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Racial Diversity in British Evangelicalism: Frames, Barriers, and Practices

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Racial Diversity in British Evangelicalism: Frames, Barriers, and Practices

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ABSTRACT

How do the beliefs and practices of British evangelicals harden or erode racial boundaries? The twin realities of dramatic secularization of white Britons alongside immigrant-fueled religious revitalization are changing the demographic landscape of the church and compelling British evangelical leaders to rethink their strategies for church mission, including how they engage with race. To what extent racial integration should be prioritized in church mission, and how exactly it should be enacted, are contested areas. The pursuit of racial integration within a local church context is often characterized by deep contradictions between the stated ideals (say, of unity and diversity) and the realities that racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences are accompanied by power differentials and cultural conflicts. The disjuncture between espoused values and lived realities of racial integration creates tensions that can be difficult for church leaders and members to reconcile. Based on 18 months of participant-observation and 72 in-depth interviews with white British, Black British, and British Asian evangelicals, this dissertation explores the attitudes and practices that hinder or facilitate racial integration in the evangelical church in England. This study contributes to the literatures on immigration, race, and religion. To the literature on racial conceptualization, the present study offers insight into how contemporary theological ideas and other elements of the evangelical cultural toolkit shape evaluations of race and racial diversity. To the immigration and integration literature, the study highlights how colonial legacies intersect with racial identification and church culture to limit the integrative function of churches for racial minorities. To the sociology of religion literature, the present

study broadens our understanding of evangelical attitudes towards race beyond the American context and also beyond white evangelicals, by including voices of Black British and British Asian evangelicals. The study has wider implications for our understanding of the meanings of “diversity” as well as the role of religious institutions in contesting or reinforcing racial inequalities in diverse societies.

TO MY NIECES AND NEPHEWS: KUYPER, IVY, JUNIPER, ZOE, TEDDY, AND OWEN.

I LOVE YOU, AND YOU GIVE ME HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

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Preface

In November 2017 I gave a lecture on “Evangelicalism, Whiteness, and the Age of Trump” to an audience of Christian intellectuals in Southeast England. The lecture was based on ethnographic research I had done in the rural Midwest in the lead up to the 2016 presidential election. In the lecture I explored the contested meanings of “evangelical” as a label, the motivations for white evangelical support for Trump, and the implications of that support for racial boundaries in the American evangelical church. At the end of the lecture an audience member asked me: “Coming to the UK with this US research in your mind, are there echoes you see in our own society? Any lessons for the church here that we need to grasp?” The question got me thinking about how the evangelical church in the UK engages with race and racial divisions.

Fast-forward to May 2020, when I find myself drafting this preface in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the wake of the killing of George Floyd. Both crises have brought race into public conversation in Britain in a more significant way than I can re-

member in the five years I have lived in this country. The disproportionate number of COVID-19 deaths in Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME)¹ communities has spotlighted stark racial inequalities in front-page news, and the US protests against police brutality and racial injustice have spread to cities and towns across the UK. Whether this increased awareness of racism and willingness to challenge unjust structures is sustained is yet to be seen. Whether the British evangelical church begins to take racial diversity and equality more seriously in its own practices and structures also merits close attention in the months and years ahead. The present dissertation encapsulates my explorations at the intersection of race, evangelicalism, and church life in the UK over the last two years.

¹In the UK, “BAME” is the most commonly used acronym to refer collectively to people of color in academic and policy discourse. “Black” refers to people of African and Caribbean heritage, and “Asian” refers specifically to people of South Asian heritage. Consistent with the wider UK literature, I will use these categories and capitalizations throughout this dissertation.

Introduction

In this dissertation I seek to explain how evangelical beliefs and practices harden or erode racial boundaries in the context of two evangelical Anglican congregations and a wider network of evangelical churches in Britain. The aim of the dissertation is to provide insight into how race is managed within a particular religious subculture, whilst considering the implications of those internal dynamics for racial boundaries more broadly.

Religious institutions are social spaces in which values, narratives, and practices around race are shaped and performed (Ecklund 2005; Emerson and Woo 2006). Although Britain is secularizing and pluralizing rapidly, the Church continues to play a significant social and political role. Christianity (specifically Anglicanism / Church of England) is the state religion and thereby holds a privileged position in articulating and enacting the relationships

between racial, religious, and national boundaries². At the local level, churches outnumber pubs³ and function as important spaces for civic and social activities as well as worship⁴.

Evangelical Christianity in Britain cuts across a number of denominations, encompassing a significant proportion of Anglicans as well as Baptists, Pentecostals, and independent churches. In recent decades, growth in British evangelicalism has been fueled largely by immigration (Goodhew and Cooper 2019), causing the movement to now have a higher proportion of racial minorities than the British population as a whole (Brierley 2019). Because evangelicalism is a missional religion, with a mandate to grow and spread the faith to all people regardless of ethnic or racial differences, evangelical churches have a strong incentive to be inclusive. However, evangelical leaders disagree about whether inclusiveness is better served by congregations targeting distinct groups differentiated in racial and ethnic terms (i.e. adopting the “Homogeneous Unit Principle”)⁵ or by seeking to be as diverse as possible.

While there is a large body of work in American sociology examining (white) evangelical attitudes towards race, little has been written about race and evangelicalism in the British context. Much of evangelical theology and certain elements of the evangelical cultural toolkit (church music, literature, influential pastors) are shared across the Atlantic, but there are a number of key historical and institutional differences between the two contexts that have implications for how evangelicals engage with race. In contrast to the United

²One example of this at national level is the fact that there are twenty-six seats in the House of Lords allocated to Anglican Bishops, who thereby have the power to influence debates on social issues of national significance.

³<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/news/holy-spirit-uk-has-more-churches-pubs>. Accessed June 14 2020.

⁴<https://cuf.org.uk/resources/church-in-action-2017>. Accessed June 14 2020.

⁵The seminal text promoting this idea is Donald McGavran’s *Understanding Church Growth* (1970).

States, Britain never had a significant number of slaves living within its national borders. Consequently, the practices of enforced segregation and the resulting formation of distinct Black denominations within historic denominations did not take place in Britain (Reddie 2006). The church in Britain did not engage with large numbers of racial minorities until after the end of the Second World War, with the first wave of economic migrants from Commonwealth nations. Consequently, discourses and responses to racial diversity, inequality, and integration developed much later in Britain and the British Church, compared to those in the American context. While race is typically framed as the fundamental social boundary in the United States (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Omi and Winant 2015; Hartmann 2015), in Britain the narrative around social difference is often framed in terms of culture, religion, or values (Lentin 2014; Shain 2020), thereby avoiding direct engagement with race. Class is also a deep and widely acknowledged cleavage in British society (Willis 1977), often obscuring racial inequalities. Church engagement with race is therefore less overt in the UK than in the US (Beckford 1998). One could hypothesize that these historical and cultural differences might make it easier for contemporary British churches to integrate minorities and erode racial boundaries. However, as this dissertation will explore, the disengagement with colonial history and obfuscation of racial inequality within discourses of “diversity” can result in the reinforcement of racial hierarchies. To explore the mechanisms through which evangelical beliefs and practices either strengthen or weaken racial boundaries, I conducted 18 months of fieldwork in two evangelical Anglican congregations in London and 72 in-depth interviews with Black British, Asian British, and white British evangelicals from a range of evangelical churches.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

British theologian Anthony Reddie, the child of Jamaican immigrants, has written: “To belong to British society and that of the church, for a black person, necessitates a denial of one’s self. To be black in Britain is to have one’s experiences, history, and reality ignored, disparaged, and ridiculed” (2006:12). Reddie points to the way in which erasure is part of the experience of Blackness in Britain. Of the evangelical church in particular, Reddie asserts it “has resorted to a wholesale spiritualization of the central tenets of Christianity” (p. 35), thereby neglecting material, social, and political issues in this world, including racism. As a liberation theologian, Reddie sees the beliefs and practices of evangelical Christianity as significant barriers to achieving racial equality in Britain. Reddie’s statement speaks in a powerful way to a central concern of my dissertation: the way in which religious narratives and practices explicitly or inadvertently reproduce hierarchies of power and oppression.

During the colonial era, Christian narratives and ideas were mobilized in the construction of “race” as a means of categorizing and ranking populations (Desmond and Emirbayer 2010; Smedley and Smedley 2012). A significant arm of colonialist expansion was evangelical missionary work across Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Pacific. As Willie Jennings (2010) has powerfully argued, colonial missionary activity provided theological rationales for racial categorization and the exploitation of racial others and their lands. The colonial missionary narrative framed racial diversity within a hierarchy of moral, intellectual, and spiritual progress. This narrative constructed Europeans as God’s chosen ambassadors to bring salvation and civilization to primitive peoples in darker continents.

Racial inequality was explained as a natural outcome of cultural differences in aptitude and development. For colonial powers such as Great Britain, Christianity often functioned as a tool for legitimating white supremacy (Fredrickson 2002). The racial domination literature points to the ways in which Christianity has created and perpetuated racial hierarchies, and the fact that Christianity was used to justify slavery (Reddie 2010).

On the other hand, the literature on minority ethnic churches in the US suggests that Christianity can also function to contest white supremacy. The role of the African American church in providing a space of dignity for Black Americans and mobilizing people for the civil rights movement has been written about at length (Morris 1984; Raboteau 2001). While Black-majority churches in Britain have a shorter and less political history relative to those in the United States, scholars have argued that they too provide a space of refuge, respect, and positive identity formation for Black people within the context of a racist society (Beckford 1998; Reddie 2006; Aldred 2006). Alumkal's (2008) study of Asian-American congregations led him to conclude that "the otherworldly dimension of religion can encourage a prophetic critique of the present social order and a vision of an alternative social order. Applied to race, this can involve interpreting a counter-hegemonic racial project (one at odds with present power structures) as a reflection of divine will" (p. 154). Alumkal is pointing to a prophetic strain in Christianity — a narrative that positions God on the side of the marginalized and invokes God's judgement on nations and leaders inflicting harm on oppressed people. This prophetic strain of Christianity has been mobilized to challenge slavery and white supremacy (Cone 2011).

The fact that Christianity has been deployed both to justify and to repudiate white supremacy points to the reality that it is a diverse religion that is sociologically better un-

derstood as a cultural toolkit (Swidler 1986; Pattillo-McCoy 1998) containing a wide variety of discourses, symbols, styles, and practices that are expressed in particular contexts. These repertoires of narratives, beliefs, habits, and practices function to generate meaning, motivation, and belonging. At the local level of the congregation, whether or not Christianity reinforces or contests racial hierarchies depends on which elements of the cultural toolkit are deployed, and how. The literature on evangelical toolkits in the US suggests that white Americans, Black Americans, and Asian Americans employ distinct repertoires from their religious toolkits that are suited to their particular ends. In white evangelical churches, salient elements of the religiocultural toolkit include an emphasis on individual salvation, inclusion of patriotic hymns around national holidays, preaching on family values including traditional marriage and a pro-life position, and musical styles with minimal bodily or emotional expressiveness (Emerson and Smith 2001; Bean 2014; Gorski 2017). In Black churches, core elements of the toolkit include the Exodus narrative of liberation from earthly structures of oppression, Old Testament prophetic cries for justice, call-and-response patterns in preaching and prayer, and more embodied and expressive worship (Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Frederick 2003; Edwards 2008a, 2009). In Asian-American churches, studies have shown that the religiocultural toolkit is deployed to reinforce the “model minority” image and to legitimate and sacralize values of obedience, submission to elders, hard work, and self-sacrifice (Chong 1998; Ecklund 2005). Given that the contents of the evangelical toolkit are typically used in ways that are best suited to the ends of particular groups, what are the implications for the formation and maintenance of multiracial congregations?

At the congregational formation (or transformation) stage, a key factor is how the church leadership frame racial diversity in the mission of the congregation (Becker 1998; Emerson and Woo 2006). Because the vast majority of churches are racially homogeneous, framings of racial diversity can easily remain abstract or tangential to the leaders and members of most churches (Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013). This pattern of abstract positive framing of racial diversity is also consistent with the findings of the American Mosaic Project (Hartmann 2015). Among Protestants, there is a tendency to frame racial diversity in the church as “good” when it is defined as individuals from varying backgrounds coming together to create a new culture (Edwards et al. 2013). In other words, the positive evaluation of racial diversity is conditional upon those diverse identities being subsumed by a new collective identity, such that unity is not compromised. This approach is evidenced in Marti’s (2009) study of two racially diverse congregations in Los Angeles, Oasis and Mosaic, where both congregations actively promote and celebrate the fact that they are racially and ethnically diverse. Marti observes that congregants in the two diverse churches experience an identity reorientation characterized by “ethnic transcendence”, in which their shared religious identity transcends their individual ethnic identities. He concludes that members of these churches “subdue their ethnoracial distinctions in favor of a common religious identity” (p. 63). One of the tensions exposed by the existing literature on multiracial congregations is that between identity transcendence and identity maintenance. Do churches that make racial diversity explicit in their mission require individuals to set aside their racial identities in order to be subsumed into a larger spiritual identity? Or is there room within evangelical framings of racial diversity to encourage spiritual unity while also acknowledging distinct identities and experiences? The first chapter of this dissertation

will explore how British evangelicals frame racial diversity as it relates to the mission of the church. I pay attention to the narratives, images, and beliefs that my interlocutors deploy to articulate the frame that they use, and the implications of these repertoires for addressing the tensions between unity and diversity.

While discourse and framing are key to the establishment of multiracial congregations, the maintenance and growth of congregations depends also on the congregational practices deployed from the congregation's subcultural toolkit. One of the findings of the American Mosaic Project mentioned above is that, though Americans express support for diversity in the abstract, when prompted to consider specific examples of how racial diversity may impact a community or organization, respondents express a great deal of ambiguity and ambivalence. In qualitative follow up interviews, respondents elaborate on practical problems of disunity, misunderstanding, and challenges to ideals of fairness that arise because of racial diversity (Bell and Hartmann 2007). Research on multiracial churches also argues that the promotion of a "multicultural" identity in Protestant churches can in practice require minority assimilation to white norms and reinforce white dominance (Edwards 2008b; Pitt 2010; Edwards et al. 2013). A question that the existing literature on multiracial congregations has not fully answered is whether the practices of multiracial congregations can foster racial unity without ignoring inequality and perpetuating racial hierarchies. One of the aims of the present study is to address this question.

In the process of investigating how evangelical beliefs and practices harden or erode racial boundaries, it is important to recognize that evangelicals are not shaped exclusively by their identity as evangelicals. As Frost and Edgell helpfully remind us:

Religious identification does not signal a static identity that individuals take on wholesale. Instead, religiosity is incorporated into the lives of individuals whose identities are already raced, classed, and gendered; it is intersectional, and as a result, religiosity has a variety of interpretations and uses in everyday life. (2017:298)

The bulk of the American and British literature on evangelicals focuses exclusively on white evangelicals. Edgell and Tranby (2007) observe, and I would agree, that there is a tendency in this line of research to essentialize white evangelicals (or evangelicals as a whole) and ignore important sources of variation within the “group”. One of the aims of the present project is to take an intersectional approach to understanding how evangelical identity intersects with racial self-identification and institutional participation in shaping understandings of racial diversity. In addition to the need to examine intersections of evangelical identity and other facets of identity, there is limited literature around evangelical social attitudes outside the American context (Bean 2014; Hatcher 2017). The studies on evangelicalism and race cited above are all based on data gathered in the US. This study therefore contributes to the literature by examining evangelical beliefs and practices around racial diversity in the UK context.

CONTEXT

The racial and religious landscape of Britain has changed significantly in the post-war period. The racial landscape has diversified as a result of migration, largely from Commonwealth nations including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Jamaica. As of the 2011 UK census, the British population was classified as 86% white (80% white British), 6.8% Asian (which denotes South Asian in UK categories), 3.4% Black, with smaller percent-

ages of mixed or other ethnicities. The growth of racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse communities within the UK has stirred up public debates about the benefits and dangers of “multiculturalism”, the integration potential of immigrants into “British values”, and the need for “community cohesion” (Lentin 2014; Osler 2009). This research project started in the wake of the EU referendum, in which anti-diversity and anti-immigration rhetoric was highly salient.

