what it means to 'include' others. As Jagessar (2015b: 266) writes, "We need to be honest about wanting to become communities where all are included when we do not have the same understanding and criteria of what it means to be included." Many of my participants were acting on an assumption that to be 'included' meant behaving as they did themselves, including regular attendance at evening meetings, even though there was recognition from others that this was not possible for some of the members, simply because of their age and life-stages. Dorcas and Ben were very faithful and regular about attendance at meetings and yet Violet still commented to me (Journal, 14th October 2016) one Sunday, "The Ghanaians never come to anything. They don't seem to want to be involved." The assumption was that they should be able to come, and should want to show their commitment through the same habits as others who have longer commitment to the same church. The inclination to 'welcome' and to 'include' people is conditional upon them wanting, and being able, to reproduce the same patterns of behaviour. Where this is not the case, and church 'traditions' are challenged, the paternalism is shown for what it is and mitigates against a healthy Cosmopolitan Practical Theology.

Secondly, I observed a habit by which the White participants assumed control. This is a trait of Whiteness recognized by Beaudoin and Turpin (2014: 265-6) and was apparent, as one example from many, when Paul was reflecting with me on the 'coffee apartheid' described earlier (Chapter 3):

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that they had not been able to find opportunity for previously. It was agreed by the Church Leadership Team, in advance, that this was an intervention which they would welcome.

[75] As mentioned in Chapter 3 when Violet had forgotten temporarily how long it was that Dorcas had been a member of the church. Given her own longevity of life the twelve years that Dorcas has been at Central probably feels a 'short while'.

[76] One area of work that I would have loved to have time to develop further is the relationship between understandings of 'inclusion' and mission in a more general sense (Orton and Hart, 2017: 11 -13) as I would argue that the ability to participate together in a church's life across diversity, rather than maintaining an ethos of 'insiders' who 'welcome' others, is crucial to the numerical growth of churches.

Paul: It's one of the issues that you will have seen on Sunday morning, and that you will have seen previously, that all the younger Black people have coffee, have coffee in the foyer

Barbara: … or whatever they have..

Paul: … or whatever they have yes. And all the older people… all the White people, have coffee in the lounge

Barbara: … always have done!

Paul: We haven't been able to …. mix them.

In my Journal (19th September 2016) I recorded:

> This last comment was made in a regretful tone of voice as though he felt he should have been 'able to mix them'. Paul is a long-standing member of the church who has taken responsibility for a great number of areas of church life over the years and who, in his employed days, had a very responsible job. He feels responsibility for the life of the church and is struggling with the idea that he can't make happen what he thinks should happen. In this particular church this was an attitude which I found to be quite prevalent among the older generation of kindly White people, who still had what I would see as a colonial attitude to other people, over whom they expected to have influence. There was, however, as far as I could see, little existing self-awareness of the impact of colonialism upon them. The approach of these long-standing Methodists will have been formed over many years influenced by their experience of being encouraged to give to Missionary Societies in order to 'alleviate poverty' and to help those 'overseas' as well as by their professional and social experience in this country.

It was also significant, to continue with the 'coffee' example, that in my interview with Steve (20th November 2016) he mentioned how a previous minister had asked him to do something about getting his fellow Ghanaians to go into the same coffee lounge as the older members.

> It's always like that… I don't understand why. When Rev Barry was here, he pushed it… if you noticed… the Ghanaians all sit in the foyer and none in the lounge. And Rev Barry pushed it… Yeah, he pushed it. Actually, he pushed me to push others into the lounge. And I did it. I pushed them all through…. continuously we did that.

As I re-read my transcript, I realised the forcefulness in the vocabulary used and there was a frustration in Steve's face and voice that he'd done as he'd been pushed to do but that it had not made any difference and people had reverted to their chosen spaces. Despite the obvious sense of the parents being near to the children's play space, those who felt it would be better to be 'together' had tried to control this happening. There is an assumption that for people to be included they should be prepared to fit in with current patterns. As Sano (1999: 55) puts it: "It is not too much to say that some converts were expected to commit cultural suicide when they accepted Christ. 'Become like us and we will like you' is what some of us heard." While this was an observation about historical missionary endeavours, I would argue that the same approach is still present and evident in my own data.

In 1988 Davey (1988: 221) quoted a missionary secretary, after listening to a Black local preacher: "I raised money to send ministers to preach to *them* – not to have them come over here and preach to *us*!" I would be glad to say that this attitude no longer exists, thirty years later, and certainly I did not hear it out loud as explicitly as this, but I did sometimes observe it in facial expressions and hear it in tone of voice[77]. This particular impact of missionary heritage, is compounded at Central by the experience of some of the Ghanaians growing up in Methodist missionary schools in Ghana and believing when they arrived in the UK that they needed to 'fit in' to the culture that they were arriving to. As Dorcas told me it "took years" and also deliberate mentoring into leadership by Judith, the minister, to believe that she could contribute to change within the church.

[77] Marilyn, who is training as a Local Preacher, also told me that in other local settings the possibility of her being 'the preacher' as she arrived, unknown in a church, was obviously an impossibility to some, and that she had received comments from people who felt that Black people could not be preachers but that White people are the ones who have the authority to preach and that Black people should not be 'allowed into the pulpit'. This explicit racism is something which needs further research.

Thirdly, there was a lack of recognition of otherness which came partly from the regularity with which some White people assumed that they knew about 'other' people. Sometimes this was based on previous experience of meeting one particular person from another country and assuming that this would then apply to all people from that country. As an example, some assumed that as 'we are all Methodists' then we would be the same and that fellow Methodists would be 'like us' without recognition of the diversity of World Methodism. Jack was an example as he assumed that Africans who liked 'loud music' must be Pentecostalists, and could not be Methodists (despite the numerous British Methodist churches which do like loud music!). While there was some potential overlap with intergenerational assumptions, sometimes the assumptions were explicitly based on racial stereotypes. Jack, again, also said to me, in a conversation about sexuality in the church, of Ben, "Well I'm sure as an African he would think that…" This was not based on any conversation about what Ben did think, but rather on Jack's own assumptions about this.

Beaudoin and Turpin (2014: 264) write of

> a soteriological drive evident in the history of White power in the West: White authority, exercised in White theological rhetoric, is presumed to be salvific. Existential and phenomenological language in White practical theology often universalizes experience that is secretly built on a specific frame while naming others as having color, ethnicity, or race.

I want to re-emphasise here that the need to listen carefully, for deeper understanding of the 'other', is crucial to Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. All of my interviewees were people who want to learn and to listen and yet there was still often a tendency of the White participants to think that they knew about others. I was shocked personally by the extent of this partly because it helped me to recognise this trait in myself as a White minister with years of professional experience in cosmopolitan settings and a previously-unrecognized over-confidence that I would understand somebody because of knowing other people with the 'same' national background, however crass it is to assume similarity between people on this basis.

Within my focus groups people were learning about each other and the lack of usual opportunity to do this is partly the challenge of time and availability to be in the same space as a diversity of people. The commitment of some people to learning about one another, mutually, was impressive (Pauline, Marilyn, Mae, Barbara, Brenda, Paul and Ben were all good examples of this). However, the complete acceptance of what is actually White culture as the 'norm' by many people at the church (represented in my characters Norman and Violet) meant that many others did not recognise the need for this mutual learning.

The difficulty and danger of these impacts of Methodist Missionary heritage is that if they remain unacknowledged then the possibility of 'mutual inconveniencing' (Chapter 4) and 'loving your neighbour as yourself' (Chapter 1) is eluded, where knowledge of self is lacking. The lack of awareness and of recognition of what is needed inhibits the possibility of a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology.

From his own experience Reddie (2009b:11) describes,

> Growing up in a predominantly White church I remember quite clearly the rhetoric of 'we don't see colour' and yet seeing the ways in which 'colour' so patently informed the very basis of how groups of people engaged with one another.

One impact of this refusal, or inability, to recognize that 'colour' makes a difference to how we perceive each other, is to prevent the genuine learning from one another that needs to take place. McGarrah Sharp (2013: 43) argues that "a model of good enough intercultural relationality adopts an in-process provisional understanding that recognizes the web of tensions in which we live." This recognition is key to the ability of a church to develop Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. The congregation at Central included a mixture of people, some of whom recognized this and some who didn't. The congregation's members were themselves diverse, in this as in so many other ways.

c) The perceived threat of everyday cosmopolitanism

In Chapter 1 I described the threat that some people feel in the face of everyday cosmopolitanism and this threat was also apparent in my data. It was unspoken in public that many of the older White members didn't want the church to change. However, this unspoken fear meant that the need to preserve the church's current life as a haven where longer-standing members could feel safe, was present and active. Jack recounted a conversation with Norman and others, when people from Ghana first began to arrive at Central, in which Norman admitted that he was afraid of Central becoming a 'Black Majority' church. Judith told me of an older White person who expressed to her similar fears after a recent baptismal celebration in which the number of Black people clearly outnumbered the White members present. This fear is not particularly rational, even numerically, as the membership is currently made up of two thirds White people. As Fulkerson (2007: 88) puts it of her own study church:

> When some White Good Samaritans complained that the church was getting 'too black', they were not making an observation about a literal numerical imbalance. Rather, they were displaying their (normally unconscious) White bodily propriety of ownership of space.

Nevertheless, the fear of being 'out-numbered' resonates with the recent mood of Brexit times, and is a significant reality of life within the chapel cosmopolitanism of Central. It also shows that the fear of one of Valentine and Sadgrove's participants (2013:10) is also present in this church as well as wider society: "Craig is implicitly expressing a fear of loss of privilege (as White and male) in competition with 'strangers' and his own sense of powerlessness in a context of unprecedented mobility and urban social change." When White members have been used to controlling what happens within the church, they fear this loss of control which they perceive may be taken away from them. In Jack's words (25th February 2017):

> …er… one thing which I think bothers some members is that if we're not careful we're going to lose control of our church… er… I don't think we will! Erm… but… it's we oldies, I suppose. We know we're dropping off the shelf, we know it's got to change and we've got to face that and… erm… I think… erm… I think God will

> guide it as to how as to change. So we don't need to worry about it… as long as we listen… That's what I think about it. But there is a worry.

In this part of my transcript Jack is both acknowledging the fear of some contemporaries but also including himself in the idea that "we" don't need to worry about losing control. He states that his belief about this is based in his trust in God but it was hard to tell who he meant by "we" and, in the context of the rest of the interview, I think it was confused, despite his intelligence. He seemed to include people who were not 'White' in his "we" but also to be personally afraid of losing control of the current style of doing things. For example, there was a look of concern in his face (in another part of the same interview) when he was describing the organising of an event which he'd been involved with and said,

> … it's a bit… how can I put it… I'm not sure what to think! It's not very organized! If you get involved with West Indians, or particularly Ghanaians, you know… they've got this rapper coming… but he doesn't come… "He's still in London… but he is coming" you know?

Jack recognizes the style and pattern of the informality of this culture, different to his own, but doesn't seem able to accept that this style will work nor, perhaps, to see that it is a particular culture and not simply a 'failure' to do things well in the style which he would personally prefer (i.e. in "good time").

This same section of transcript also illustrates the difficulty that people found in talking confidently about some of their doubts about intercultural relations. My participants were often aware that some of the words that came naturally to mind were not 'acceptable' and there was an underlying worry about 'political correctness' which made them nervous of saying anything which could be misconstrued or quoted against them. As a man with enough self-awareness to recognize his need for 'good time-keeping' Jack struggled with the idea of losing control of this. He repeatedly showed himself willing to get along with and listen to others. He mentioned to me, in passing one day, how he chose to go between the two coffee areas in order to "mix it up a bit", because he believed that people need to get to know each other within a church. He deliberately stays in the worship space to see who will talk with him. His theology, which in some

respects is a lot more 'liberal' than some other participants, includes quite a strong sense of God's Holy Spirit at work and he expressed it like this, in relation to the after-worship time:

> I don't know if anybody else thinks like I do but sometimes I think, "Who wants to speak to me? So, I'll go over there and sit on my own. If somebody wants to speak to me, they'll come and join me." And if they want then they do. And that's great.

Jack is loved by many people, from a variety of backgrounds, as was evident in my focus-groups, and the kindness shown by him to others, and by them to him, is a good example of the neighbourliness of Central where members were developing a good intercultural habit. Their awareness, as Christians, of the need to 'love your neighbour as yourself' often caused tension for them knowing that some of their own feelings were not particularly loving of others. The fear of change was sometimes present in those who wanted change for the sake of others, showing how complex a chapel cosmopolitanism can be. Jack typified this and showed how people can sometimes respond with love in the face of fear: a message that I argue our current society needs to hear. Saenz Jr (2018: 9), writing from a current United Methodist experience of trying to live out good neighbourly relations with immigrants in the context of the Trump era, argues:

> The harassment of political correctness feels repressive and controlling, guilt-ridden, and produces resentment, shaming, bitterness, anger and a deepening resolve to resist. The prompting of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is freeing, inspirational, and empowering…. To have compassion and care for the stranger goes above and beyond political correctness. It is a Christian obligation and desire rooted in our new nature as disciples of Christ born of the Spirit.

d) The language of Whiteness

I have written earlier (chapter 4) about the need for listening and have commented (chapters 1, 2 and 4) on what are often at Central 'silent mis-understanding stories' rather than the 'mis-understanding stories' of McGarrah Sharp (2013). One very evident example of the privileging of Whiteness was Central's reliance on English as the language of choice, and especially on 'Queen's English' when leading worship. The level of education of the church members is relatively high and the expectation is that those who offer to read in worship should have 'Good English'. This inhibits some of the members from offering to participate in this way. Interestingly, Steve compared the accents of his fellow Ghanaian members unfavourably to the accents of their British-born children who used to read in church as children growing up. The effect is that in some services of worship the Black members are not represented at all, and that is often the case with the Black adult members, even though the children, who regularly take part, are mostly Black.