In Britain, popular and scholarly discourse around “race” and “ethnicity” has developed on a different trajectory and timeline compared to the US (Murji and Solomos 2015; Meer and Nayak 2015). While “race” has been explicit in American understandings of belonging and citizenship since the nation’s founding (Haney-López 1995), it did not become salient to British discourse around national belonging until after significant numbers of Commonwealth migrants began entering the borders of Great Britain after the Second World War. This period in British history is marked symbolically by the 1948 arrival of the Empire Windrush, bringing several hundred Caribbean laborers to London (Naidoo 1998). Expecting to be welcomed as fellow citizens into the “Mother Country” of Britain, Commonwealth migrants did not receive the warm reception they had anticipated and instead faced discrimination in housing, work, and the church (Aldred 2006). The growth of the Black and minority ethnic population in the 1950s and 1960s caused a racist backlash and led to the tightening of immigration laws in 1962 and 1968. In the 1960s and 1970s, scholarship and public discourse around race focused on color-based racism, and “Black” functioned as a political term encompassing the shared struggles of all non-white communities (Patterson 1969; Modood 1994). In the 1980s, the discourse began to shift to an engagement of “new ethnicities” (Hall 1991, 1992), which challenged essentialist thinking about racial

categories and emphasized fluidity and hybridity in the production of ethnic identities. In the 1990s and 2000s, explicit focus on “race” declined in mainstream and scholarly conversation, replaced by a greater interest in cultural and religious differences (MacMaster 2001; Shain 2020), with particular emphasis on Islam (Modood and Ahmad 2007; Meer 2008; Joly 2012; Meer 2013). This latter shift has been attributed to the rapid growth of the Muslim population in Britain, the socially and economically disadvantaged status of British Muslims, and the prominence of the state’s counter-terrorism and “community cohesion” agendas. Consequently, barriers to equality and integration in Britain are often framed in terms of cultural and religious factors rather than race (Zolberg and Woon 1999; Marranci 2004).

As for the religious landscape, the native-born white British population has secularized rapidly (much more rapidly than its American counterpart) during the post-war era. Data from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey reveal that between 1983 and 2018, the percentage of Britons identifying as Christian dropped from 67% to 38%, and the percentage identifying as Anglican / Church of England fell from 40% to just 12%. While 33% of the population over age 75 identify as Anglican, only 1% of the population aged 18–24 identify as Anglican. Within this overall trend of dramatic decline in Christian affiliation, there are pockets of growth in evangelical (including evangelical Anglican) and Pentecostal churches, largely because of immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean, and other Commonwealth nations. In addition to economic migrants, “reverse missionaries” are arriving from former colonies with the purpose of re-evangelizing Britain (Jenkins 2002; Olofinjana, Edwards, and Gidoomal 2013). According to the London Church Census, while 300 churches closed between 2005–2012, 1000 new churches were opened during the same period. Of

those new churches, nearly two thirds are Pentecostal Black-majority churches (BMCs), and a significant number of others are led by ethnoracial minorities. Leaders of the Evangelical Alliance (EA), the umbrella body for evangelical churches in the UK, have stated that approximately 25% of its member churches are ethnic minority churches. According to church attendance figures, 23% of evangelical churchgoers are people of color, and in inner London 48% of churchgoers are Black (Brierley 2019). Thus, racial and ethnic minorities are significantly overrepresented within British evangelicalism compared to the general population.

Evangelicalism is a global, transdenominational Christian movement, with the number of adherents estimated at 350 million (Johnson et al. 2018) around the world. It is distinguished from “mainline” or “liberal” Protestant Christianity by its doctrinal emphases on the ultimate authority of the Bible, the necessity of Jesus’ death on the cross to achieve salvation for humankind, the need for individual-level spiritual transformation, and the mandate to share one’s faith in public life (Bebbington 1989). The word “evangelicalism” is often confused with “evangelism”. As noted above, evangelicalism is defined by more than just evangelism, but it rightfully has the reputation for being a missional religion that emphasizes “taking the gospel to the nations”. Evangelical missionaries from Great Britain (and the United States) have historically played a significant role in spreading evangelical faith across the world, and today the areas of fastest growth in the evangelical movement are Africa, Latin America, and Asia. In Britain itself, evangelicalism was a vibrant movement in the 18th and 19th centuries, in part because of several revivals led by dynamic preachers (Bebbington 1989). Between the World Wars, British evangelicalism declined significantly in numbers and in influence (Barclay 1997), but in recent years the movement has grown in

energy and confidence in social engagement. Unlike their American counterparts, British evangelicals are not treated as a voting block, as they are fewer in numbers and also more internally diverse in their political orientations (Hatcher 2017).

The twin realities of dramatic secularization of white Britons alongside immigrant-fueled religious revitalization are compelling evangelical institutions in Britain to rethink their strategies for mission. While all evangelicals would assert that mission is central to the outworking of their faith, the exact content and mode of mission is contested. For evangelicals there is certainly a quantitative dimension — enlarging the kingdom of God through individual conversions. The qualitative dimension — manifesting the values of the kingdom of God in corporate life — is open to a wide variety of interpretations and contestations. The enactment of mission is often characterized by deep contradictions between the stated ideals (say, of unity and diversity) and the realities of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences that are accompanied by power differentials and cultural conflicts. The disjuncture between espoused values and lived realities of mission creates tensions that can be difficult for church leaders to reconcile.

Such tensions come to the fore in local congregations, the core unit of evangelical mission. How to evaluate and act upon racial diversity in the context of a local congregation is a topic of debate. Some evangelical church leaders adhere to what is known as the “Homogeneous Unit Principle” (HUP), the idea that a congregation is most effective missionally when it targets groups that are demographically homogeneous, whether in terms of language, race, or social class. The idea here is that, because people are naturally attracted to others like themselves, churches should cater to specific groups in order to maximize comfort and facilitate more rapid growth (McGavran 1970). Other evangelical leaders are com-

mitted to the principle that local congregations should be demographically diverse in order to conform to their interpretation of biblical ideals. However, the proportion of churches that are multiracial is very low, both in the US and in UK. According to Emerson and Woo (2006), who define a multiracial congregation as one in which no single ethnic group comprises more than 80% of the congregation, only 5% of Protestant congregations in America are multiracial. A comparable analysis has not yet been conducted in the UK. Based on 2005 attendance figures, 11% of congregations in England have more than 20% non-white participants (Brierley 2018). (This figure, however, does not separate out white-majority churches from minority-majority churches.) Among church leaders who do assert that churches should be racially diverse, there is variation in motivations for this conviction, interpretations of the place of racial diversity in mission, and ways of translating this conviction into reality through congregations. There is also variation among lay people (church members who are not in ordained leadership) in how they understand and experience racial diversity within evangelical churches.

This dissertation explores how racial diversity is framed and practiced by members of the evangelical community in Britain, including long-established members and more recently arrived immigrants. In it I capture voices of leaders and lay people and voices of white British, Black British, and British Asian evangelicals. To date, no sociological study has been conducted on this subject in the UK. The study has wider implications for our understanding of the role of religious institutions in contesting or reinforcing racial inequalities in diverse societies more broadly.

Before transitioning to a description of my research methods, it is useful to briefly state how I am defining some of the key terms in the analysis. I treat race, ethnicity, and reli-

gion as socially constructed rather than fixed categories. I draw inspiration from Brubaker (2002), who urges social scientists to beware of *groupism*: the tendency to take sharply bounded entities for granted and treat them as if they have collective and unified agency. Rather than uncritically accept ethnic (or racial or religious) categories as the unit of analysis, thereby naturalizing and reifying them, social scientists should focus our attention on analyzing the dynamic and relational processes by which categories and groups are formed. Brubaker urges us to think about race, ethnicity, and nation (and I would add religion) as they are constituted by language, idioms, categories and frames of understanding, organizational practices, and institutional forms. I seek to apply Brubaker's guidance in my own analysis of race and religion in this study.

As terms, I view "race" and "ethnicity" as fluid and overlapping, though with different origins and different connotations. Both race and ethnicity are socially constructed notions of groupness based on claims of common origins (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Race is an older term that may derive from the Arabic word *ra's*, which means "head, origin, or beginning". In 16th century European writings, we see "race" being used to refer to things that are connected by common descent (initially plants and animals), evoking connotations of breeding and lineage (Smedley and Smedley 2012). The modern concept of race emerged in the context of colonial enterprise and capitalist expansion, as European powers developed ways to categorize, rank, and justify the economic exploitation of their colonial subjects. Race as a concept is therefore inextricable from hierarchical relations and connotes processes of ascription and homogenization, often on the basis of phenotypical characteristics (Desmond and Emirbayer 2010; Omi and Winant 2015). Studies of race are typically con-

cerned with power, inequality, and the institutionalization of race and racism within larger social, political, and economic structures and systems (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Loveman 2014).

In contrast to “race”, the term “ethnicity” developed much later in popular and scholarly discourse, within the context of early 20th century interest in processes of immigrant identity formation and assimilation. While race connotes processes of ascription, ethnicity connotes processes of self-identification and is therefore arguably a more fluid category. While racial categorization draws upon perceived phenotypical distinctions, ethnic categorization draws more on notions of shared cultural practices (including language, religion, and other practices). In American sociology, studies of ethnicity have focused on issues of identity formation, group boundary processes, and immigrant adaptation (Gans 1992; Brubaker 2002; Wimmer 2008; Waters 2009). In this study, I am deliberately privileging the term race over ethnicity, in order to in a focus on power, inequality, and colonial history. However, this does not mean that I am dismissing the processes of self-identification and group boundary formation that ethnicity connotes.

And what do I mean by “diversity”? As Ahmed (2007) points out in her study of diversity practitioners in universities, the term “diversity” does not have a clear meaning. For some, it connotes initiatives promoting equality and justice for marginalized groups. For others, it connotes the celebration of difference as an attractive commodity to consume or participate in. For others, it is simply a descriptive term about the co-presence of individuals from multiple backgrounds within the same institution or geographic area. Similar to the term “multiculturalism”, the word takes on multiple descriptive and normative meanings depending on who is using it and in what context (Kymlicka 2011; Modood 2014; Hartmann 2015). I am interested in the meanings that my interlocutors attach to the term.

When talking about and acting on racial diversity, do evangelicals treat it as a justice issue, a commodity to celebrate, or a neutral reality of human life? In my analysis, I will reflect on the implications of the usage of “diversity” for processes of integration and the potential for perpetuating or challenging racial inequalities.

The dissertation’s overarching research question is: How do the beliefs and practices of British evangelicals harden or erode racial boundaries? The attention to beliefs examines how evangelical individuals evaluate and attach meaning to racial diversity. The attention to practices examines the behaviors that facilitate or limit racial diversity and integration in the context of evangelical congregations.

METHODS

To address my research question, I selected the methods of in-depth interviews and participant observation. I used interviews in order to gain access to the cultural repertoires of boundary work, meaning making, and identity, as well as reflections, experiences, and processes (Patton 2002; Lamont and Swidler 2014; DeLuca, Clampet-Lunquist, and Edin 2016). The bulk of the data comes from 72 in-depth interviews with British evangelicals (23 white British, 30 Black British, 19 British Asian). Of these, 59 are with lay people, and 13 are with ordained clergy. I included clergy because they have the most responsibility for decision-making about the vision, strategy, staffing, budgets, structures, and activities of churches. I included lay people because the extent to which the clergy mission (including the place of racial diversity in that mission) succeeds or fails is dependent on the perceptions, experiences, and actions of the rank and file.

Because much of the work on evangelicalism foregrounds the voices of white evangelicals, I decided to construct the set of interview participants from individuals of white British, Black British, and British Asian heritage. These are racial categories used in the UK census and other government data sources, and I recognize that by using these government-constructed categories I am at risk of reifying racial “groups”. Within the context of interviews and informal conversations, individuals variously described themselves as “English”, “British”, “African”, “British-Ghanaian”, “ethnically ambiguous”, “Asian”, or “Black”, to mention a few. Of the people I interviewed of Black British heritage, 16 people referenced being of African origin, while 14 people referenced being of Caribbean origin. The perspectives and experiences of the evangelicals I engaged are of course shaped by multi-layered ethnic and racial identifications, rather than by affiliation with a monolithic category (Waters 2009). That being said, because of the social and political power that ascribed racial categories have in shaping patterns of prejudice and discrimination, I do consider them worthy of attention in how I analyze the experiences narrated to me and the practices I observed. I include “British Asian”, “white British”, and “Black British” categories in the study for specific reasons.

White Britons I include because much of the concern among evangelical leaders about the decline of Christian affiliation pertains to white Britons, who appear to have abandoned faith at dramatic rates. One element of the “reverse mission” discourse and “united and diverse” discourse is the idea that including ethnic minority leaders and members in churches can help to inspire and revitalize faith among white Britons. In an increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan city like London, there is the notion among some church leaders that ethnoracial diversity may be an attractive feature of congregational life to white

Britons. Although demographic distributions are shifting rapidly in London, white Britons remain the majority and continue to possess the greatest wealth, power, and cultural influence.

In the UK, “Black British” includes two main subcategories; “Black Caribbean” and “Black African”. Black Caribbeans I include because they are the minority group that has the longest presence in the UK and the longest history of participation in racial justice movements. The histories of slavery and exclusion are more salient for Black Caribbeans than for any other minority group in Britain. While Black Caribbeans have the highest rates of residential integration (Iceland, Mateos, and Sharp 2011) and intermarriage (Mutarak and Heath 2010) of minority groups, they also continue to face discrimination in education, employment, criminal justice, and healthcare (Lymperopoulou and Parameshwaran 2015b,a; Green 2018). Compared to Black African Britons and British Asians, Black Caribbean Britons have the lowest rates of religious salience and participation (Sunak and Rajeswaran 2014). Some church leaders attribute this decline in religious participation to their experiences of exclusion from both white-majority churches and first-generation Black-majority (African) churches. There is also a phenomenon of native-born Black Caribbean conversion to Islam, Rastafarianism, and Black Hebrew Israelites, out of a desire to claim a non-Anglo-centric religious identity (Reddie 2009).

The majority of Black Africans began immigrating to the UK in the 1980s and 1990s. They therefore have a shorter history in the UK and less experience of integration into (or exclusion from) British institutions, including churches. Black Africans (particularly Nigerians) have made by far the largest contribution to church planting⁶ in recent decades, with

⁶“Church planting” refers to the process of establishing a new congregation in an area deemed to be under-served by the Church.

the vast majority of new churches concentrated in London (Brierley 2019). The majority of reverse missionaries in the UK are of African origin and explicitly state an intention to bring revival to secular white Britons. The discourse among reverse missionaries points to an inversion of racial hierarchies through evangelical mission, as Black Africans fulfill the role of spiritual authority and teacher to white Britons in need of salvation.

The final category I include is “British Asians”, which in the UK refers specifically to people of South Asian origin. South Asians are often left out of studies about race and Christianity, as most of the work on the relationships between religiosity and racial boundaries focuses on the Black/white divide. During the colonial era, South Asians (particularly Indians) often occupied a middle position in the racial hierarchy between European colonial masters and darker-skinned subjects, whether in Fiji or the Caribbean or Africa. Today, British Asians are the largest racial minority in Britain and also experience high levels of discrimination (in some cases worse levels of discrimination than Black individuals) (Green 2018). In the UK, the racialization of Asians is entangled with widespread anti-Muslim sentiment (Abbas 2004; Meer 2008). This is because the majority of Asians in the UK are Muslim (primarily Pakistani and Bangladeshi) and because the UK government has an extensive domestic counter-terrorism operation (“Prevent”) that many have argued reinforces negative stereotypes about Asian and Muslim communities. British Asian Christians (most of whom are Indian) are in some ways subject to this same process of racialization based on phenotypical features, despite the fact that they are religiously distinct. British Asians have considerably less visibility and power in evangelical leadership circles compared to white or Black Britons. One of the British Asian leaders within the Evangelical Alliance One People Commission tells the story of when she arrived at her first OPC meeting wearing

a sari and was asked, “Are you lost? Can we help you?” Asians are perceived by white and Black Britons as culturally “other” and uniquely unable to integrate into British culture. Thus British Asian Christians have a unique perspective on racial diversity and inequality in the church, based on their position in relation to evangelical institutions and in relation to British racial hierarchies more broadly.