Brenda was particularly concerned to keep English as the language for worship and, from a previous experience, saw it as a potential threat if other languages began to be used at Central. The irony that she would not personally like other than her own language to be used (a luxury not afforded to members of other first languages) is similar to Jack's embarrassed acknowledgement that he would not like to be "in the minority" despite the fact that the Black members (many of whom he considers friends) *are* currently in a minority.

e) Difficulties with mutuality

Both Brenda and Jack saw the difficulty of asking for something different for yourself than that which you were offering to others. Other participants, though, did not seem to be aware of these tensions. Gill (as quoted in Chapter 3), for example, didn't seem to have any awareness of how her own 'feeling at home' in the worship, which is conducted in English, might compare with others' experience. Some Methodist Churches have been experimenting, as have other denominations, with multi-lingual worship or with translated worship. This is an area where more research into the effects on

Cosmopolitan Practical Theology of these practices would be beneficial. At Central I did not hear this issue debated at all, and for most of my White participants there seemed to be no awareness, even of the question.

In the case of Fulkerson's ethnographic study, she recognised there that the 'appearing' of Black participants created a place of redemption. In other words, by them having a place to be properly present, truly themselves and visible, Black participants[78] were recognized for who they are as children of God. In her case the participants shared a common language. In the case of Central Methodist Church there was a need not just for my Black participants to be recognized, with opportunity to 'appear' but also to be heard. I am reminded of the beautifully descriptive passage in Brown (2015) of a new visitor to a prayer meeting of diverse American women:

> When it was her turn to pray, she started off shyly, carefully choosing each word. A voice from within the group gently interrupted, 'You know you can pray in any language you want'. We all felt her body shift as she exclaimed, 'Really?' We opened our eyes and nodded in unison. As she switched from English to Spanish, the words burst from her small body, rushing together like a song. She sounded like an entirely different person. We only knew some phrases and key words, but that young woman lifted all our hears that night. By affirming her, we saw her true identity, and our view of God was expanded as we imagined God whispering in Spanish back to her, back to us all.

This experience was not familiar to those who came to Central with a first language other than English. Some of my participants who spoke English fluently were able to enjoy the language of the worship services in a language that helped them to feel 'at home' but others were not and I did not see any acknowledgement of this at Central. Brazal and De Guzman (2015:113) comment:

> Unlike the homogeneous and exclusive tendencies of community, the church that values difference does not only respect and celebrate social group

[78] Also, other 'others' within the congregation, particularly those with disabilities.

> difference but must also try to develop structures and mechanisms that can be liberating especially for those groups who are marginalized or subordinated.

One challenge to the kindly, but often paternalistic, White members of Central is that, in respecting difference, 'love your neighbour as yourself' needs to include working for the same privileges that they have themselves, including the opportunity to use their first language in worship. The 'norming of Whiteness', such that it is not even acknowledged, prevents the familiarity of English-speaking from being recognised for what it is: a haven for those who increasingly cannot assume in their home town that English will be the language around them. While I was not able to research more closely into this question of language with my participants it was apparent, by its absence in conversation and interviews, that this aspect of White privilege, taking for granted ones own language as the common language, was unrecognized. Reddie 2009b: 50, argues:

> Acknowledging one's Whiteness is crucial in the struggle for racial justice, for it is in this acknowledgement that one is able to critique oneself, recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses, and so open oneself to the other.

I have found this to be important in my professional life and my research, and I agree with Beaudoin and Turpin (2014: 267):

> To carry forward a color-conscious critically White theology, we need a racially aware style of White practical theology that sees its universalizing formulations as instances of anxious White recuperation of cultural homogeneity in face of its threatened dissolution, and at the same time as an act of mourning for an imagined past.

This threat of the loss of a past, however imagined it might be, can prevent White people from opening up to the diversity offered by chapel cosmopolitanism. Instead the clinging on to the normality of Whiteness, which for many provides a haven, is often an obstacle to the mutual inconveniencing necessary for the development of a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology.

By examining my data in the light of Marti's theory about 'havens' and its relationship to Jagessar's concept of 'intercultural habit', I have explained how the norming of Whiteness impacts negatively on the potential of a congregation for a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. I will, now, in my Conclusion, outline the implications of my research for chapel cosmopolitanism.

Conclusion

Having explored in detail the UK context for chapel cosmopolitanism, and examined the relationship between havens and intercultural habit in congregational life, I now want to present the implications of my argument and to return to my mother-in-law's question, "So, what is the research *for*?" I initially set out to discover what helps and what hinders intercultural churches in belonging together, and developed the five features (outlined in my Introduction) which, I then considered, together make up a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology. As I undertook my fieldwork, I examined the interplay between 'havens' which all people need (Chapter 3) and 'intercultural habit', important for Cosmopolitan Practical Theology (Chapter 4). The most significant conclusion from my data was that the norming of Whiteness became an invisible block to the 'mutual inconveniencing' needed for 'intercultural habit' (Chapter 5). Therefore, I added to my original five features of Cosmopolitan Practical Theology the sixth feature, namely "Recognition by White people of White privilege and a determination to relinquish that privilege".

I want to acknowledge, as I conclude this thesis, that much of the community life and ministry at Central Methodist Church was very positive and, in thinking about the life of the church, I am aware of Cantle's comment (2005:1):

> Any study of race and diversity tends to focus on the problems of multiculturalism and ignore the fact that many mixed ethnic and faith communities do live in harmony and that they are generally more successful in creative and entrepreneurial terms.

Central Methodist Church is indeed positive and entrepreneurial[79] in responding to the local diversity of communities as well as to the diversity within the congregation. Within the chapel cosmopolitanism of the church many members had found 'a home', wherever they had felt most at home earlier in life. The suggestions that I make in this conclusion are raised not because the intercultural life of the church is overwhelmingly negative but because I want to respond to those with Black experience who have a

[79] As evidenced by their employment of several staff for various new projects responding to particular local community needs.

challenge which they pose within ethnically diverse British Methodism. Dedji writes (2004:211):

> I must confess that deep within me there is a creative tension between what it means to remain truly African as well as being Christian. Being Methodist does not solve but epitomizes this dilemma… The challenge which faces the future of British Methodism is how to retain the integrity of its indigenous component as well as its 'world church' dimension in the newness to which it aspires.

I see this thesis as a response to that challenge in that it highlights the need for careful attention to those who will not, or feel they cannot, participate in intercultural conversations and yet impact on those conversations and relationships by their 'silent mis-understandings' and by their White assumptions of privilege and normalcy.

Having established that *all* members of an intercultural church have a need both for havens and for intercultural habit I want now to suggest some practical implications of the research because I concur with Jagessar (2015a: 14) that:

> The many-one-ness of humanity underscores God's preference for multiplicity in togetherness. It also reflects the manifoldness of God's infinity: variety offers us a glimpse of the Divine, with each part mirroring an aspect of the beauty/majesty of the 'holy other' and each needing the other to point to the greater goodness of God the extravagant lover.

My question has been how to help churches live out this theology in practice in the context of chapel cosmopolitanism. What follow below are some suggestions, arising from my research, about the implications of my findings.

a) The need for self-awareness in White people

My research highlights, above all, that there is a need for more awareness-raising of the Whiteness of those of us who are White. Dorrien comments (2008: 19)

> If you live in this society without being constantly reminded of your race, and don't have to worry about representing your race, and can worry about racism

> without being viewed as self-interested, and don't have to worry about being targeted by police for your race, then you are a beneficiary of white supremacism.

Despite being in an inter-cultural church very few of my White participants showed any awareness of this political reality. It was an absence in the data. Methodism has had a proud history of racism-awareness training, but my data makes it clear that this is still needed. Encouraging people to have these conversations with each other would help all involved in the intercultural life of churches and would, in turn, help the Methodist Church in Britain to live out the Gospel of racial justice more fully.

Further investigation will be needed about methods for this, but an honest and explicit approach about the marginality of an earlier White culture[80], within which many White British Methodists previously felt 'at home' may help congregations to recognize the truth of their situations. Some of my participants were grieving for an earlier existence which they felt they were losing, or had lost. Unrecognized loss can prevent change and growth as much pastoral theology has commented (see, for example, Clinebell 1984: 219). The recognition of this loss could, therefore, contribute to an ability to move on and to embrace the culture-changes which occur in a more globalized world and a more cosmopolitan society.

Given that my data suggests that White Christians only tend to acknowledge 'other cultures' and not their own, I would argue for introducing more explicit reflection on culture, including different White cultures[81], as a way forward in the development of greater mutuality in intercultural relationships. While it would potentially cause some misunderstanding[82], speaking out these mis-understandings could be the basis through which to develop deeper understanding (McGarrah Sharp 2013). My data suggests that

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[80] A recognition which is being helped by the marginalization of the Methodist Church in British society, as evidenced by the Statistics for Mission https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/statistics-for-mission/

[81] Within my focus groups the fact that the White participants were from a variety of parts of the UK helped with this naturally. Time and space have not permitted to include these but there were significant comments about different British accents and this meant, for some, a recognition that diversity is not just about skin colour or country of origin.

[82] Indeed, I have been asked by Black colleagues whether I am trying to privilege White people even further by my attention to their Whiteness.

some disruptive conversation is needed to challenge the norm. As Jaggessar points out (2015b: 265) currently:

> While space(s) to affirm diversity and minority groups are very critical and important, there is evidence to suggest that we have also placed too much emphasis on separate rather than common needs/vision, which in practice have/has contributed to the further marginalization of minorities. And in the process what remains largely un-interrogated are the privileges and power base of the dominant group and their positions.

I argue that explicit conversation about Whiteness is needed as its impact is all-pervasive and this is a common need if Cosmopolitan Practical Theology is to flourish.

b) The need to speak about words

The data I worked with[83] suggested that many participants had a lack of vocabulary to talk about intercultural issues. There was a need for a culture of helping each other to speak about diversity. Norman and Violet had a reluctance to participate in the formal conversations I needed because they lacked confidence about the words that would or wouldn't be acceptable. My professional experience and this doctoral research indicate that the British legislation concerning incitement to racial hatred[84] and the popular news stories about 'political correctness gone mad'[85] which many older people have accepted as 'truth', have left people nervous[86] of how to speak about different identities and this increases reluctance to have the conversations which would deepen understanding and

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[83] See, for example, p. 85 above but mainly, in this case, through its noted absence in my participant-observation notes.
[84] The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/1/schedule Accessed 11.10.19.
[85] A Google search for the phrase 'political correctness gone mad' produced the result: "About 1,470,000 results in 0.42 seconds" For two differing examples see https://www.economist.com/open-future/2018/09/10/has-political-correctness-gone-too-far and https://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/martin-townsend/772180/trevor-phillips-political-correctness-documentary-channel-4-gone-mad
[86] Again, there has not been enough time to investigate this but I think that the rapid developments in more stringent safeguarding practices, while necessary and welcome, have also made people from an earlier culture nervous about what they say or do, adding to a sense that it is best to 'keep to yourself'. More research into the interplay between safeguarding and risk-taking in relation to cultural changes would be very welcome.

empathy. There could, of course, be other reasons for the reticence about the conversations and more research into this would be welcome, including the question about which vocabularies people feel free to use within church life. My research suggests that encouraging people to express themselves as they would naturally do is important in order for them to participate fully in the development of congregational culture, and suggests that this applies to a variety of White cultures, as well as to languages other than English.

c) The need for intercultural habit in the Methodist Church in Britain

I argued (Chapter 4) that there are factors within Methodist heritage which both encourage and thwart intercultural habit. Theodore Jennings (quoted by Reddie 2009b: 19) points out that:

> Methodism of the contemporary era struggles to emulate the inclusive and transformative practice of its founder, whose commitment to the transformation of the poor saw him transcend most of the social and cultural boundaries of respectability and conformity that were replete within the comfortable (largely Anglican) landed gentry of 18th century England.