I recruited my initial interview participants from several key institutions within the British Christian landscape: an evangelical church-planting network, Church House (the administrative center of the Anglican church), and the UK Evangelical Alliance (the umbrella body for evangelical churches across the country). I employed snowball sampling to obtain my full set of respondents, paying careful attention to the balance of race, gender, class, and age. Interview participants came from a range of evangelical denominations, including evangelical Anglicans, Baptists, Pentecostals, and non-denominational churches. The participants included 32 men and 40 women. In terms of class, the majority were of middle-class origins, with the exception of 3 British Asian participants and 4 Black British participants of working-class occupational backgrounds. Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 86, and the mean age was 43. The interviews covered topics of personal background, faith identity, education about race, and evaluations and experiences of racial diversity within the church. The questionnaire is included as an appendix. The interviews were semi-structured and recorded with participants’ consent. They ranged in length from 30 minutes to 2 hours and 20 minutes, with the average length being 1 hour and 9 minutes. At the end of each interview, I immediately took notes on the interview setting, major themes and impressions. I transcribed a subset of the interviews myself and had the remainder of the recordings professionally transcribed. I analyzed the transcripts using NVivo,

identifying themes (Ryan and Bernard 2003) and writing empirical and theoretical memos throughout the coding process.

In the process of developing and piloting my interview questions, one of the challenges I encountered was how best to elicit open conversation about race. As mentioned above, explicit discourse about “race” is rarer in Britain than in the United States. I think there are a few reasons for this. One is that, because Britain had very few slaves within its own borders, there is a tendency to perceive race and racism as American problems (despite the fact that Britain played a central role in the transatlantic slave trade and benefitted from it economically). Secondly, because there has not been the British equivalent of the American civil rights movement, there has not been a national “reckoning” with Britain’s participation in slavery and perpetuation of racial inequality. Consequently, the realities of racism are not highly salient in public discourse, despite clear racialized patterns of inequality in national data around educational outcomes, income, wealth, and treatment in the criminal justice system. A further contributing factor, I think, is the cultural norm of British reserve. While cultural tropes of “keep calm and carry on” and maintaining a “stiff upper lip” do not of course apply universally in British society, dominant norms around politeness and privacy relegate topics perceived to be personal or sensitive — such as religion and race — as inappropriate for public discussion. In my early interviews I noticed that if I asked a question specifically about “race”, respondents would quickly divert to language of “culture” or “ethnicity”. In response to this challenge, I restructured the interviews in such a way that enabled me to build rapport in the early part of the interview and probe respondents’ associations with the word “diversity” prior to asking specifically about race.

Around a politically sensitive topic such as race, there is of course the risk of social desirability bias. To mitigate this risk, I endeavored to ask questions eliciting experiential narratives rather than just opinions. When I did ask more opinion-related questions, I used neutral language and typically framed them with a “Some people have view X on this issue, while others have view Y. What do you think?” structure. The purpose for using this type of question structure was to indicate to the person being interviewed that I was not seeking one “right” answer but that a range of answers were possible and legitimate. While none of these strategies will have completely eliminated social desirability bias in the context of a face-to-face interview, I expect that they did reduce the risk.

I am also mindful of my position as a white researcher interviewing both white and minority individuals about race. This of course raises the possibility of respondents of color feeling less comfortable speaking openly with me about their opinions and experiences. There is no methodological solution to this problem. That being said, throughout the interview process, I sensed that the fact that I am American rather than British gave me a certain advantage in asking questions about the sensitive topics of race and religion. As an outsider, I am seen as legitimately ignorant about British culture and its racialized structures, which means it is more socially acceptable for me to ask the questions that I was asking. British people also expect Americans to be more direct in our conversational style, so I am partially exempt from the British norms of privacy, politeness, and indirect communication. I would often strategically emphasize my ignorance as an American, saying things like, “As an American, I don’t really know much about X”, or “I struggle to understand Y in Britain. Could you explain it to me?” This proved a fruitful approach to having what felt to me like frank conversations. The fact that I have extensive experience in evangelical

institutions, having grown up as the child of missionaries and engaged with churches in a range of national and cultural contexts, also enabled me to build rapport and trust with the individuals I interviewed.

Congregations in which individuals are embedded

Evangelical individuals are of course embedded in congregations. Compared to other Protestants, evangelicals have the highest rates of congregational participation, including weekly service attendance, small group participation, and volunteering through their congregation (Green and Hewitt 2011). Congregations are important spaces of socialization and attitude formation for evangelicals. Congregations have their own subcultures and deploy elements of the wider evangelical subcultural toolkit in selective ways, depending on their history, leadership, demographics, and local context.

Alongside the in-depth interviews, I conducted 18 months of fieldwork in two evangelical Anglican congregations in London, which I refer to as Eastside and Westside⁷. Both churches are led by white middle-class clergy and have an explicit mandate to grow both in numbers and in ethnic and racial diversity. Both churches operate in close proximity to racially homogeneous congregations within diverse neighborhoods. Eastside is a historically white working-class parish⁸, which in the last twenty years has gentrified significantly and transformed into a highly unequal and moderately ethnically diverse neighbourhood. Westside is a majority-minority parish with higher overall levels of deprivation and significant numbers of British Asian and Black British families, many of whom immigrated to the area

⁷I use pseudonyms for all congregations and individuals in the study.

⁸“Parish” refers to the geographical patch that each Church of England congregation is responsible for. There are around 12,500 parishes in England.

to meet labor shortages following the Second World War. The vicars (the Anglican word for pastor) of both parishes are committed to growth and to ethnic diversity and integration within their churches, but have different understandings of the meaning of diversity and operate within distinct institutional cultures. The leadership team members of Westside have, collectively, several decades of social and political engagement in the parish, while the senior leadership of Eastside are newer to the area and have been trained primarily in white conservative evangelical spaces. I selected these two congregations for fieldwork because, while they have similar theological orientations and similar visions for racial diversity, they have been shaped by distinct social and political cultures and contexts. At the outset of the project, I was interested to examine how these distinct histories and experiences of social and political formation intersect with theological and strategic discourses to shape attitudes and practices around race. Because Westside has invested in racial integration over a significantly longer period than Eastside, my analysis draws more heavily on my fieldwork in that parish.

My fieldwork in these two congregations included participant-observation in public-facing church activities including Sunday services, summer holiday clubs, community outreach events, and prayer gatherings, as well as the internal and mundane activities of leadership team and committee meetings, church cleaning and decorating, rota planning, and countless informal chats over tea and biscuits (or samosas) in the fellowship hall and in people's homes. Of the 72 in-depth interviews that I conducted, 25 were with members of these two congregations. Analyzing the data from these interviews alongside the ethnographic data from the congregations enabled me to contextualize the perspectives and experiences of those 25 individuals within their own churches. This allowed me to observe and

better understand areas of convergence and divergence between views and experiences recounted in individual interviews and the discourses and practices of the wider community (Wuthnow 2011).

Larger institutional context

To place the two congregations within their wider institutional context, I also conducted fieldwork within the networks and institutions through which I had identified my initial interview participants and the two congregations. This dimension of my fieldwork included attending relevant conferences, meetings, and celebrations, as well as informal conversations in those spaces and interviews with key informants. It also included part-time work within Church House, the headquarters of the Anglican church, which gave me unique insight into programs, policies, funding arrangements, and people that are shaping ideas and practices around racial diversity within the church on a larger scale. Church House is home to a number of departments that shape national Church of England policy and practice, including the Evangelism & Discipleship team (which shapes national strategy on church growth), Mission and Public Affairs (responsible for advising bishops on social issues), and Ministry (responsible for clergy training and development). In my part-time role supporting research projects and program evaluations based in Church House, I engaged with key people and national projects that helped me to contextualize the findings from my congregational fieldwork and interviews. Throughout my fieldwork in the two congregations and affiliated institutions, I wrote regular field notes, which I then typed up and coded using NVivo.

CHAPTERS

In the first chapter, I consider four primary ways that evangelicals frame the pursuit of racial diversity in the church. I refer to these as the *essential*, *instrumental*, *irrelevant*, and *barrier* frames. As I explore these four frames, I pay attention to the repertoires and toolkits that evangelicals deploy to articulate the particular frame that they use (Swidler 1986), as well as the sources of those repertoires. Because this chapter focuses primarily on framing rather than practice, I draw mainly on interview data as well as textual data from sermons, conferences, and informal conversations. As the chapter will show, the Bible is a frequent reference point for evangelicals. This is not surprising, as respect for the authority of the Bible is one of the defining tenets of evangelicalism. Evangelicalism as a religious movement discursively ascribes weight to the idea that the Bible provides guidance for all realms of human experience; spiritual, social, and material. However, there is variation between evangelicals in what elements of the Bible are most salient and how those narratives and images are interpreted within particular social contexts. In this chapter and to a greater degree in the second and third chapters, I will explore the ways in which biblical repertoires are filtered through individual experience and intersect with structural location to shape attitudes and practices around racial diversity.

The second chapter explores the barriers to achieving racial diversity in evangelical churches. In this chapter I analyze how widespread ignorance about race, ingrained legacies of colonialism, and intersections of racism and classism often prevent evangelical churches from achieving racial diversity and harden racial boundaries. I find that the educational and leadership training pathways within British evangelicalism (particularly Anglican evangelical-

ism) produce elite cohorts of leaders with limited exposure to economic or racial diversity and limited tools to engage the diversity of the neighborhoods their churches serve. This homogeneous and elitist leadership then shapes a church subculture characterized by an academic approach to Scripture, limited emotional or embodied engagement, a posture of superiority, and narrow conceptions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Intersecting with colonial legacies of white supremacy and racialized economic inequality, these subcultural traits form barriers to the inclusion of people from minority socioeconomic or racial backgrounds.

The third chapter explores the practices that can facilitate racial integration in the context of the local congregation. The data are drawn both from interviews and from ethnographic field notes. The chapter explores five sets of practices that facilitate racial integration in church congregations: learning about racial and cultural groups different to oneself, diversifying church leadership, embracing diverse worship practices, cultivating authentic relationships, and practicing repentance and forgiveness. The ethnographic site of primary focus is Westside parish, in light of the fact that the leadership of Westside have been testing out and institutionalizing practices to advance racial integration over a period of nearly forty years. As I consider each of these practices, I examine how and to what extent each practice is able to challenge racial hierarchies. I find that these practices can, to an extent, decenter whiteness within the congregational culture. However, these congregational practices have limited potential to address the wider cultural and institutional barriers to racial integration within British evangelicalism described in the previous chapter.

In the conclusion I summarize the key findings presented in the three chapters. I then reflect more broadly on debates around “assimilation” and “integration” in white-majority

institutions and the degree to which British evangelicalism hinders or facilitates integration within various dimensions. Finally, I consider practical implications for churches and other institutions, as well as limitations of the current study and areas for further research.

1

Talking About Racial Diversity: Frames

In seeking to understand how evangelical beliefs and practices harden or erode racial boundaries in Britain, a key step is exploring how evangelicals frame racial diversity in the church. How do evangelicals think about racial diversity, as it relates to the mission of the church? What are the sources and reasons for those beliefs? What are the implications of those beliefs for challenging or maintaining racial hierarchies? How evangelicals evaluate racial di-

versity in the church is significant because it has implications for how churches and their members then behave in response to issues of racial segregation and inequality. Although Christianity in England is declining in numbers, it remains both the largest and the established religion and therefore has capacity to contest or reinforce wider societal patterns of racism. As this chapter focuses primarily on discourse, I draw on the interviews I conducted with evangelicals, as well as what I heard in the sermons, conferences talks, small group discussions, and informal conversations during my fieldwork. I take seriously the way evangelicals talk about racial diversity because, as Wuthnow argues:

[Talk] is a tool kit — culture in action in Swidler's terms — with which to do work, but it is more than an after the fact justification. It serves rather as the means through which values and beliefs acquire sufficient meaning to guide behavior and to provide a template for self-understanding. (2011:9)

I include voices of clergy and lay people; women and men; Black, Asian and white participants, exploring areas of divergence and convergence. This enables me to examine the ways in which biblical repertoires are filtered through individual experience and intersect with structural location to shape attitudes around racial diversity in church.

I find that the evangelicals in the study evaluate multiracial churches in four main ways: *essential*, *instrumental*, *irrelevant*, or a *barrier* to church mission. Those who frame multiracial churches as *essential* to the mission of the church argue that God's design for the church is to be multiracial and that worshipping in a multiracial congregation yields greater spiritual growth because it requires humility and sacrifice. Those who frame multiracial churches as *instrumental* to the mission of the church also evaluate diversity as positive,

though for more pragmatic reasons related to numerical growth potential. Other evangelicals evaluate racial diversity as *irrelevant* to the church's mission, drawing on scripts from the Bible and conservative evangelical subculture to argue either that race is nonexistent or that it is a secondary social issue that constitutes a distraction from the central work of the church ("preaching the word"). A final group of evangelicals frames multiracial churches as a *barrier* to the mission of the church. The reasons behind this position are both strategic and normative. On the strategic level, the main argument is that the social and spiritual needs of first-generation immigrants require the structure of ethnic-specific congregations, and that pushing them into multiracial congregations is counterproductive and may result in numerical decline. Normatively, the main critiques of multiracial congregations are that they demand the assimilation of minorities to the majority culture, treat diversity in superficial way, and ignore issues of racial injustice in favor of a "unity" or "one in Christ" discourse.

As I explore these four frames, I pay attention to the *repertoires* and *toolkits* that evangelicals deploy to articulate the particular frame that they use (Swidler 1986), as well as the *sources* of those repertoires. One of the key sources is the narratives and ideas contained in the Bible. This is not surprising, as demonstrating respect for the authority of the Bible and adhering to correct biblical beliefs are important boundary markers for evangelicals (Hunter 1987). Evangelicalism as a religious movement discursively ascribes weight to the idea that the Bible provides guidance for all realms of human experience; spiritual, social, and material. However, there is considerable variation and ambiguity in how those biblical repertoires are interpreted and mobilized by different people. While the Bible is a primary source for the vocabularies people use to articulate their particular framing of racial diver-

sity in church, people draw on a number of other sources too. These include personal experience, institutional growth and marketing strategies, and wider cultural narratives about diversity and race. The evangelicals I spoke with tended to mix both ideal and pragmatic justifications for their framing of racial diversity in church, and some respondents straddled multiple frames or switched between frames depending on what we were talking about. In the conclusion I reflect on the implications of the framings evangelicals articulate for challenging or maintaining racial hierarchies.

FRAME 1: ESSENTIAL

Evangelicals who hold the *essential* frame maintain that racial diversity is not tangential or instrumental to church growth, but rather is an integral part of what it means to be the church in the world. My conversation partners offered a range of reasons why racial diversity is important to the church's mission. These include beliefs that racial diversity is part of God's good design for the world and reflects God's own identity and character, and that God commands his Church, as his representatives, to worship together in racially diverse congregations. The evangelicals I spoke with also argued that racially diverse churches are a witness to the reconciling power of God, and that worshipping in diverse churches helps Christians to grow in maturity and Christlikeness. For people in this category, the Bible is a salient repertoire of narratives and images motivating their position, though they are selective in which elements of the Bible they highlight and which they do not.

One of the reasons evangelicals frame racial diversity as essential to the mission of the church is because they believe it is part of God's good design for the world and for the church. From this perspective, racial diversity is a moral and spiritual issue rather than a

merely social or cultural one. The primary texts that evangelicals marshal to demonstrate the weight of this belief are the beginning and end of the Bible — the creation and Tower or Babel narratives in Genesis and the “new creation” vision in Revelation. From the creation and Babel narratives, the main idea distilled is that diversity is part of God’s purposeful design. Citing God’s creation of multiple types of plants and animals, evangelicals argue that diversity is something that God desires and intentionally creates. With respect to human beings in particular, evangelicals point to the Babel narrative as evidence that God wants ethnic and cultural diversity within the human race rather than homogeneity. Naved, a British Asian pastor, put it this way:

A: I think the Bible speaks quite a lot about these things. I mean, you can call it cultural differences, you can call it language differences. Where it all started — Tower of Babel — they all wanted to reach God and God said, ‘No you can’t reach me.’ So [God] separated them so they all went different ways. I suppose that’s the first one where you see different groups forming. And then obviously there is a history—

Q: Was that a good thing or a bad thing? The Tower of Babel causing separation.