The changes between Wesley's time and today are marked and pose stark challenges to the culture of Methodism which has had a similar way of operating for all the years of its history. While it is beyond the scope of this research to consider how the Methodist Church in Britain needs to respond generally to all of the culture shifts highlighted by chapel cosmopolitanism, I do want to argue that my research, on ethnic diversity in church life, is also relevant in respect of other kinds of diversity. More research is needed to discover whether the need for a haven by those who feel marginalized, whether inside or outside of the church, feeds into the reluctance of churches to respond to all kinds of diversity[87]. However, I conclude from my data that lack of self-awareness by those who need a haven to reassure them, in times of change which they find threatening, itself threatens the wider health of the church because people act from

[87] The current debate within Methodism about sexuality and marriage is helped by the report "God in love unites us" commended by the Conference of 2019.

fear rather than from other theological considerations. These groups who perceive threat then begin with a desire to protect and preserve earlier culture, rather than with a desire to grow and to change, despite what they may often profess[88]. I would suggest, therefore, that fellowship groups, and other activities offering havens, continue to be offered but with more explicit training about how to promote what these groups are offering, and the reasons for them.[89]

Making these changes in local church life is important in missional terms so that churches can witness to the kind of intercultural life which can live out 'love your neighbour as yourself' in today's cosmopolitan society. Garces-Foley (2007: 223) comments:

> Multicultural churches are valuable arenas for cultivating the skills for negotiating cross-cultural exchanges, such as the ability to live with ambiguity and discomfort. In forming members as tolerant and inclusive Christians, multicultural churches are also forming citizens with civic skills necessary to flourish in a complex society replete with not only cultural but also religious differences.

The potential for Methodists to operate with this intercultural habit, as a result of their experience of world Methodism over the decades, is clear as long as the mandate to 'love your neighbour as yourself' does not work with assumed knowledge of the neighbour. I see this research as part of a call to Methodists to realise this potential.

d) The need to add a political edge to Belonging Together

While the title of the 2010-13 project *Belonging Together* showed an intention to celebrate the diversity of the Methodist Church in Britain, the conclusions did not address adequately the power dynamics which operate in intercultural church life. While

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[88] My experience as a Mission Enabler has frequently given other more anecdotal, but strong, evidence of this.

[89] The 'Holiday at Home' scheme at Central is an example of this. Also, one church in my earlier survey deliberately set up 'An Elders' Gathering' to keep together the older people and to reassure them that they could still keep in touch as the congregation grew with lower age-group members, and then invited some of the new younger people to come and meet with this Gathering so that they could become friends one or two at a time.

the racism which was once very explicit in the churches in Britain[90] is now less often overt, my data suggests that racism has changed rather than disappeared in church life. Reddie (2009a: 356) describes the current experience as “cultural racism”:

> In using this term, what I mean to suggest is that the sense of the superiority of White Euro-American cultural norms, over and against those of Black Africans, takes its cue from the notion that the cultural practices and traditions of the former are deemed superior to those of the latter. This form of “new racism” is one that largely moves beyond the genetic-based rhetoric of White superiority that characterized “old racism”; and is one that utilizes the cultural and aesthetic model of a top-down patrician or class-based notion of Euro-American hegemony over against the baser and less sophisticated instincts and practices of “poor” Black people.

One of my concerns throughout my doctoral studies was that if I had wanted to take a more quantitative approach to the issues of intercultural injustice or discrimination this would have been difficult, or even impossible to do, with the lack of data on ethnicity within the Methodist Church in Britain. My own fieldwork, combined with my professional experience, makes plain that there is a need to collect statistical data in order to challenge White privileging and to combat racial injustice more effectively.

The Methodist Church in Britain (2013) concluded, "The end of this [Belonging Together] project should mark the beginning of a more excellent way of being an ethnically inclusive Church, and I invite us all to help make it so." This was repeated in 2018 when the Methodist Conference (MC/18/47), in response to the report, *The Unfinished Agenda*, “as a matter of urgency, committed itself to taking steps to enable the Methodist Church to become a more inclusive and multicultural community of faith”.

The key to helping the Methodist Church in Britain to become more inclusive and to develop a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology lies in White people being willing to notice and to give up their White privilege. The invitation to all to be involved in what is now

[90] Many of the Black Christians speaking in churches about their experience of the 50’s and 60’s tell the stories of being asked to go to a “more appropriate church” or of being told that a particular church “wasn’t for them” when they arrived in the UK.

called ‘The Unfinished Agenda’ of racial justice, needs the extra insistence that racism is a problem that White people need to address. Cone (2004: 149) writes: “Whites and Blacks must learn to work together. Our future depends on it. But that can never happen creatively until Whites truly believe that their humanity is at stake in the struggle for racial justice.”

My data would suggest that ‘The Unfinished Agenda’ of racial justice also needs an extra attention to those White people who feel marginalized by the changes in UK society as it becomes more cosmopolitan. White Studies point out that not all Whiteness is the same (Beaudoin and Turpin, 2014: 252-3) but that lack of study of how Whiteness operates leads to an impact which is unacknowledged, unexamined and invisible. I argue that good models for future Belonging Together work need to enable people from different backgrounds and perspectives to engage more deeply with one another, across difference.[91]

Despite the awareness of many people about the need for intercultural habit, most of the systems at Central Methodist Church, which were based in turn on the systems of the historic Methodist traditions, were culturally White[92], leading to some people feeling more ‘at home’ within them, than others. There is a need to recognize the dominant culture of the denomination of Methodism itself. As Reddie puts it (2009b: 20): “Our acceptability should be judged on the grounds of how we engage with ‘others’… not how ‘white’ we are culturally”, and yet choices about who will make decisions on behalf of each church/circuit/district, and about the ways in which these decisions will be made, do usually depend more on people’s ‘ability’ to operate within Western cultural norms of decision-making and less on how people engage with different people[93]. More

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[91] This approach has had good results in the Methodist debating of sexuality, where pairs of people with different experience have worked together with others in explaining their points-of-view, sharing their theologies and life experiences, and modelling, in the process, how people can enrich each other through intercultural engagement. The pairing, at Central Methodist Church, of new members with existing members, set up by Judith, were a good example of this way of working (Chapter 4).

[92] I would include within this the required Methodist practice of meetings, based on minutes and agendas, democratic decision-making processes, and the usual evening times for business meetings away from the worship life of the church.

[93] In my professional work as District Mission Enabler, I have seen some churches working on decision-making with less ‘literate’ White cultures, and some others with a more Cosmopolitan culture than the ‘norm’, with some degree of success. *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church* in

research would need to be done but churches mainly appoint people to roles based on their own personal opinions and, indeed, most positions of power within churches are filled on the basis of the person's own abilities or experience, with no consideration of the quality of their intercultural habit. My participant-observation has led me to conclude that the Methodist Church in Britain's strategy called 'Belonging Together', which argues for the commitment of all Methodists to equal participation, will not be enough for a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology as long as White privilege remains unacknowledged, unexamined, unchallenged and undisrupted.

e) The need for White privilege to respond to Black challenge

While I can't speak for Black people about the challenges that they would like to issue to the Methodist Church in Britain, the presence of Black people within chapel cosmopolitanism poses a challenge to me, and other White Christians, to heed Jagessar's call for 'moral imagination' and 'mutual inconveniencing' (Chapter 4). Black Theology has long called for White Theologians to listen to those whose voices are marginalized. My research has led me to conclude, with Starr (2001: 43 – 44):

> White people should never forget that racism is not a black problem, it is a White problem, and it is White people who must deal with it… We are never former racists, only recovering racists, and we need to be daily vigilant about our addiction. Those of us who are White, let's be honest with ourselves. Let's bring down our defences and let go of the energy it takes to pretend we are not racist.

Throughout my fieldwork I was impressed by the gracious and consistent presence of Black members who showed a real commitment to being part of an intercultural congregation. This reminded me of one of Marti's participants (Marti 2010: 207) who said:

Britain does, however, make certain legal requirements which cannot simply be ignored within the present reality of the life of the Methodist Church in Britain and these are culturally White and Western.

> I've always lived in ethnically diverse situations and I've always worked in diverse situations. I indeed refuse to do anything other than that. Because heaven is going to be diverse, all right? Everyone should learn how to get along, to work with, have a relationship with one another. So had Oasis been an all Black church, I would not have joined.

The reasons that many of the Black members did not play a full part in the decision-making aspects of my study church were undoubtedly varied (as they would be for the younger White members too). Work and family demands and lack of confidence would be among these reasons. However, the enormity of the challenge of changing the culture is clear. The White domination of meetings and decision-making processes, within chapel cosmopolitanism, needs to be acknowledged and challenged by White people. I want to pay tribute here to the persistent work of Reddie in insisting that the Whiteness of the Church can be challenged by the Blackness of the Church. Reddie (2009a: 362):

> It is my belief that a radical, liberative Black spirituality can move us to the point where, as Black people, we are not seen as problems, but as opportunities for celebrating God's uniqueness as it is expressed and experienced in and through cultural difference.

It should not be incumbent on Black people to raise these issues. Black people have spoken often. Reddie, again (2009b: 14): "Black experience that gives rise to Black Christianity is one that must challenge White people to face up to the unearned privileges accrued from Whiteness." It is not surprising that Eddo-Lodge (2017) and many others have decided not to talk with White people about race, when this challenge has been made repeatedly but still White people do not hear it. A Cosmopolitan Practical Theology has to include White people listening, and responding, to the challenges that Black people put to us, and it also has to include White people regularly challenging one another in giving up unearned privileges.

f) The need for White Theology in the UK

In undertaking this research, I have been acting, listening, speaking and writing as a White researcher and although my focus has been on the experiences of a local congregation, this has been within the framework of a doctoral programme in Practical Theology. The experience has highlighted for me the need for White Theology in the UK, and for a closer examination of the culture that exists within Practical Theology as a discipline. In my Journal (10th December 2013) I wrote, in my first year, "The culture of 'academia' is so different from the culture that I'm used to. It feels like I'm operating interculturally, again… because I am!" I am a White person, and married to an academic, but my background and professional experience have mainly been working-class and intercultural and, as somebody from a different culture than that of Practical Theology (which I have experienced as, perhaps necessarily, a domain of wealthier people) I have been sensitive to the culture that others see as 'the norm'. Beaudoin and Turpin point out (2014: 251):

> We are immersed in the privilege and narrowness that Whiteness has afforded practical theology… The work of white scholars critically assessing white racial projects in theology more broadly and practical theology in particular is in a nascent stage, requiring more attention from a broader range of scholars.

My own work has pointed to the need for further research into the Whiteness of Practical Theology and I am glad that I have been invited to be part of a series of seminars which are intended to be the beginning of a national Research Network for academic theologians, theological colleges and practitioners to consider the relationship between Whiteness, diversity, racial justice and theology[94].

g) The need to continue to develop an intercultural habit in my own practice

While I am hopeful that some of my research findings will benefit the Methodist Church in Britain, individual churches, and perhaps even Practical Theology, I have no doubt that its biggest impact has been on my own understanding and practice. Throughout the

[94] An initiative of Chris Shannahan, at Coventry University's Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations

process, I have needed to stay alert to whatever the data showed me, tempting though it sometimes was to work with what might have been easiest. Ward (2004: 136) warns:

> Ethnographic methods, though rewarding in many ways, are not without difficulty… I would argue any ethnography worth its salt will run into questions of power which will permeate practical and ethical issues. Within a congregation the difficulties of making these visible may well outweigh the advantages, and perhaps this is why congregational studies can seem such a benign discipline.

I hope that my thesis has paid proper respect to the data I was given, and has responded to the challenging aspects of intercultural congregations. My previous professional experience and my pastoral care for people marginalized by dominant culture[95] made me aware of the need to take extra care in listening to those who can be invisible in society. Nevertheless, my research has been a painful reminder to me of the constant temptation to stop listening to those who challenge my own norms. In particular I found it shocking how much I had to discipline myself to notice who I was reading, and from what experience and context those scholars were writing.

Throughout the research, as an outworking of commitment to a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology, I endeavoured, as I attempted to understand my data, to ensure that I engaged with authors from backgrounds different from my own. Mirroring the rest of society and the norming of Whiteness which is prevalent in Western academic life I found this really difficult, because of the way in which Western scholars recommend other work that they have encountered within Western academic circles. With hindsight, I would have made a more conscious effort to begin with non-Western scholars and then follow their leads. Early in my research, I found that only about a quarter of my literature was from non-Western authors and I made a deliberate decision to increase the diversity of perspectives as I reflected on cosmopolitan life. I now have an academic and faith commitment to monitoring the sources of my reading, as I do in my social media and face-to-face conversations, in order to prevent the experience of reading only those who recommend, and reference, those from similar contexts and

[95] Including my years teaching GCSE students who had almost no English skill, later in an ex-mining, ex-steel area of Rotherham, and more recently with homeless people and asylum-seekers in Leicester.

backgrounds. With reference to the diversity of scholarly voices from non-Western perspectives, Beaudoin and Turpin (2014: 265) comment:

> White practical theology must continue to struggle not to listen to these partners as interesting inflections of the field, but rather as central to the shaping and reshaping of its forms of dialogue, conceptual and methodological framing, and research directions.

This research has given me a new understanding of this need and a renewed commitment to this practice. In my Reflective Practice piece, Module TH8004, I wrote (2016: 16):

> I want, in my ministry, to exercise the combination of post-colonial theology with good liberative pastoral practices which she [McGarrah-Sharp 2013] advocates for cross-cultural ministry. This combination requires that I am aware of my Whiteness and that I notice the triple power that is given me as White, researcher and minister. It requires that I discipline myself to listen to others, to reflect on the situation that we are all in, to pause, even when I imagine I know what to do, how to speak, or what others will think or feel, until we are ready to act or speak together.