A: It comes across as a bad thing, but in some ways, if that didn’t happen, we wouldn’t have the variety we have, and the diversity we have in our world, and then hence I suppose that’s a good thing, that’s God’s plan in some ways. Out of something which people wanted to do which was not acceptable, God has created something else which is good, it gave the world diversity, and so I suppose that’s where it all started.

In this explanation, Naved suggests that while the human motivations behind the Tower of Babel were negative (a prideful desire to be like God), the consequences were superintended

by God to achieve a positive outcome (racial and cultural diversity) in line with God's purposes.

While a number of lay people I spoke with cited the creation and Babel narratives in articulating their support for the *essential* frame, a smaller number of more theologically sophisticated evangelicals (mostly clergy) added that diversity within creation reflects not only a preference that God has, but the actual character and identity of God. The theological idea here is that God in Three Persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is diverse within himself, with each member of the Trinity being equal with the others. In other words, diversity exists in a perfectly integrated way within the person of God. Because the Genesis account states that God created human beings in his likeness (Genesis 1:27), evangelicals argue that God intends the dynamic of “unity within diversity” that exists in the Trinity to also be manifest in human community. Applied specifically to skin color, evangelicals assert that variations in human complexion all reflect the diversity and complexity of the Trinitarian God. As Jill, a Black British member of Westside said, *“Everybody’s made in the image of God, and God’s image must be very diverse if we’re all made in his image because we all look very different.”* Michael, a white pastor in his 60s, said: *“And certainly, biblically and theologically [I] would point people towards that we are all made in the image of God. And therefore God is reflected as much with people with black skin, brown skin, white skin, and so on and so on.”* Michael has been working in racially and ethnically diverse congregations for several decades and points to this verse as the basis for racial equality as well as diversity. The act of distorting human differences including skin color into bases for hierarchy, exclusion, and exploitation is explained as an outcome of the Fall within this evangelical biblical framework.

Evangelicals understand the book of Genesis to set out God's purposes for his people, and the book of Revelation to describe the fulfillment of those purposes after Jesus returns. Evangelicals espouse that while Scripture was compiled over the course of many centuries, it is internally coherent and consistent. They therefore identify continuity between God's approach to ethnic and racial diversity in the book of Genesis and the book of Revelation. By far the most frequently referenced verse in the Bible related to racial diversity, across formal interviews, informal conversations, church services, and other ethnographic contexts, was Revelation 7:9–10. This verse was cited by lay people and clergy, older and younger people, and people of all ethnoracial identifications, suggesting that it has wide salience. The verse describes the author's vision of the new creation (sometimes called "the new heavens and the new earth"), after Christ has returned and renewed the world:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb.'¹

The verse describes a large group of people united in their activity of praising God, but among whom differences of ethnicity and language are preserved. Evangelicals tend to ascribe significant weight to Revelation because they believe it represents the future reality after which Jesus has returned and perfected the world and his people. Therefore, the image of diversity in Revelation is understood to indicate that God's ultimate, perfected plan

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the *New International Version* (1984).

for his people (the Church) includes diversity. In other words, ethnic and racial diversity is not a temporary or socially-constructed reality but an eternal, God-ordained reality.

Together, the Genesis and Revelation narratives and images provide a justification for the view that racial diversity is an inherently good thing, divinely sanctioned. It is worth noting that while these bookends of the Bible offer compelling rationales for racial diversity within the people of God, the middle sections of the Bible create some challenges for evangelicals wanting to develop a coherent framework. Other Old Testament narratives generate some confusion for evangelicals, for example around the question of how God could simultaneously have a preference for diversity whilst also appearing to choose a particular ethnic group, the Jewish people. This tension was articulated by Enoch, a young British Asian:

A: I mean the view of Bible on the race changes dramatically from Genesis to Revelation. Like initially, people are asked to keep their identity and their definitions separate. They are asked strictly not to intermingle, not to follow the practices and it's a clear rule like nobody from outside their race is allowed inside to worship...So, there is a very strong presence of racial discrimination in the initial parts of Bible...But coming to the New Testament, there is a very different turn like the disciples of Jesus have broken from the traditions, they have gone out to the Gentiles. They have gone out to the Gentiles and spoken the same word, they have extended the same privileges to other Gentiles as well what has been given to the Jews as well.

Q: So, do you think did God change his mind about racial differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament?

A: Yeah. God changed his mind.

Q: Did he?

A: No.

This tension in Enoch's thinking, which I heard from others as well, exposes an interpretive difficulty that Christians face more generally when deploying the repertoire of ancient scriptures to address contemporary issues in the church. While ideas from the early pages of Genesis (which are widely familiar to people who have grown up in the evangelical church) can be more readily employed in the framing of a racial diversity initiative in church, the larger Old Testament idea of Jews as chosen people is difficult for clergy or lay people to understand and apply to contemporary approaches to racial diversity. A small number of evangelicals I spoke with referenced stories of Gentile inclusion in other parts of the Old Testament (e.g. the characters of Rahab or Ruth) as evidence for God's ultimate preference for ethnoracial diversity in the people of God, but such characters were not salient to most people.

Despite the interpretive challenges presented by the middle sections of the Bible, the evangelicals I spoke with maintain that ethnic and racial diversity is at the heart of God's vision and plan for humanity. Evangelicals believe that the role of the church is to represent God in the world and to participate in God's plans for humanity. Therefore, the image of Revelation 7 is understood not only as a future ideal but as a mandate for what the contemporary church should strive towards in the here and now. On this basis, evangelicals espousing the *essential* frame argue that the church has a responsibility to cultivate racially diverse congregations, to model to wider society what a redeemed and reconciled humanity looks like. At Westside, Revelation 7:9–12 forms part of the church's official vision statement. Abigail, the current vicar, routinely quotes the vision during Sunday services and other church events and activities in order to reinforce its significance. Both from the pul-

pit and in private conversation, Abigail has said that her favorite part of being a vicar is participating in that vision, which is “*a taste of heaven*”.

Data from interviews and informal conversations suggest that the value of racial diversity has been at least partly internalized by the congregation members at Westside. Silvia, a Black British woman in her 60s who has been at Westside for over twenty years, recalls the period in which the new team of vicars took on the leadership of the church and made significant efforts to racially integrate the congregation: “*I remember a lot of the sermons were around Revelations and that whole melting pot, that whole thing about, you know, the whole tribes, there being the whole different tribes and nations.*” When Silvia was younger, she recalls that “*church was something that we saw as white, established, and most of my friends at that time went to a Black Pentecostal church*”, and that she appreciates the vision Westside has to be a church for all kinds of people. Wendy, a white British woman who has been a member of Westside parish for about seven years, also referenced the Revelation image when talking about some of the strengths and challenges she sees in their church:

I would take it back to the, to the vision structure we have here at Westside, and from Revelation. You know all tribes and peoples and languages, represented before the throne of God, giving glory to him together. Yeah, that's ultimately where we're headed and there's, I think there is something very powerful in evidencing that here and now. It reminds us of where our final home is as a Christian community. It's not always comfortable, but, in not being comfortable, it's a reminder that this isn't our home. We're only going to be truly comfortable once we're in that throne room when our differences no longer matter, we've been perfected, we can now love fully and accept fully, and so on.

And until then, we're gonna have to struggle and work at it, but that we should because all are welcome.

Wendy ascribes value to multiracial congregations because they enact the Revelation vision, remind Christians of where their ultimate identity lies, and give glory to God. She acknowledges that the present reality of the church does not correspond to this vision in Revelation, but that the church should try as hard as it can to realize that vision. For Wendy, these ideas of the present struggle and yearning for a final home are not abstract but are rooted in her personal experience of displacement and working in difficult international and cross-cultural contexts.

Other evangelicals I spoke with (beyond those at Westside where Revelation 7:9 is explicit in the vision statement) made a similar argument about Christians having a mandate to cultivate racial diversity in churches now, in order to reflect the ultimate biblical vision. For example Janice, a white British member of Eastside, had this to say about racial diversity in church:

I prefer the united and diverse [model of church]. I think it is more biblical. I think that is what heaven is going to look like. I quite like the idea of trying to have heaven now. I think it does put people out of their comfort zone. So you are going against human nature by doing the united and diverse. But I think it is a part of human nature that's fallen. I don't think that is necessarily a good bit of it. I think it is challenging and harder, but I think it is the right thing to do on principle.

Like Wendy, Janice argues that because heaven is pictured as united and diverse, present congregations on earth should also aim to be united and diverse. She attributes the difficulty of achieving this to the fallen part of human nature, and in her interview explains that

the grace and power of God are needed to overcome the divisive element of human nature. Like Wendy and several other white British people I interviewed who hold the *essential* frame, Janice made a deliberate decision to leave a more affluent white-led church to be part of her current church that places a significant emphasis on ethnic and racial diversity. Linking back to the idea of God being diverse and making the world diverse to reflect himself, Adora, a young Black British woman, commented that when churches conform to the Revelation vision, they are able to better appreciate these aspects of God:

It's great to be able to see God working amongst different cultures, because then you do realize that he is Lord of all and that he has made all these cultures and that they do reflect his glory in varying ways. I think Revelation says that not just for the sake of it, but because it is really important that there are people from every tribe, nation, and tongue — diversity reflects God's diverse way of making stuff, which is amazing. So it does bring him glory, helps us understand each other better and love each other better.

In addition to seeing racially diverse congregations as reflecting God's character and embodying a biblical vision of church, evangelicals argue that multiracial congregations are an important witness to the reconciling power of God. This view was taught at one of the church planting conferences I attended in central London: "*Ethnoracial diversity is a gospel imperative...It is a testimony to the power of the gospel*", one of the keynote speakers asserted. "*Multiethnic churches are a result of the gospel and a way to present the gospel.*"² The assertion here is that because racially integrated communities are difficult to build and sustain through human efforts, the existence of racially integrated churches points to the reality of superhuman intervention. This view was articulated not only from the front in formal

²In evangelical circles, the word "gospel" is often used as shorthand for "the message of the Bible".

contexts but also in individual conversations. Amanda, a white British lay person, reflected in her interview:

The difference in the church [compared to other social institutions] is that it works because of Jesus' grace. The grace of God transforms us to be kind and patient and bring out the person of spirit. Without that, it [racial diversity] is going to be really, really difficult, like almost impossible. But, because of Christ, we can all be brought together in this.

She echoes the view that unity in diversity is hard work and it is only the grace of God that makes it possible. A verse commonly cited in making this argument was Galatians 3:26–28, which says:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

A number of respondents interpreted this to mean that, because Jesus' death made it possible for people from multiple races to worship together as one religious community, it would be a bad witness for Christians to then choose to worship in homogeneous churches again. Jill, of Caribbean heritage, put it like this:

I really — I think I fall on the we need to be as integrated and diverse as possible, because I just don't think the kingdom is going to divide us up into the Asian Christian fellowship, and the Caribbean Christian fellowship, it's going to be, we are followers of Jesus and we follow him. There should be no slave or free or Jew or Greek. We should be

working together and living harmoniously and fighting it out and sorting things out between ourselves, because we're not here for ourselves. I keep saying that this life is just temporary and actually we should be working towards making God's kingdom, making justice, making things right for the people who are here. It's not about us and about our particular style.

From Jill's perspective, the idea that there is no "Jew or Greek" means that within the context of a worshipping community, there should be racial diversity and integration. Jill expresses the view that worshipping in a homogeneous congregation is a selfish thing to do, because it prioritizes the interests of a particular group over the collective work of building the kingdom of God. In her own life within and outside of the church, Jill has experienced racial discrimination and cultural conflicts, yet she maintains that "*living harmoniously and fighting it out*" is the right response to biblical teaching about the church.

Others went so far as to argue, on the basis of the Galatians text, that congregations must be multiracial in order to be fully obedient to Scripture, and that homogeneous congregations are disobedient. George, a young British Asian who grew up in a homogeneous Indian church and transitioned into a multiracial church, had this to say about homogeneous churches:

I would just see that as kind of very conservative, like almost ethnocentric make-up of it. So, like I always rallied against that, not always, but like when I became a genuine Christian, I was like, 'that's not the gospel that's reflected in the New Testament,' and so I felt like so far from the ideal that a multiethnic, multiclass church is what I see as the ideal church...I'm fine as long as Indians have their church in the UK and it's fully Indians as long as they can acknowledge that it's not God's plan for a church on earth to

split along racial lines, and it's not a gospel for which the apostles fought and defended and gave their lives.

In George's interview, he made it very clear that the passage from Galatians, amongst other letters from the Apostle Paul, demonstrate a biblical mandate for multiracial churches. He uses strong language in this quotation, pointing out that the early apostles "*gave their lives*" to defend a gospel that includes a multiracial vision of church. In his case, the strength of feeling underlying his perspective may reflect the negative experience he had within a homogeneous church, which he described as ethnocentric, insular, and authoritarian. While at that church, George had faced significant opposition when he decided to marry a white British woman. He asserts that when he became a "*genuine Christian*" he came to the conclusion that church congregations must be multiethnic to conform to the biblical picture. Michael, a white pastor who spent much of his childhood in South Asia, shared George's view, saying:

So, as an evangelistic tool it [a homogeneous church] is really powerful. But it seems to me it's the complete antithesis of the biblical picture of what the church is meant to go into. So, to have a congregation that remains mono-cultural and doesn't see its purpose as to integrate more widely is actually, I don't think, a biblical way of being church.

Silvia, of Caribbean heritage, said that Black-majority churches can be vulnerable to ethnocentrism as well:

So it's not even about just having white-only churches. It's about having Black-only churches as well. They too can have a culture around, you know, not being very accepting, you know, the whole, 'because they worship different than us...', you know. My [Black]

friends — they would never come to my church, because they would say, ‘It’s boring.’ I said, ‘Well, how do you know it’s boring if you haven’t been?’ ‘Oh, you know, Church of England. Just, you know, you sing a few hymns. We, you know, we’re more vibrant. We’re more lively. You know, we praise Jesus.’ I said, ‘Well, we do all of that too, you know, but, you know, we may not be as loud, but we do that too, you know?’

Silvia contends that Black-majority churches and individuals who attend them can also have an attitude of superiority around the way that they sing or pray or relate to the Holy Spirit. Silvia is critical of this attitude, arguing that it can produce prejudiced and dismissive views of the practices of Christians from other racial or cultural groups.

Evangelicals identified a number of corporate and personal benefits to worshipping in a multiracial church. One of the most commonly cited benefits of Christians worshipping together in a multiracial congregation is the exposure of “idols” held by particular cultural or racial groups. An “idol” is a biblical concept that refers to valuing something more highly than God, and idolatry is the root of “sin” — the act of turning away from God. In a sermon at Eastside, the preacher emphasized that the Christian message changes believers in two ways. First, in terms of identity, the gospel becomes the Christian’s primary “citizenship” (carrying greater weight than identities of national citizenship, race, or other affiliation). Secondly, the gospel challenges the Christian’s understanding of culture. He explained that participation within a racially and culturally diverse church enables individual members and groups to see the “sins” and “idols” within their own ethnic group, race, or nation, and to recognize some of the strengths in the views and practices of other groups. The point that the preacher was making is that every culture has values and practices that are in line with biblical teaching, and every culture also has some values and practices that

are either directly contradictory to Scripture or are clung to too tightly. Worshipping in multiracial congregation exposes these idols more effectively than worshipping in a homogeneous congregation, in which ideas of what is right, good, and biblical are more easily conflated with cultural values or group interests. Adora put it this way:

And it also helps us see that his way is the way that trumps every other way I guess. So like people have their own cultures, and once they become Christians they all have things that need to be changed, and they will realize that ‘actually hang on — his way and my culture — it isn’t a match. It’s God’s culture really that we should be wanting.’ I guess it helps to see that — to see that you are special but you’re not so special at the same time.