I intend to take this approach as far as I am able and, sadly, I am sure that the task will be life-long.[96] Reddie comments (2009b: 51):

> It is my hope that White people who are committed to racial justice will make greater use of critical White studies as a means of unmasking the privilege construct of Whiteness; for this is not a task for Black theologians alone.

That is my hope too. Belonging Together is not enough. Developing a Cosmopolitan Practical Theology is not possible except where White people are willing to learn about the reality of their own White privilege, through encounter with those who they might be tempted to consider ‘different’ or ‘minority’, on equal terms, so that we can all be mutually inconvenienced for the sake of a fuller and more just life, together.

[96] Perkinson (2004: 233)

Thematic Data Analysis **APPENDIX 1**

Data analysis: *Phase 1*

I began by using the transcriptions of focus-groups and of interviews along with my fieldnotes in order to recognise the regularly occurring themes. I examined how often themes occurred and measured this against how significant the theme appeared to me as a participant-observer. It was initially difficult to group the themes as they represented different kinds of experience and I was also resistant to 'labelling' or 'codifying' human life in a way that seemed to me quite colonial and controlling. However, as I read and re-read the data I began to develop a broad picture of the different elements of the congregational experience and also to dig down into the layers of that experience. (Table A)

Data analysis: *Phase 2*

After making the list of themes that emerged from the three different data streams I then grouped them using four categories (Table B):

Category A: the two themes which showed the complexity of many of the other themes

There were two issues, 'Worship' and 'Coffee time' which had a significantly large presence in the church's life while I was there because of things which happened during my time there. These also relate in basic terms to 'worship' and 'fellowship' which are key to any Methodist Church's life and each one represents the complexity of the overlapping of many of the other themes. As they each had a 'story' which I knew would be an important focus of the thesis I have put these in a category of their own.

Category B: the themes which represent 'help' to people in Belonging Together

Ten different themes were mentioned by my participants as helping their sense of Belonging Together within the church. It is interesting that this category includes more themes than the others, and it reflects the positive approach of most of my participants to the subject of my research.

Category C: the themes which represent 'hindrance' to people in Belonging Together

The three themes which made up the category of 'hindrance' to Belonging Together include one theme, 'misunderstanding' which did not come up in my interviews and therefore is only there because I recognised it as an observer and introduced it to the Focus Groups. It came from both my reading of McGarrah Sharp, along with my reflections on the resonances of her work with all my other inter-cultural pastoral experience, and also from my fieldnotes of misunderstandings which I heard within my time at the church. Some of these misunderstandings were things I heard during the interviews, but they were not referred to (nor apparently noticed) as such, by my interviewees themselves.

Category D: the themes which clearly included a mixture of both 'help' and 'hindrance' to people in Belonging Together

The eight themes in this category are themes where the participants sometimes made positive and sometimes negative comments about the same theme depending on their perceptions, and the particular incident or event which they were thinking of at the time. Due to the diversity of my participants it is not surprising that there were various ways of thinking about the same theme and, in some ways, these are the themes which give the most insight in understanding the complexity of this congregation's life.

Data analysis: *Phase 3*

When I returned to my data for a third time and considered, again, the list of themes and categories which I had developed I made another change based on my own fieldnotes and participant-observer experience. While I am glad that I undertook a variety of methods for data collection the ethnographic approach that I have taken means that my own voice as researcher needs to take account of the lived experience of the congregational life which I participated in. While I do not want to speak for people, I do need to speak about what I see and experience from my own perspective as well as

trying to see it from many other perspectives. I adjusted the themes to show whether the theme was strongly apparent, less apparent of not at all apparent from my own participant-observation and I was interested to see how my own perspective impacted on the priority of the themes that I had identified. (Table C)

Data analysis: *Phase 4*

As I looked at the data and 'graded' the themes in this way I realized that the negative themes had impacted fairly strongly on me, and that I had, in fact, identified more negative themes which were present in the data but which were not named by my participants. The fact that there is a smaller number of themes in this category made me aware that there were also themes in this category which had not been recognised explicitly, nor spoken of out loud. These themes of 'rejection', 'inability to bond' and 'territorialism' were all there in my observations but I had not commented on them much partly, I recognised later, because I was resisting noticing them myself. In the last conversation that I had with Judith, the minister, at her instigation, months after I finished the field work, we had an open conversation about these more negative and usually unspoken aspects of congregational life, and I decided to put them into my themes belatedly. (Table D)

Data analysis: *Phase 5*

Having looked at the data and compared the themes that emerged from the interviews and the focus groups with my own observations I then organised the themes according to those which had featured most in my interviews. This allowed me to cross-check how much difference it had made to use my multi-method approach, rather than relying on interviews alone. (Table E)

Table A All themes which emerged as frequently appearing, showing the research method in which they appeared. The numbers in the 'Interviews' column ("Ints.") tells how many different interviews featured this theme.

	Theme	Part-Obs.	Ints.	Focus Groups	Methods
1	Coffee space		9		3
2	Worship		5		3
3	Welcome		5		2
4	Kindness		4		3
5	Laughter				1
6	Misunderstanding		6		2
7	Busyness		7		3
8	Income levels/wealth/fund-raising				2
9	Educational levels		2		3
10	Confidence levels				1
11	Levels of interest in diversity of people		5		2
12	Language / accents		5		3
13	Personal faith		10		2
14	Prayer		3		3
15	Biblical interpretations				1
16	The Holy Spirit		6		3
17	Past missionary history		2		3
18	Local church history		9		1
19	Local migration history		8		3
20	Generational issues		4		3
21	Minister's role		9		3
22	Change		13		3
23	One World Celebration Concert		6		3
		19	19	18	

Table B **The themes grouped according to category**

Category A: the two themes showing the complexity of many other themes

Category B: the themes representing 'help' to people in Belonging Together

Category C: the themes representing 'hindrance' to people in Belonging Together

Category D: the themes including a mixture of both 'help' and 'hindrance' to people in Belonging Together