Adora’s point is that every Christian, whether white, Black, or Asian, has things in their own group or culture that should be celebrated and things that should be challenged in light of biblical teaching. When I asked Adora for an example, she mentioned the centrality of marriage in a number of African and Asian cultures. She commented that Jesus’ teaching on marriage challenges the idea that marriage is essential to personal fulfillment or adult responsibility, and that this teaching is a challenge to people of African and Asian background who may “idolize” marriage.

This notion of idolizing marriage or family surfaced in a number of interviews with children of Asian or African immigrants. Interviewees commented that some cultures place loyalty to family higher than any other value, and that the Christian message challenges this orientation. For example, Rehan asserted that British Asians can be “*judgmental — it’s because in Asian cultures family is massively important so they’ll be like ‘Oh, your kid’s going to that private school?’ And I feel like the social setup is you talk about your family and how well they’re doing...and they start comparing each other’s jobs and kids and so on and so forth.*”

From Rehan's perspective, this emphasis on educational attainment and close family ties can prevent Asian families from wanting to integrate into multiracial churches, because they perceive the norms in multiracial churches as less well aligned to the aspirations they have for their children. For white British people, participants reflected that worshipping in a diverse church can expose idols of individualism, privilege, and comfort. For example, Esther, a young white British woman who worships in a multiracial evangelical Pentecostal church, shared how worshipping in her church has personally exposed her to experiences of exclusion faced by Caribbean people who immigrated to London during the Windrush generation. She shared how becoming aware of these things has challenged her own idol of comfort, and concluded that *"church isn't about enjoying church. Church is about like praising God, learning about God, and fellowship."*

The value of discomfort is an idea that surfaced in a number of interviews. Respondents expressed the view that the discomfort produced by worshipping in a multiracial congregation is difficult but necessary for personal spiritual growth. Discomfort produces deeper understanding, humility, forgiveness and maturity. This emphasis was sometimes contrasted with a mainstream cultural emphasis on "political correctness." A Black British pastor joked that *"God didn't die for my name to be pronounced right"*. He argued that political correctness places too much weight on individual identity and comfort, and can limit space for genuine two-way conversation and growth in understanding. He claimed that meaningful racial diversity in a church context requires the cultivation of "kingdom culture" (characterized by humility, repentance, and grace) rather than political correctness. Other researchers have pointed out that the danger of deploying the term "kingdom culture" is that it can be mapped onto the majority culture of the church to legitimate and

sacralize the values and practices of the majority (Chong 1998; Ecklund 2005). This creates a situation in which, in the words of George, *“the gospel has been perverted to conform along cultural lines”*. However, George also asserted that in the context of a multiracial congregation, if people are willing to engage with discomfort and admit that *“both British and South Asian Christianity is deficient to the extent that it only engages with itself in its own voice”*, then the type of “kingdom culture” that the above pastor promoted can become a reality. Rather than promoting cultural superiority, church leaders and congregants can grow spiritually in humility and mutual respect.

Reflecting on some of the challenges associated with worshipping in a multiracial church, Varun commented, *“The incarnational thing calls for sacrifice but also risk-taking and not being afraid to offend. Jesus offended many people.”* By “incarnational thing” Varun is referring to the Christian doctrine that Jesus set aside the comfort and perfection of heaven to enter into the imperfection of the world in human form. Commenting on this dimension of the narrative of Jesus, Varun points out that it required sacrifice and the willingness of Jesus to offend people in his ministry to them. Likening the sacrificial and uncomfortable work of Jesus to the difficult and risky work of worshipping in a multiracial church, Varun contends that the experience of discomfort molds people into the likeness of Jesus. This idea of the experience of sacrifice making people more like Jesus was echoed by Angela, one of the few Black female clergy in the Church of England:

I think just by our natural inclination is to be with people who are like us...But I think when it comes to — if we’re looking at growing the church, which is one thing, and if we’re looking at becoming more Christ-like, then we have to expose ourselves to the whole — as far as we’re able — to the whole picture of what we understand God to be about. So

I think there needs to be some intentionality about it, and some kind of evolution, but I think that is the most important place for us to learn about what it means to be people of God. It's hard work, and we have to learn things like sacrifice, and letting things go, and compromise and all of those things, and we don't learn those things unless we are rubbing shoulders with each other.

Helen, a middle-aged British Asian woman who has attended both homogeneous and diverse churches suggested that while people may feel more comfortable in a homogeneous church, a mark of maturity is willingness to be stretched in a diverse environment:

I think as a new believer you don't really feel comfortable [in a multiracial church], but then as a mature believer you want to go where you can stretch, and I think that's the difference...Because I think if you just stay comfortable, you're not gonna grow as a believer.

These comments from Varun, Angela, and Helen resonate with the “theology of discomfort” that Garces-Foley (2007a) identified at a multiracial church in California, where experiences of misunderstanding, conflict, or alienation are reframed in terms of “discomfort” that is imbued with spiritual significance as an opportunity for growth.

In summary, evangelicals framing racial diversity as *essential* to the mission of the church view racial diversity as an integral part of the identity and purpose of the church. They argue that it reflects God's character and the reality of the new creation, is evidence of gospel power, and is necessary for qualitative growth. Respondents in this category drew heavily on biblical repertoires and assert that the biblical mandate for diversity transcends the pragmatic challenges. Of the evangelicals I interviewed for this project, those holding the

essential frame constituted the largest group. I assume that my set of interviews is biased towards this view because the study was based in London and because my ethnographic work was based in two multiracial churches where the leadership teams use this frame. If I were to conduct a nationally representative survey of British evangelicals, I expect that the proportion adhering to this frame would not be as high as the proportion I have found in my own set of interviews.

Why does this set of evangelicals hold to this view? There are a number of factors. One is the institutional environment in which people worship and the scripts made available to them in that environment. The vast majority of the evangelicals I spoke to holding the *essential* frame are those who have been members for several years of churches that explicitly teach this framing. Thus, the toolkit of Bible references, vision statements, and interpretations is frequently reinforced by congregational leaders and transmitted to members. In the third chapter I will examine in greater depth the specific organizational practices that leaders of multiracial congregations employ to embed the principles that they espouse. A second factor related to the adoption of the *essential* frame is a more general ideological commitment to racial and cultural diversity, which in a number of cases appears to have predated involvement in a multiracial congregation. White British people in particular tended to articulate a strong ideological commitment to diversity and to emphasize that they had deliberately chosen to worship in a multiracial congregation rather than in a homogeneous congregation. The roots of this ideological commitment included extended experience living in international or racially diverse contexts in childhood or early adulthood, tertiary education in history or social sciences, a sense of divine “calling” to work in multiracial contexts, or strong interracial social ties (particularly interracial marriages). These

findings are consistent with Emerson and Woo's (2006) analysis of "sixth Americans" — people who have grown up with a high level of exposure to diversity and therefore develop a preference for participation in diverse institutions rather than homogeneous ones. Of the ethnic minorities who articulated the *essential* frame, some also expressed a strong ideological commitment with similar roots to white British people holding the *essential* frame. Additional common threads among minority individuals in this group included negative experiences in racially homogeneous churches (e.g. insularity and disapproval of choices seen as betraying the culture), and the experience of explicit invitation to participate and lead in the context of a multiracial church. This resonates with Marti's (2010) findings about African American congregants at Oasis church, many of whom expressed a desire to distance themselves from Black churches and be part of a more diverse space.

What are the implications of the *essential* frame for challenging or maintaining racial hierarchies? As noted earlier in this section, one of the underlying assumptions of the *essential* frame is that racial distinctions are real and have meaning. As Morning (2009) argues, underlying conceptualizations of race are significant because they shape both ideologies of race and practices that have consequences for racial equality. Morning's own research on racial conceptualizations among university students and faculty finds that faculty with religious affiliations are much more likely to offer biological rather than cultural or social-constructivist definitions of race, compared to their colleagues, though she does not explore why this is the case. The present study does not directly answer this question but it does suggest that some evangelicals assign ontological weight to racial distinctions, seeing them as God-given aspects of human identity. Consequently, unlike their brethren who hold the *irrelevant* frame (to be explored later), these evangelicals are much less likely to espouse

a color-blind view (Bonilla-Silva 2006) that dismisses the implications of race altogether. However, because this group of evangelicals places such a strong emphasis on the *spiritual* value of racial diversity, they are quick to say that racial diversity is something to be celebrated and slower to acknowledge or deal with the material and social inequalities linked to racial categories. It is also important to note that many of my interlocutors included above used language of “culture” instead of or interchangeably with “race.” Particularly around the topic of discomfort exposing idols, the examples people raised were primarily about cultural values and cultural differences, rather than conflicts or inequalities between racial groups. The implications of submerging race will be explored further in the next chapter.

FRAME 2: INSTRUMENTAL

A second way that evangelicals frame racial diversity in church is *instrumental* — a strategic tool — for mission. Like the evangelicals who frame diversity as *essential*, these evangelicals also evaluate multiracial congregations as a positive thing, but for more pragmatic reasons. Respondents in this group tended to appeal primarily to common sense arguments about organizational growth rather than biblical or theological arguments.

One of the most common arguments in support of cultivating racially diverse congregations is that such churches are able reach a higher number and wider range of people, particularly in demographically diverse neighborhoods. England has much lower levels of residential segregation along racial lines compared to the US (Iceland et al. 2011), and so in urban areas the individual neighborhoods in which churches operate are likely to have a meaningful measure of ethnoracial diversity. Because the Church of England has a parish system in which a congregation is responsible for its local geographic patch, Anglican con-

gregations have an incentive to engage with the demographic diversity of their neighborhood. A number of Anglican evangelicals I spoke with consequently made the pragmatic argument that if an urban church wants to fulfill the quantitative growth dimension of its mission, it should be racially diverse. An existing level of racial diversity in a congregation makes it easier for the church to continue growing across demographic lines.

At the individual level, this concern was linked to the invitation of friends. For example Colleen, who is of mixed white and Caribbean heritage, said that if she wanted to bring a white friend along to church, it would be better to bring her friend to a multiracial church rather than a Black Pentecostal church, as her friend might feel out of place. Colleen attends a racially diverse evangelical Anglican church near her home and has brought white and Black friends along to church. Rehan, of Asian descent, also acknowledged the instrumental value of being part of a church that is multiracial:

So I think for a church to grow, you need to have some people from an ethnic background in the church, not necessarily being like the senior members, but in the church to show that they're welcoming and they're not gonna be pushing people to the side and there's not segregation or anything like that.

In his racially diverse neighborhood of East London, Rehan reflected that it would be much harder to reach Black and Asian youth in the area if they did not have Black and Asian leaders within the church to be visible role models and relate more effectively to young people. He contrasts this with a church plant he knows about in Brixton (a neighborhood with a significant Afro-Caribbean population) that was led by an all-white church planting team. Rehan remarked that although the intention of the church plant was to

engage the full diversity of the community, the congregation ended up being almost exclusively white. Thus, the pragmatic argument is that, if a church wants to maximize its growth within a particular area, then it needs to be able to cater to different types of people. A church will struggle to engage the different racial and cultural groups in its geographic area if there is no diversity in the existing congregation. This idea of needing to ensure that a wider range of people were comfortable in church was often mentioned by second-generation immigrants (or in reference to second-generation immigrants) — the point being that children of immigrants who grow up in racially homogeneous churches have a hard time inviting their friends of other backgrounds to their church.

A less frequently articulated strategic motive is that promoting racially diverse churches is necessary for the long-term survival of the church in England. Abigail, vicar of Westside, expressed this view. She is concerned that other members in the Church of England do not recognize this fact, viewing her approach to multiracial ministry as “*specialist ministry*”. Her argument is that because England is becoming increasingly racially and culturally diverse, the church needs to be more intentional about how its strategies and practices include people from more diverse backgrounds. Abigail is acutely aware of the statistics cited in the introduction — that white Britons are secularizing rapidly while Black and Asian immigrant communities have much higher levels of religious affiliation and participation. The survival of the Church of England is under threat if it is unable to adapt and to shake the stereotype of being a “*quintessentially (white) English*” institution: “*I also think if the church is gonna survive...they [the national church] have got to recognize that this is the future.*” This is a pragmatic argument about long-term institutional survival, and I did not hear this particular view from any other respondent.

Some evangelicals who use the *instrumental* frame treat racial diversity as a strategic advertising tool. I observed this in practice one evening after church a few weeks before Christmas. John and Nick showed me the Christmas promotional video of an evangelical church planting network in London that featured a Black man and his daughter. After viewing the short video, John and Nick asked me what I thought of it. They then told me that the network that made the video had wanted to make a Christmas video that included racial minorities, but they could not identify any people in their own (majority white middle-class) church network to feature in it. A staff member at the organization had called John to ask whether his church had any Black people that they could include in their video. Laughing, John reported asking the person, “*What kind of Black people do you want?*” In the end, the organization making the Christmas video hired two Black actors. The incident suggests that the church leadership making the video considered representation of Black people in their church instrumental to engaging a cosmopolitan London audience. It is not only white-majority churches that seek to advertise racial diversity as part of a church growth strategy. One afternoon Nadiya was describing to me how the Black-majority church she attends has started to try to appeal to more white British people in order to grow. Describing the church’s approach to advertising over the radio, she said:

Yeah they use more English sounding voice overs, definitely, so like when they hear it on radio they say ‘oh this sounds good’ — you know because I think there is a psychology to it, to having some kind of English accent to draw people in, so that they don’t just see it as a Black church. They want to be seen as ‘we’re diverse.’ So it’s not just for Black people, it’s for white people.

In summary, the evangelicals I spoke with and observed who use the *instrumental* frame hold that racial diversity is a useful tool for church mission because it enables the church to numerically grow more. In most cases this was referenced on the level of individual relationships (i.e. being able to bring friends and neighbors of other races along to church), but in some cases on the level of facilitating institutional growth by appealing to a wider range of demographic groups. Across the set of interviews conducted, this was the frame used least commonly. However in practice, as the next chapter will explore, I observed the *instrumental* frame at work in church strategies and practices, including in churches where the *essential* frame was taught.

Why do evangelicals hold this particular frame? At the outset of the project, I expected that a subset of people, perhaps those with a positive but superficial appreciation of diversity, would hold this frame. I expected this to include white British people with limited exposure to ethnoracial diversity as well as first-generation “reverse missionaries” seeking to reach white British people. Contrary to my expectations, I also spoke with native-born ethnic minorities who articulated this frame. The individuals in this category tended to express a weak attachment to their own ethnic identity and an optimism about diversity. They drew upon personal experience, common sense arguments, and marketing frameworks to articulate their perspective.

What are the implications of these beliefs for challenging or maintaining racial hierarchies? While an *instrumental* framing of racial diversity does not dismiss the social significance of race altogether, it engages with race on a superficial level. The *instrumental* framing treats race as a relatively minor individual-level identity characteristic and assumes that all racial groups are operating on an equal playing field. The commodification of racial

diversity for the sake of institutional aims resonates with research on universities' use of diversity discourse (Ahmed 2007; Berrey 2011; Herring and Henderson 2011). These studies find that that universities use racial diversity as an indicator of global competitiveness and attractiveness to students, while downplaying the significance of racial inequality. In Warikoo's (2016) analysis of how racial diversity is perceived by university students in the US and UK, she finds that for elite white students, racial diversity is often a "selling point" on a brochure — an attraction that can enhance their learning environment — as long as they do not have to confront more difficult issues around inequality. Churches, like universities, have to market themselves to potential participants. In the British context, where secularization and ethnic diversification are both accelerating, one way of churches responding to market pressures is to advertise ethnic diversity as a value that they hold. Although Anglican churches continue to operate on the parish model, they are increasingly in competition with other denominations that operate on a gathered model (which potentially draws participants away from the Anglican parish church). Thus, evangelical Anglican churches have a particular incentive to advertise and promote diversity in order to maintain a viable market share within their geographic patch. While churches advertise other elements of congregational life to attract participants (e.g. a large youth program or convenient service times or high quality music), "diversity" may become an increasingly important attraction, similar to the way it has for universities. Adopting a multicultural or diverse identity can serve as a niche identity for a congregation (Ammerman 1997), within a wider ecology of churches that tend to be homogeneous. Explicitly marketing a church as multiracial can be a mechanism of growth in a neighborhood or city with a significant segment of people who embrace a cosmopolitan ethos (Garces-Foley 2007a). One of the

risks of churches operating with an *instrumental* frame is treating racial minorities in a tokenistic fashion. This is accompanied by a tendency to treat minorities as members of monolithic groups and a failure to listen to individual experiences or perspectives. A second risk of adopting the *instrumental* frame is neglecting problematic features of dominant church culture and power structures. These risks will be explored in further detail in the next chapter.

FRAME 3: IRRELEVANCE

A third way of framing the relationship between racial diversity and the mission of the church is *irrelevance*. Evangelicals using this frame assert that cultivating racial diversity within a congregation should not be a priority. People in this category tend to treat race either as nonexistent, or as a secondary and therefore distracting issue for the church. In articulating this frame, the evangelicals I spoke with drew on the repertoire of Scripture, scripts from conservative evangelical and Pentecostal subculture, and their own personal experience.

One of the main arguments behind the *irrelevance* frame is that God does not see race. This framing draws heavily on one particular verse in the New Testament, Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” As mentioned earlier in the chapter, this same verse is also cited by evangelicals using the *essential* frame, but with a different interpretation. For evangelicals who see racial diversity as irrelevant, they interpret this verse to mean that spiritual unity in Jesus erases racial differences in church community. For example Nelly, a middle-aged Black British woman worshipping in a multiracial church, cited the above verse from

Galatians as evidence that “*God doesn’t see color.*” Nelly went on to say that “*My stand on race is when we go to heaven, God doesn’t see color. He sees everyone as one.*” From Nelly’s perspective, an explicit focus on racial diversity should not be a priority in the church because it draws attention to something that God does not see (race) and compromises unity. This idea of Christian unity trumping racial distinctions was reiterated by Kweku, the son of Ghanaian immigrants. Kweku said that in his church, “*We treat all people the same. We don’t look at people through that lens [of race].*” Rehan, a young professional of South Asian origin, also shared this perspective. In a conversation about his role as a volunteer youth group leader at church, he argued that it is better to emphasize that Jesus loves everyone, and not to encourage “*segregated thinking*” among youth. (At other points in his interview, Rehan used the *instrumental* frame when saying that it is good to see minorities in church leadership positions, but here he asserts that it is best not to hear them talk explicitly about racial differences.) The implication in the comments from Kweku and Rehan is that, in light of the call to Christian unity, drawing attention to racial distinctions in any way is inappropriate and potentially damaging.

In addition to the Bible, evangelicals who share the *irrelevance* frame draw upon common scripts within conservative evangelical and Pentecostal subcultures — namely the language of “preaching the word” (the Bible) and “allowing the Holy Spirit to work.” The salience of the phrase “preaching the word” belies an assumption that the act of preaching is the top priority in the mission of the church and that all other activities are secondary. Emphasizing dependence on the Holy Spirit suggests that the inner work of the Holy Spirit transcends all material and social concerns. One afternoon I was sitting with Asha in one of the small meeting rooms in her office building. Over mugs of tea, we were talking about her

racially diverse church that has grown significantly and the factors that have contributed to that growth. Asha reflected:

It is a solid Bible teaching church. I don't think that it was established with Black people in mind. It was established with teaching the word of God in mind and welcoming to everyone... The starting place wasn't ethnicity. The starting place was teaching the word and making that the truth, and out of that flows a growing church, and people I believe are drawn to church by the Holy Spirit.

Asha, a second-generation British Asian, contends that the reason that her evangelical church has grown is that it preaches the Bible faithfully and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. A deliberate focus on diversity has not, in her estimation, contributed to the racially diverse growth of the church. She went on to explain that an emphasis on race can detract from the main mission of the church to teach the Bible. The strengths Asha identifies in her church are framed partly in intellectual terms (an emphasis on teaching and truth) and spiritual terms (people being drawn by the Holy Spirit) rather than social or practical terms.

Adora, a Black British lay leader in her thirties, expressed a similar view to Asha:

I think the Bible is really clear what the church is here for, and it's not here for every single thing that's good — there's loads of good things to be doing — but the church has a very specific mission: to declare God's excellencies and his word. Obviously everything flows out of that, good stuff flows out of that, social justice, but it has to be couched within, it can't be the main thing.

Like Asha, Adora asserts that “social justice” issues like racial diversity are secondary matters. From her perspective, the purpose of the church is to preach the word of God. Racial

diversity and racial justice may be good things, but they should not be the main focus of the church. Adora and Asha both use the language of good things “flowing out of” teaching the Bible, suggesting that these good things can be an organic byproduct of preaching the word but are not primary aims and do not demand intentional effort. Adora attends a large evangelical church in London that is known for its strong emphasis on Bible teaching. While the church does have a small percentage of racial minorities (primarily East Asian and West African professionals), its leadership is exclusively white. In evangelical contexts, particularly more conservative evangelical contexts like Adora’s, the phrase “preaching the word” connotes sermons that teach the reality of individual sin, the need for individual repentance and atonement, and the promise of eternal life with Jesus. In these contexts, “social justice” is often considered a “political” issue, and terms like “race” and “diversity” stir up associations with identity politics, which is the realm of secular liberals from their perspective.

In summary, the *irrelevance* frame evaluates racial diversity as irrelevant to the mission of the church. Respondents who use this frame maintain that racial diversity is not a priority for church mission, either because it is irrelevant to God, or because it is secondary to the church’s mission to “preach the word”, or because it can stir up negative dynamics in the church by highlighting a source of division. Individuals who used this frame employ the repertoire of Scripture as well as ideas common to conservative evangelical and Pentecostal subcultures. Across the four frames that I encountered, the number of people holding the *irrelevance* frame was smaller than the number holding the *essential* or *barrier* frame. As noted in the discussion of the *essential* frame, I assume that this is related to my recruitment methodology. Because I was based in London and recruited some of my participants

through the two multiracial congregations in which I undertook ethnographic work, I assume that my pool of respondents is biased towards people who hold the *instrumental* or *essential* frame. I hypothesize that if I were to conduct a nationally representative study of British evangelicals, I would find a higher proportion of people who hold the *irrelevance* frame, relative to what I found in this qualitative study.

Why does this set of evangelicals hold to this view? At the outset of the research, I had expected that I might encounter evangelicals who do not see much relevance of racial diversity to church mission, but I had assumed that the majority of them would be white British. I assumed this on the basis of prior research in the US demonstrating the prominence of color-blind racism amongst white Americans more generally (Bonilla-Silva 2006) and white evangelicals more specifically (Emerson and Smith 2001; Tranby and Hartmann 2008). Contrary to my expectations, I heard this view exclusively from second-generation immigrants. While I cannot say definitively why this is the case, one of the commonalities I observed across this set of individuals was a weak attachment to their own ethnic identity.

For example, Asha described herself as “*ethnically ambiguous*”, saying that, “*I was born here and I see myself as a kind of citizen of the world...I feel like I could identify with many and I like that and I prefer and choose to do that.*” She frames her own identity as a fluid matter of preference and choice, rather than as a category assigned to her. Having grown up in a rural white town, Asha recalls that her family was the only Indian one in their neighborhood, and that she did not feel very at home there. She says she prefers where she now lives in London, though she does not articulate this as being about race. Similarly, Nelly was raised in the only Black family in her area, where they experienced discrimination and social isolation. She remembers that her parents often emphasized to her and her siblings

that color does not matter and that it is best not to make a big deal out of race, and Nelly contends that this attitude learned from her parents should apply in the context of church as well. Adora is the daughter of wealthy West African immigrants and has grown up in cosmopolitan urban settings where she has not experienced race as a significant impediment to her professional advancement. In the case of Kweku, having spent his childhood in Bradford (a racially segregated city in the north of England) and lived through the 2001 riots (resulting from tensions between the British Asian and white British communities), he stresses that it is better to downplay race and interracial dynamics in church (and society more broadly) rather than give them direct attention. All of the respondents in this category attend churches that are racially diverse, but none of them cited racial diversity as an attribute that attracted them to the church. Rather, they said that the values of preaching the word, allowing the Holy Spirit to work, and unity in the gospel are higher ideals. Similar to evangelicals holding the *instrumental* frame, this group of respondents also share the assumption, perhaps an idealism, that racial differences can be transcended in the context of a church congregation. The members of this group also tend to be middle-class and/or upwardly mobile. As the children of immigrants raised in predominantly white settings, and having attained middle or upper middle-class status, it may be the case that members of this category prefer not to think of race as a significant determining factor in their identities and relationships.

What are the implications of the *irrelevance* frame for challenging or maintaining racial hierarchies? It is worth noting that I never heard evangelicals apply Galatians 3:28 (“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”) to gender in the same way they did to race. While churches might

reference this verse to claim that specific teaching or initiatives related to racial issues are irrelevant in church, those same churches would offer teaching on gender and programming specific to women or men. British evangelicals tend to hold essentialist views on gender. For British evangelicals, as for American evangelicals, advocating for the preservation of traditional gender roles is perceived to be a key cultural battleground and a defining feature of evangelical identity. Thus, in mainstream evangelical circles, the verse from Galatians is deployed selectively to negate race as a meaningful social category while upholding gender as a highly salient category. Framing God as color-blind legitimates adopting a color-blind approach to race in church. Churches using this frame are therefore more likely to downplay the perspectives and strengths that people bring on the basis of their experience, as well as the historical and contemporary struggles that groups experience on the basis of race. The belief that spiritual unity in Christ should transcend or erase racial distinctions resonates with Reddie's critique of evangelical Christianity — that it “has resorted to a wholesale spiritualization of the central tenets of Christianity” (2006:35) — thereby neglecting the material, social, and political dimensions of human experience.

FRAME 4: BARRIER

While some evangelicals evaluate racial diversity as *essential*, *instrumental*, or *irrelevant* to the mission of the church, a final group of evangelicals frame the cultivation of multiracial congregations as a *barrier* to the mission of the church. There are two main reasons for this. For some, the pursuit of racial diversity in church is evaluated as counterproductive for the church's mission among first-generation immigrants. For others, racial diversity is seen as potentially harmful to racial minorities, regardless of immigrant generation. For

the latter group, racial justice is a higher priority than racial reconciliation or church unity. Evangelicals holding to the *barrier* frame cited a mixture of pragmatic and normative arguments.

Barrier to mission among first-generation immigrants

One group of evangelicals argued that racially diverse congregations can be problematic for first-generation immigrants, who benefit from ethnically homogeneous church settings where they can feel at home, whilst adapting to a new country. This view resonates with much of the American literature around immigration and religion that demonstrates how, for first-generation immigrants, churches function as places of refuge, resources, and respectability that gradually facilitate integration into mainstream society (Hirschman 2004; Portes and Rumbaut 2014). Although some sociologists have highlighted that religious institutions do not always play this same integrative role in European societies (Alba 2005; Foner and Alba 2008), a number of the evangelicals I spoke to argued that homogeneous churches have an important transitional role to play for first-generation immigrants in the UK as well. This view was most often articulated by British Asians. The main theme in their comments was that, given the significant disruption that first-generation immigrants experience in their material, social, and cultural lives, there is a need for a model of church that facilitates continuity and nurtures close relationships. For example Enoch, a young British Asian who attends both a multiracial church and an Indian church, put it this way:

So, that homogeneous church is really important in the initial phases I will say because it kind of gives the same warmth and the same feeling of being home and it kind of

nurtures their faith till they are strong enough to be seated into a different one, I will say.

Having strong ties with a number of first-generation immigrants, Enoch sees the practical value in cultivating ethnically homogeneous churches to ease migrants' transition from country of origin into the UK. Naved, a British Asian pastor, shared a similar view to Enoch:

With time, that second generation will automatically tend to be in mainstream churches. But you will always have more first-generation migrants coming through. You need to have these churches so you can cater for them, and eventually their second generation will move onto the integrated [church], so I think you need to have that provision. Once you have that provision, new people coming continuously gives you that new kind of experience.

Naved communicated a pragmatic argument that when it comes to church mission, promoting racial diversity is not the strategic or appropriate approach amongst first-generation immigrants. The idea here is that pushing first-generation immigrants into racially diverse churches would be counterproductive because it would cause too much discomfort and disruption and drive people away from church.

Some respondents hold the *essential* frame more generally, while using the *barrier* frame in relation to first-generation immigrants. For example Abigail, the white British vicar at Westside, is a strong advocate of the *essential* frame, locating racial diversity as a core part of the mission of the church. However, like Enoch and Naved she sees a legitimate place for homogeneous (whether in terms of language or culture or race) worship spaces for first-generation immigrants. Abigail commented: *"I think it's important because it's about our*

identity. This is my identity and I don't want to say to anyone 'you cannot worship in your own language or your own culture'. This is about who you are and I want to honor that." Beyond providing a space of cultural continuity and social stability, Abigail asserts that homogeneous churches play an important role in affirming the value of minority identity and culture. Insisting that first-generation immigrants worship in racially diverse churches can undermine their identity and devalue their culture. Abigail was the only white British evangelical I spoke with who articulated this view.

Of the evangelicals who emphasized the value of homogeneous church settings for first-generation immigrants, all of them said that it is better for second-generation immigrants to transition out of homogeneous churches and into multiracial settings. This assumption is evident in Enoch's comment above that once people are "*strong enough*" they will move to a multiracial church and in Naved's statement that "*the second generation will automatically tend to be in mainstream churches*". This language conveys an assumption that a certain level of cultural "maturity" or cultural integration is required for people to participate in multiracial churches.

Barrier to meaningful inclusion and racial justice

Other evangelicals argued that intentional cultivation of multiracial congregations is a *barrier* for church mission not only among first-generation immigrants, but among Christians of lower maturity levels. This view was expressed primarily by people of Caribbean heritage, who said that multiracial churches are an unrealistic aim and can be damaging to minority individuals. Alan, a Black Caribbean pastor who has been involved in racial justice movements, observed:

You can force diversity, but then if someone doesn't know your culture or understand the nuances of your culture, you can actually say something or gesticulate in a way and people can be offended....And I think trying to marry cultures without being culturally literate creates some problems....So in terms of racial diversity, I think once people are Christians of course they can coalesce and come together, but to actually reach or be relevant or be effective, I think it's easier to reach more people like you.

Alan argues that when racial diversity is prematurely forced, the result can be that people offend each other and therefore jeopardize relationships and spiritual growth. It is only after Christians have reached a certain level of maturity that they are able to and should be encouraged to participate in a more racially diverse spiritual community. Before that stage, people of similar backgrounds are more likely to be effective in communicating and helping fellow Christians grow in faith. His comment that *"it's easier to reach more people like you"* resonates with the Homogeneous Unit Principle (HUP) popularized by Donald McGavran (1970). McGavran's basic idea is that churches that target homogeneous groups are more effective at contextualizing the Christian message for that group and are more likely to grow faster. Alan's arguments are pragmatic, emerging from his own experience in the church and his knowledge of the ongoing impacts of racism on the integration trajectory of Black British people in mainstream institutions, including the church.

Black Christians, compared to the British Asian and white British Christians I spoke with, were more likely to cite wider sociological and popular literature about race in framing their ideas about racial diversity in the church. For example Margaret, who has been involved in racial justice issues for a number of years, foregrounded texts like *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* in her interview. Margaret described the church as a

microcosm of society, not immune to the ills of the wider society and the recent resurgence of “*racism, ethno-centrism, western-centrism*”. Like Alan, Margaret states that racial diversity should not be “*forced*” and that homogeneous churches are valuable spaces for racial minorities to worship in a safe and supportive environment, given historic and ongoing realities of racism. Unlike Alan, Margaret did not reference the idea of Christians transitioning into multiracial churches after achieving a certain level of maturity, but maintained that there is an ongoing positive role for racially homogeneous church spaces. This view resonates with the literature on African-American churches in the US, which have functioned as safe havens as well as sites of political mobilization for Black Christians (Sernett 1997; Cone 2011). It also aligns with Reddie’s commentary in the British context that “Black folk in the African Diaspora might not have survived up to this point had it not been for their God-inspired genius for creating safe ecclesial spaces in which they could seek refuge from the ravages of racism and white supremacy” (2006:47).