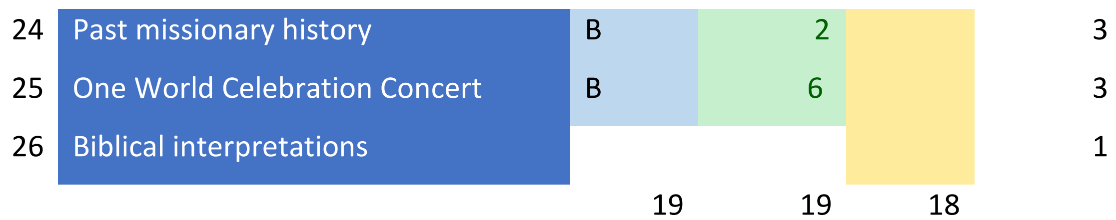
		Theme	Part-Obs	Ints	F Groups	Methods
A	1	Coffee space		9		3
	2	Worship		5		3
B	3	Kindness		4		3
	4	Prayer		3		3
	5	The Holy Spirit		6		3
	6	Minister's role		9		3
	7	Local migration history		8		3
	8	Personal faith		10		2
	9	Welcome		5		2
	10	Levels of interest in diversity of people		5		2
	11	Laughter				1
	12	Local church history		9		1
C	13	Busyness		7		3
	14	Misunderstanding		6		2
	15	Income levels/wealth/fund-raising				2
D	16	Change		13		3
	17	Educational levels		2		3
	18	Past missionary history		2		3

Table C The themes grouped in the same categories as Table B but then ordered according to how apparent they were in my experience as a participant-observer

		Theme	Part-Obs	Ints	Focus Gps	Methods
A	1	Coffee space	A	9		3
	2	Worship	A	5		3
B	3	Kindness	A	4		3
	4	The Holy Spirit	A	6		3
	5	Minister's role	A	9		3
	6	Laughter	A			1
	7	Local migration history	B	8		3
	8	Prayer	B	3		3
	9	Personal faith	B	10		2
	10	Welcome		5		2
	11	Levels of interest in diversity		5		1
	12	Local church history		9		1
C	13	Busyness	A	7		3
	14	Misunderstanding	A	6		2
	15	Income levels/wealth/fund-raising	A			2
D	16	Educational levels	A	2		3
	17	Language / accents	A	5		3
	18	Generational issues	A	4		3
	19	Confidence levels	A			1
	20	Change	B	13		3
	21	Past missionary history	B	2		3
	22	One World Celebration Concert	B	6		3
	23	Biblical interpretations				1
			19	19	18	

Table D The themes with an extra three negative themes added in when I noticed them at a later stage of analysis

	Theme	Part-Obs	Ints	Focus Gs	Methods
1	Coffee space	A	9		3
2	Worship	A	5		3
3	Kindness	A	4		3
4	The Holy Spirit	A	6		3
5	Minister's role	A	9		3
6	Laughter	A			1
7	Local migration history	B	8		3
8	Prayer	B	3		3
9	Personal faith	B	10		2
10	Welcome		5		2
11	Levels of interest in diversity of people		5		1
12	Local church history		9		1
13	Busyness	A	7		3
14	Territorialism	A	6		3
15	Misunderstanding	A	6		2
16	Income levels/wealth/fund-raising	A			2
17	Inability to bond		1		2
18	Rejection		3		1
19	Educational levels	A	2		3
20	Language / accents	A	5		3
21	Generational issues	A	4		3
22	Confidence levels	A			1
23	Change	B	13		3



	Theme	Part-Obs	Ints	Focus Gs	Methods
24	Past missionary history	B	2		3
25	One World Celebration Concert	B	6		3
26	Biblical interpretations				1
		19	19	18	

Table E The themes ordered according to those which were mentioned most often in the interviews.

		Theme	Part-Obs	Ints	Focus Gs	Methods
1	23	Change	B	13		3
2	9	Personal faith	B	10		2
3	1	Coffee space	A	9		3
4	5	Minister's role	A	9		3
5	12	Local church history		9		1
6	7	Local migration history	B	8		3
7	13	Busyness	A	7		3
8	4	The Holy Spirit	A	6		3
9	14	Territorialism	A	6		3
10	15	Misunderstanding	A	6		2
11	25	One World Celebration Concert	B	6		3
12	2	Worship	A	5		3
13	10	Welcome		5		2
14	11	Levels of interest in diversity of people		5		1
15	20	Language / accents	A	5		3
16	3	Kindness	A	4		3
17	21	Generational issues	A	4		3
18	8	Prayer	B	3		3
19	18	Rejection		3		1
20	19	Educational levels	A	2		3

21	24	Past missionary history	B	2		3
22	17	Inability to bond		1		2
23	6	Laughter	A			1
24	16	Income levels/wealth/fund-raising	A			2
25	22	Confidence levels	A			1
26	26	Biblical interpretations				1

APPENDIX 2

Participant Information Sheet

An ethnographic study of
an Ethnically Diverse British
Methodist Congregation

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Do take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this, Jill Marsh

What is the purpose of the study?
This study is being done to deepen understanding of ethnically diverse congregations and what can help in building them up.

Why am I being invited?
You are being invited to join in because you belong to a congregation which has people from a mixture of different backgrounds. Your experiences and what you have learned as part of this congregation will be helpful in understanding the life of your church.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and would not need to give a reason. You can simply withdraw by letting me know that this is what you want.

What will happen to me if I take part?
If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign two consent forms: one for me to keep and one for you to keep for yourself. You will then be contacted by me over the following few weeks to arrange your interview with me. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
As the conversations could perhaps cover some sensitive experiences, potentially, I will work with you to make sure that you are comfortable with what is happening and that you are content with what you have said. You will be able to see the written version of the interview if you would like to do this.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
As a Methodist I hope that you might welcome this opportunity to share your experiences and insights for the benefit of learning across the British Methodist Church. By taking part you will also be contributing to a growing understanding of ethnically diverse congregations within the wider church. I intend to provide a summary of my findings to those who have participated at the end of the research (hopefully Summer 2019 at the latest)

What if something goes wrong?
If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

Professor Robert E. Warner,
Executive Dean of Humanities,
University of Chester
Parkgate Road
Chester
CH1 4BJ
r.warner@chester.ac.uk
Tel. 01244 511980

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
All information which is collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential so that I will be the only one with access to it. I will also keep what is said anonymous.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results will be written up and used as part of my D. Prof thesis. Some may be used in publications if opportunities arise. Individuals who participate in this study will not be identified in any subsequent report or publication.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The research is partly funded by the Methodist Church through a Continuing Development in Ministry grant and partly by the Northampton District of the Methodist Church.

Who may I contact for further information?
If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact:

Rev. Jill Marsh (home address and telephone number added here)

Thank you for your interest in this research.

APPENDIX 3

Consent Form

Title of Project: An ethnographic study of an Ethnically Diverse British Methodist Congregation

Name of Researcher: Jill Marsh

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected. ☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

____________________	____________________	____________________
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Jill Marsh	____________________	____________________
Researcher	Date	Signature

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