Building on the ideas above, other Black evangelicals I spoke with framed the pursuit of racial diversity as a *barrier* to church mission because it is superficial and does not take seriously deep-seated injustices. In other words, the pursuit of racial diversity in church can actually be harmful when it masks inequalities and only serves the interests of the majority group. Justifications for this frame drew on personal experience and analysis of the power dynamics within British evangelical institutions. For example, Jeff, a pastor of a Black-majority church, said to me: “*Black people in reformed [evangelical] circles are just guests at the table. And we’re often there to fulfill a broader vision of the majority culture. We’re just guests.*” When I asked Jeff why he thought majority culture churches have a vision for racial diversity, he responded, “*They just want a black face really. They want to look*

multicultural. It's easy to have diversity. But if you want to reach our contexts and our people, learn about us!" Jeff, whose interview referenced Malcolm X and Chancellor Williams, argues that racial diversity is not valuable in itself, as a superficial commodity that mainstream churches seek to make themselves more attractive in a cosmopolitan city like London (i.e. those holding the *instrumental* frame). Rather, church mission needs to take seriously the contexts and needs of particular places and racial groups and cultures in order to be meaningful and effective. It is for this reason that Jeff, while connected to mainstream evangelical institutions, has made the decision to plant a church that caters specifically to Black British people and is entirely Black British in its leadership.

While evangelicals holding the *essential* frame appeal to biblical themes of diversity and unity, evangelicals holding the *barrier* frame appeal to biblical themes of justice. They point to the Old Testament prophets, who rail against the oppression of the poor and marginalized and called the people of Israel to pursue justice. Charles, a middle-aged Black British man, argued that white-majority churches should not too quickly seek to become racially diverse without reckoning with issues of racial justice within church and within wider society. He observed that minority leaders and congregants in churches still often feel like second-class citizens and that there can be "*no integration without justice*" in church. In other words, it is damaging to require racial minorities to jump to the stage of integration and reconciliation in church without first dealing with historical and current injustices. Charles also commented that "*theology does not go deep enough*" in the UK context, explaining that liberation theology does not have a significant presence in the UK and that the church is therefore inadequately equipped to deal with structural injustices. Like Jeff, Charles expressed suspicion towards the motives of white-led evangelical churches or or-

ganizations promoting racial or ethnic diversity. In reference to the Evangelical Alliance One People Commission, Charles questioned whether the EA is using minorities to further its purposes (e.g. boosting membership and funding, or acquiring a “*diversity badge*”). While in their interviews Jeff and Charles both noted that there is a biblical mandate for racial diversity, their personal experience of church dynamics in the UK had led them to the conclusion that promoting racial diversity can cause more harm than good. Some of the specific practices they identified as problematic will be explored in greater depth in the next chapter. While their arguments supporting a *barrier* frame are largely pragmatic, they also reflect an ideal of justice that is held more strongly than the ideal of diversity.

It is worth noting that critiques of churches that pursue racial diversity in a superficial way were leveled against Black-majority churches as well as white-majority churches. Joseph, a Black pastor of a multiracial church, was talking with me about Black pastors who are deliberately seeking to attract white people to their churches. Rhetorically addressing these pastors, Joseph asked, “*Why do you want white people in your church? Is it for status? To get noticed for being multicultural? Or actually a sign of internalized racism?*” The critique of superficial diversity in a Black-led church is of course distinct from that of a white-led church. For Black-led churches, the critique is that a push for diversity is motivated by an internalized racism that assigns higher status to churches with white congregants. For white-led churches, the critique is that a push for diversity is a status marker in cosmopolitan settings where diversity is a liberal middle-class ideal. In both cases, racial identity is being commodified in a way that reifies racial boundaries.

In summary, the evangelicals I spoke with who frame the pursuit of racial diversity in church as a *barrier* to mission have a number of justifications for this frame. For some

(mostly British Asian respondents), racial diversity is framed as a *barrier* primarily in relation to engaging first-generation immigrants. For others, racial diversity is framed as a *barrier* because it is unrealistic to expect people to worship in a multiracial congregation unless they have achieved a certain level of spiritual maturity. For others (mostly Black British respondents), the pursuit of racial diversity is framed as a *barrier* because it does not deal with the realities of racism and inequality and only benefits the majority group, thereby doing damage to the life and witness of the church.

In contrast to the evangelicals using the *irrelevant* frame, evangelicals using the *barrier* frame consider race to be a meaningful social category that has implications for the way people are treated and experience social institutions including the church. While individuals in the former category expressed weak attachment to their own ethnic identities, the individuals in the latter category expressed strong ties to the minority cultural and racial groups with which they identify. All of the Black British and Asian British people whose views are quoted above shared stories of experiencing discrimination on the basis of their race, including in church contexts. The individuals in this group also had a higher level of exposure to and/or participation in racial justice initiatives in their youth or adult lives, making matters of race and racism more salient to them. Of the 23 white British people I interviewed, only one sympathized with the *barrier* frame. As mentioned above, this was Abigail, who is personally deeply committed to racial diversity in church but recognizes that for first-generation immigrants, racially diverse churches pose obstacles to worship and integration. In terms of the toolkits individuals draw upon to articulate this frame, the Bible does feature, but is used differently than it is by those in the *irrelevance* category. Rather than appealing to biblical calls to “unity” (favored by evangelicals who have a more

cosmopolitan identity), the evangelicals in this group appeal to biblical calls for “justice” and care for the marginalized. Appeals to biblical ideals of justice are integrated with insights from personal experience and social justice toolkits in generating this frame.

What are the implications of this frame for challenging or maintaining racial hierarchies? Similar to their brethren who hold the *essential* frame, evangelicals in this category recognize race as a meaningful social category that has implications for people’s lives. Their greater attention to themes of justice within the biblical repertoire motivates and equips them to recognize inequality as it overlaps with race and to take action to address injustice. Maintaining this frame therefore places evangelicals in a better position to challenge racial hierarchies. However, evangelicals face a challenge in holding this frame while simultaneously worshipping in multiracial congregations, where racial inequalities are likely to be present but spiritualized by leaders who embody the *essential*, *instrumental*, or *irrelevant* frames.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored the variety of ways that my respondents evaluate the relationship between racial diversity and the mission of the church. The evangelicals I spoke with framed this in four main ways: as *essential*, *instrumental*, *irrelevant*, or a *barrier* to the mission of the church. While all of the people I spoke with give weight to the Bible, there is variation between people in the particular narratives, images, and themes that deploy. The source material for their framing also extends beyond the Bible to scripts common to conservative evangelical and Pentecostal subculture, institutional growth strategies, progressive discourse around racial justice, and personal experience. Which tools people deploy

depends on what scripts are salient within their own congregations and the nature of interaction they have had with people racially distinct from themselves in other spheres of life.

I observed some variation in framing along the lines of racial self-identification. Among the white British people I interviewed, the majority ascribed to the *essential* frame, while smaller numbers ascribed to the *instrumental* or *irrelevant* frame. There was only one person out of twenty-three who could identify any reasons why multiracial churches could pose difficulties or why homogeneous churches might have value in some cases. White participants in general were quicker to dismiss homogeneous churches as unbiblical. The British Asians I spoke with were spread across the four frames, and were the most likely to make the argument for homogeneous churches in the case of first-generation immigrants. Participants of Caribbean origin expressed significantly more polarized views, compared to white or Asian participants. They were some of the strongest advocates of racial diversity in church and some of its strongest critics. The strong critique of racial diversity was rooted in a greater awareness of the history of colonialism and slavery, the complicit support of the Church of England in those systems of oppression, and experiences of racial exclusion and marginalization continuing beyond the colonial era. On the other hand, the strong critique of racially homogeneous churches was often linked to the view that Black-majority churches are also limiting the spiritual growth of their members and cultivating an environment that excludes people from other backgrounds.

Strength of attachment to one's own ethnic identity appeared to play a role in shaping what frames people used. Evangelicals holding the *irrelevant* and *instrumental* frames tended to express weaker attachment to their ethnic identities, while those holding the

essential and *barrier* frames tended to express greater attachment to or consciousness of their ethnic identities. White British people who had grown up in racially and culturally diverse neighborhoods or schools tended to be more aware of their whiteness, ideologically committed to worshipping in a diverse church, and therefore under the authority of church leaders who reinforce the *essential* frame in their teaching. By contrast, white British people who had been socialized in more homogeneous white spaces were more likely to hold the *irrelevant* or *instrumental* frames.

While this chapter has explored the ways that evangelicals *frame* racial diversity in church, the next chapter will shift from discourse to practice, examining the *barriers* to the development of multiracial evangelical congregations in the UK. I will draw both on interview and ethnographic data, as well as secondary and historical sources. While framing of church mission and vision is one key element of churches becoming multiracial (Becker 1998; Emerson and Woo 2006), institutional histories and organizational practices advance or constrain the degree to which that vision becomes a reality.

2

Inhibiting Racial Diversity: Barriers

In the previous chapter I explored how evangelicals think about racial diversity as it relates to the mission of the church. I examined the four primary ways in which evangelicals frame racial diversity, and the cultural repertoires that evangelicals use to articulate those frames. The majority of the evangelicals I spoke with maintained that racial diversity is *essential* to the mission of the church, and my fieldwork revealed wider institutional interest in this

frame in the form of conferences, books, and sermons on the topic. One might expect that compared to their American brethren, the British church has an advantage in building multiracial congregations, since levels of residential segregation are much lower in England and the Church of England operates on the parish system. Yet only a small fraction of congregations are racially diverse (Brierley 2019). And within those racially diverse congregations, the integration of minority leadership and minority cultural practices is limited (Lindsay 2019). Despite having cultural logics and institutional structures in place that could facilitate multiracial congregations, the vision for multiracial churches has had limited success on the ground. As Anthony Reddie has observed: “The rhetoric of being ‘one in Christ’ has often proved more illusionary than actual” (2006:13). This chapter explores some of the structural, cultural, and historical reasons behind this disconnect between vision and reality. These include a lack of education about race, barriers to the recruitment of minority leadership, lingering impacts of colonialism, and intersections with class. These factors contribute to serious gaps in knowledge, disparities in power, feelings of alienation, and a disembodied religiosity that marginalizes the experiences and cultural contributions of people of color.

LACK OF EDUCATION ABOUT RACE

“I think we don’t know how to talk about race, anyway,” said Amanda, referring to herself and fellow white people. Amanda is a member of Eastside and espouses the *essential* frame of racial diversity, yet admits that she is ill-equipped to have conversations about race. Paul, an older white vicar, reflected in his interview:

If you actually look at what happened in the slave trade, it's so atrocious, you know, but also so profitable for this country. And that's a staple of history, in a sense, which most white people haven't taken on. And I think that's a major distortion in our understanding of race.

The evangelical subcultural toolkit is not used in a vacuum. How evangelicals deploy the contents of their toolkit is shaped by the larger institutional and cultural contexts in which they are formed. One of the factors that limits British evangelicals from drawing upon their cultural repertoires in ways that could erode racial boundaries is being ill-equipped to talk about race. The nature of the British school curriculum is one of the structural drivers of this gap. The British Empire and the transatlantic slave trade were not made mandatory topics in British secondary school curriculum until 2008¹, and even after that date the coverage of the material has varied between schools. This helps to explain why, out of all the people I interviewed, only a handful could remember learning anything about race, slavery, or colonialism in school. Of those who did remember learning something about these topics, most remembered them being addressed briefly, or slavery presented as more relevant to America and less to Britain. *"I don't think we learned anything much [about the British empire]. I don't remember learning anything much at all, but what I did learn was probably from TV dramas where it was all glorified."* This was the recollection of Harriet, a white woman, whose response was typical of people I interviewed over the age of 40. Harriet's memory of the empire being taught in a glorifying way is consistent with recent polling data. According to a 2014 YouGov poll of the British public, 59% of respondents agreed

¹<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7582004.stm>. Accessed July 20 2020.

that the British Empire is something to be proud of, and 49% agreed that countries colonized by Britain are better off for being colonized.²

Compared to older respondents, people I interviewed in their 20s and 30s reported learning a bit more about colonialism and Black History, but the level of education (or at least the salience of that education) for these respondents was low. For example Katie, a young white British professional who attended both state and private schools in the 1990s and early 2000s recalls:

Well I think you learn maybe like some history about the slaves and maybe a sense of, like I think you learn a lot about the empire and history and maybe like that we went out to different places and did some things out there...but I can't remember exactly what really...and I think it's the sense of 'we [the British] are the better culture, the superior culture'...obviously we had a lot of success and stuff.

Katie's recollection was typical of the responses I heard from people in their 20s and 30s. The low salience of education around race and empire was reported not only by white respondents but by Black and Asian respondents as well. For example Sarah, a second-generation Black British woman who grew up in London in the 1990s, recalls mainly learning about King Henry VIII in history class but that *"we did learn about like, colonialism, British Empire and how we conquered certain countries, but I don't remember the countries. We did that in one lesson. It wasn't like an in-depth study."* Deborah, the daughter of Ghanaian immigrants, remembers:

²<https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2014/07/26/britain-proud-its-empire>. Accessed July 20 2020.

History was about the World War, and so there was no like African studies or anything like that. And I guess, yeah, I don't remember any of that really. I think it was more conversations we had with like my friends and they wanted to know why like the palm of my hand is lighter than the back of my hand, stuff like that.

For Deborah, the only educational moments about race that she can recall from her childhood were informal conversations with fellow students rather than any formal instruction.

While I have not independently verified the secondary school curriculum of each person I interviewed, it is noteworthy that for the vast majority of the people I spoke with (regardless of age or racial identification), history related to racial formation and racial inequality was not salient to them. In reflecting on why this might be the case, George, a young British Asian, suggested:

I think racism is always an issue in society, but it's not explicit, like I guess especially that Britain didn't have like a whole reckoning moment like the US did, like the civil rights movement. That was this huge kind of flashpoint, like watershed moment in US history. But British people are just generally like, 'Oh we were always fine with it.' They're like, 'Oh we've had Caribbean people here from the '30s, so it's fine, right.'

In George's analysis, the fact that Britain did not go through a civil rights movement means that there is a common assumption in the British public that Britain is “fine” with race, that Britain is a tolerant and inclusive society. As a result, there is less explicit acknowledgement of or discussion of racism and racial inequality in British society or in the British church compared to in the United States. George's lay analysis is consistent with the literature on education around race in Britain. Lentin (2014) observes that when race is taught

in school history courses (if at all), it is typically linked almost exclusively to the horrors of Nazi Germany or slavery in America, and thereby treated as a problem of other countries in the past. Lentin also argues that because the public and academic language around race has shifted towards “multiculturalism” and “integration”, the realities of racial inequality are increasingly obscured. Consequently, “race occupies a more concealed and submerged vantage point within the body politic of this nation” (Reddie 2006:29) compared to the US. This means that regardless of the biblical beliefs, metaphors, and narratives about racial diversity that evangelicals have acquired in church settings, evangelicals have limited tools to contextualize or historicize their spiritualized understandings of race.

For other people I spoke to who had received some education about race in school, they reported this being a negative experience. For Charlotte, a young white British woman educated in a more diverse government-funded urban school, education about race was more salient than for the other white British people I interviewed. Charlotte remembers her school celebrating Black History Month every year, and in her case recalls feeling negatively towards this part of the curriculum:

Every year there's Black History Month. I think that was also the thing I struggled — looking back, I feel really — I feel really awkward saying this, but...why are we celebrating them because they're Black? They're just like me. I think that was another issue I had like there was this 'we have to celebrate ourselves because we're Black or because we're Muslim'. Why do we have to celebrate skin color? It's nothing. Obviously as a white person, I think you have to be sensitive saying stuff like that, but yeah, that was I think another thing I struggled with. We'd always celebrate stuff like Ramadan and Indian festivals, and it was like I don't feel celebrated because it's an English country, Christian

country, yet, I feel like I'm being pushed out of the way to celebrate other cultures, which are welcome, but like where is the room for celebrating Christ?

Rather than reporting that education about minority groups was useful to developing her understanding and empathy, here Charlotte is expressing the feeling that attention to minority histories detracted from her school experience and triggered resentment in her. It is worth noting that in a comment about Black History Month, Charlotte goes on to mention Islam and Indian culture. This suggests that conceptually, Charlotte places racial, religious, and cultural minorities into a similar category, all of whom sit outside the boundaries of England as a white Christian nation. Despite growing up in a racially diverse urban area and having at least a bit more education about minority histories and experiences relative to her peers, Charlotte expresses the view that racial diversity is costly, particularly to her as a white Christian person.

In some cases, people of color reported not wanting to engage with history as it was presented in school. Nelly, a Black British woman who went to school in Southeast England in the 1970s and 1980s, said:

A: I hated history because of slavery and stuff. History was one of my worst subjects. I just wasn't interested. I didn't want to be a part of it. I didn't want to participate.

Q: Why was that?

A: The horror stories that you heard. I just didn't want to engage, so I'd rather not go to a history class, because I didn't want to hear it if that makes sense.

For Nelly, the discomfort she experienced learning about the history of slavery as a child has contributed to a present preference for not talking about race. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Nelly articulates an *irrelevance* frame when speaking about racial diversity in

church. Her negative experience learning about race in school as a child may have been a factor in shaping her position that it is better not to talk about race at all in church. Thus, for the evangelicals I interviewed, the education about race that they remember receiving in school was either inadequate to equip them to talk about race, or negative, discouraging them from engaging in conversation about race.

The lack of attention to issues of race in school curriculum extends to the curriculum of Christian ministry training. Of the people I interviewed who had undergone some tertiary education related to ministry preparation, they all remarked that the training does not equip students to understand or engage the increasingly racially and culturally diverse contexts in which they are then expected to work. Reflecting on his secondary and tertiary school education, Henry said:

In terms of Black History often it's limited to slavery and stuff going on in America. And when it comes to church history, even at Bible College there's very little. So we had early church, Reformation history, and those were the main focal points. And then missionary activity in the 1800s.

Henry went on to explain that the lack of attention to race in ministry training means that students finish their training having studied under white professors, read white authors, acquired a Western-centric theological perspective, and having gained very few conceptual or practical tools to facilitate racial integration in their own ministry settings. Henry's assessment of his own experience resonates with the analysis of Willie Jennings (2010), who argues that a truncated theological and historical education in seminaries has produced a "diseased social imagination" in the Western church that prevents it from pursuing racial

reconciliation in any meaningful or effective way. His critique also aligns with the observations of evangelical leader Oliver Barclay, who writes that in the UK, “theology has become divorced from both ministry and spiritual life” (1997:129). The fact that mainstream evangelical ministry training institutions also have limited racial diversity in the student body means that students do not even have an opportunity to learn informally from fellow students. Maya, who is third-generation British Caribbean and was one of a handful of racial minorities in her ministry training cohort, says she is concerned that the people she sees training for evangelical ministry don’t know anyone outside of their own demographic and therefore have neither the desire nor the opportunity to learn: *“Everyone’s excited about church planting and reaching out to people. But you don’t really know anybody that’s not you!”* While ministry training may equip people with the abstract idea that racial diversity is a biblical ideal or good for church growth in the city, the content and environment of the training offers little concrete support for confronting racial diversity and inequality.

In addition to the lack of teaching on race in school and in ministry training contexts, the majority of people I spoke with said they could not remember issues of race or racism ever coming up in a sermon or official church teaching, with the exception of Westside and Eastside attendees. Some commented that conversations about race issues occasionally surface in informal settings with friends from church, but not in formal church environments. The lack of attention to race in church teaching may be linked to the perception among evangelical leadership that race is a “political” issue and therefore does not belong in the pulpit. Even Michael, a vicar deeply committed to racial integration in church, said to me, *“In a church setting, I have to admit I’ve not done a lot of — I guess I’ve not really seen my role as one of educating people about their history. I’ve kind of tried to keep it about the Bible.”*

This was a noteworthy comment because evangelical sermons tend to include an exposition of a passage from the Bible, followed by an application of the key messages from that passage to contemporary issues and matters of personal relevance. Areas of application often include family and social relationships, attitude to work and career, use of personal time and talents, and occasionally political issues such as religious freedom. Thus, perceiving race and the history of race to be irrelevant to sermons suggests that these issues are treated as less important to congregations and individuals compared to other social issues.

When church leaders have a lack of understanding or a lack of engagement with race, this can lead to dismissive attitudes towards racial inequalities among leaders and congregation members. Alan, a pastor of Caribbean heritage, commented:

I mean a lot of the church sort of works on the premise which — David Cameron, he went to Jamaica and offered them 25 million pounds to build a prison, and when they asked about slavery reparations, he said, ‘Oh, slavery was nearly 200 years ago, move on, move on.’ However, I don’t think the people who David Cameron was talking to, the majority of them knew that his family, David Cameron’s family benefited from slavery. So they can move on because they’ve had financial rewards and benefits, but the slaves can’t because they’re still picking up the pieces because they never got a penny...So the general church, the general church person, they’re more concerned about saving their souls and the attendance at church rather than the social justice issues because when you start talking about social justice, you’re ruffling feathers and when you ruffle feathers you become a target.

Here Alan asserts that many white British Christians share the “*move on*” attitude of David Cameron in relationship to slavery and racial inequality. He also observes that white churches

tend to be individualistic in focus — more concerned about saving individual souls and less about social justice. This is consistent with Emerson and Smith's (2001) assessment of white evangelical theology as highly individualistic, which contributes to a difficulty in understanding collective or structural dimensions of racism.

Even evangelical organizations and institutions that have ostensibly been established to address issues of racial division may be doing so without substantive engagement with the historical roots of those divisions. Commenting on the work of the One People Commission, Paul remarked that they ought to be *"asking hard questions...instead of just saying 'we're all one in Christ'"*. From Paul's perspective, having worked in multiracial churches for forty years, the OPC's promotion of racial diversity is superficial because it doesn't deal with some of the more difficult and contentious issues around history, power, and cultural conflicts. Paul is uncertain about whether the OPC is not aware of these issues or has made a decision not to explicitly explore them. His concerns resonate with others who articulated a *barrier* frame, perceiving a superficial approach to diversity as ineffective and potentially damaging.

Given the lack of attention to race both in school and in church, most British evangelicals are poorly equipped in their understandings of race, inequality, and segregation. Talking about the attitudes of mainstream churches to race, Henry said:

So I think there's just a complete lack of awareness, and I think it's very much — 'We didn't have slaves here or we didn't have many of them, therefore racism isn't a problem here', without realizing that the mindset that allowed people in the UK, including Christians, to trade slaves, the passage of time hasn't erased that. And so there is a racism that's been supported by anecdote and pseudo-science and theology and the hard

work hasn't been done to unpick that and undo that. Yet people end up having not just prejudice but being able to enforce that prejudice in oppressive ways and it's just built into the fabric of society and it's a shame that Christians don't realize that and churches are therefore, because we don't realize it, churches are guilty of doing the same thing, perpetuating the same things. Sometimes in really overt ways and other times in subtle ways because of its members.

Henry argues that the existence of white supremacy in the British church is difficult to tackle because it goes largely unacknowledged — it is simply *“built into the fabric of society”* and taken for granted (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Omi and Winant 2015). One of the implications of this general ignorance is the persistence of a color-blind ideology in some evangelical churches, expressed by white people and people of color alike. For example Chloe said, *“as we are transformed to be more like Christ, it's embracing who Jesus sees you. Jesus doesn't see color, he sees a heart, he doesn't see different skin types - he loves us all.”* This kind of thinking reinforces the *irrelevance* frame discussed in the previous chapter. Even for those evangelicals who hold to the *essential* frame, if they do not understand the dynamics of racism, they will struggle to take action to advance integration and equality in their own congregation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, evangelicals espousing the *essential* frame tend to see race as a God-ordained distinction that positively reflects God's own complex and diverse nature. However, without any grounding in the historical development of racial categories or the inequalities created by colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, this group of evangelicals does not recognize the social and material realities of race and continues to treat it as a spiritualized aspect of identity.

GAPS IN LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND REPRESENTATION

The ways in which evangelical leaders are identified, trained, mentored, and treated largely function to reinforce racial hierarchies and harden racial boundaries in the evangelical church, and particularly in the evangelical Anglican church. The proportion of ethnic minorities in mainstream church leadership is far below the proportion of minorities in church. This disparity is most extreme in inner London, where 62% of churchgoers were people of color in 2012 (Brierley 2019), but only 5% of clergy were people of color across the Anglican Diocese. Of senior church leaders who are minorities, a significant proportion are first-generation immigrants of more privileged backgrounds, and so are not fully representative of native-born minorities in the UK. While BAME individuals are better represented in management roles in the spheres of hospitality, banking, and the public sector in the UK, they remain poorly represented in management and leadership roles in the church. Individual churches like Westside are prioritizing diversifying their leadership and making some progress, but the gaps across the wider church remain substantial. As the sociological literature has demonstrated in multiple spheres of employment, recruitment tends to operate within the confines of social networks (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). This is true for the evangelical church in Britain as well. Arnold, a Black British member of a large evangelical church, reflected on why this might be the case:

I think churches, like most institutions, are established in a particular way after a particular mindset. Someone thinks 'this is the way to do that'. And the person who thinks that and leads that tends to recruit after their own kind or at least own mind so that they can maintain that passion that they started with. So I don't think they are necessar-

ily trying to exclude others. It's 'this is the vision, and this vision has been informed by the kind of place I grew up, the kind of literature I read, the kind of music I listened to'. So you will tend to recruit people who reflect that.

Ben Lindsay, church leader and author of *We Need to Talk about Race: Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority Churches* (2019) put it more strongly: “There is a blatant bias towards white leadership” (p. 101). The leadership of Eastside recognizes this dynamic within their own church structures. While the Eastside leadership say they would like to have more diverse ethnic representation within their team, after six years of running they have not yet been able to recruit any non-white staff to their senior team. The vicar Simon reflected:

We struggle with that [recruitment of people of color]. And therefore, that has caused us to reflect and think we need to start changing the networks we work with, so there is trust... We originally just thought probably if we advertise that the Lord will send us the right people, and of course, it hasn't really happened.

One of the factors contributing to the difficulty in recruiting racial minorities to positions of leadership within the evangelical church is a lack of mentors and role models of color. The lack of role models of color then perpetuates the idea that church leadership — particularly in evangelical Anglicanism — is a white person's job. Michael commented on how this linkage between leadership and whiteness is rooted in social networks of privilege:

And this whole thing of privilege, of assuming that this is for you or assuming it's not for you. And then there's inevitably a sort of — I was going to say 'old boy's network' — it's

not as insidious as that sounds, but it's more like, 'Oh, I know somebody, and they know somebody, and they're a good chap.'

Even when minorities do gain leadership positions in the church, it can be difficult to access mentors who have influence in evangelical training institutions and church planting networks and evangelical conferences and other leadership pathways. The people who hold power and influence in mainstream evangelical institutions often occupy homogeneous white middle-class networks, and mentoring relationships tend to form within those networks.

Compounding the problem of network-based recruitment and the lack of role models for people of color in mainstream evangelical churches is the structure and culture of ministry training. One of the most common themes to surface in the interviews was the fact that the current ministry training pathways and structures within British evangelicalism are not designed to meaningfully include racial minorities. Jill, of Caribbean heritage, shared about her experience when she was considering the first stages of ordination in the church:

The more I look at the whole ordination process, the more I just think it's not designed for me. I struggled — I found the course really difficult, because I was the only Black person in the course. How does that happen in the 21st century? I don't understand why Black people are not going in but the course was very — it was a quite difficult course. It was quite dry. It was quite rigorously academic. I think that I wasn't comfortable doing it. It wasn't that I wasn't able to do it. But it wasn't a kind of nurturing course, because actually pastorally that's what you're about. Actually what it was was grounding you theologically, which is cool if that was something I felt I needed, but...

Jill's reflection resonates with many of the experiences I heard from evangelicals of color who had pursued training within mainstream institutions, particularly Anglican institutions. Describing the experiences of other people of color she knows that did the same course, Jill said:

They found that people in the hierarchy were not aware, not culturally aware, and so it makes it difficult, because you're kind of quite nurtured and loved in the church, so when you go to these kind of places and you think 'I just want to run away from them, so I'm not prepared to play.' I remember the bishop saying, 'It does feel like, you know, when you guys are square pegs and we're kind of forcing you into round holes.' So there were Black people that were going through ordination were struggling, they were really struggling. The bishop was saying, 'I can see that, but I can't see any way out of it.' If the bishop can't see any way out of it, then why are you encouraging people to just go and have their square pegs rammed in and come out battered and bruised?

Jill and others described mainstream ministry training courses as dry and academic, lacking in pastoral nurture, highly individualistic, and inattentive to minority concerns. When I asked Jill what she thought would need to change about ministry training, she said:

If you go to an educational institution and not one person is Black that teaches you anything, or is like you, that's quite an uncomfortable place. Actually, where's the acknowledgement of the diversity in your congregation if your leadership is not diverse? You have to be teaching and not diverse if the curriculum is not diverse. You're basically saying, 'we're not going to really change for you. We're not going to make you feel welcome or part of it. You just have to fit into our mold, and if you don't, then, eh, nevermind, it wasn't for you.'

Jill expresses frustration that, while Britain and its neighborhoods are becoming more diverse and some senior people like the bishop recognize that the existing ministry training is not fit for purpose, there appears to be a lack of willingness to put in the effort to update the training to be more inclusive. Other concerns about theological education include the absence of voices of color, the uncritical portrayal of European missionaries in church history, and the lack of thoughtful engagement with social justice issues. As Henry said:

It's important that we should be talking about how we work together to dismantle the legacy of white supremacy, racism and colonialism within the church, especially within Reformed [evangelical] circles so we can truly listen and learn from one another and be reformed by the word of God. This affects everything: teaching, church history, evangelism, discipleship, pastoral care, social action, exegesis...

Another barrier to racial integration in church leadership is that, in some minority communities, church leadership is not seen as an economically viable or socially desirable position to hold. Rehan, a British Asian young professional, suggested:

I think because the ethnic minority think that jobs like finance and so on and so forth are more important to do because that's their cultural thing... Yeah, it goes back to money, unfortunately, that 'I'm not gonna go down that route. I'll go to that church but I'll do this as a full-time job,' where I think white middle-class are not hung up on that fact, that God's time is now and people need to be saved, whereas the ethnic — I'm specifically talking about the Asian mentality more than any other ethnic, cause I don't know what's holding back Black people from taking up leadership. But yeah, I can only speak from the Asian side of things. That's a massive hang-up, unfortunately. And also they

seem to think it's for the generation above them, like my generation wouldn't think, from an Asian mentality specifically, to take up ministry because they're like 'that's your dad's kind of age group to do. And if that kind of disappears then someone else will take it up, not me. Let somebody else take it up' kind of thing and not to take any responsibility.

Rehan suggests that particularly for the children of first-generation immigrants, a job on the staff of a church is not seen as providing adequate economic stability. He also suggests that within Asian culture, a posture of deference to elders may also limit the possibility of younger generations taking steps towards church leadership. British Asian representation in evangelical leadership is quite low.

In the Westside community, which has a significant British Asian presence, deference to elders as well as deference to white leaders appears to slow down the process by which British Asian individuals put themselves forward for leadership. Abigail says that she struggles to shake the perception that she, as a white person, is the “host” in Westside parish. Even though she moved to the neighborhood as an adult and personally feels like a “guest” in relation to her British Asian congregants, because she is white she is seen as the host and therefore as the person expected to exercise the most power. There were a number of cases in which church leaders had identified and encouraged people from minority backgrounds to step into leadership roles — whether that be preaching or service leading or ordination — but for various reasons those individuals were not able to take up the position. Michael reflected on this:

So often people from minority communities are struggling with all sorts of things in their lives that those from more privileged backgrounds [aren't], and this is where it

get complicated in terms of economics, social class, culture, and race, that these things all mix up. And people's lives are often that much more complicated and pressured and busy so that they just don't have the capacity...And that's just a real challenge, because then you get people who have been nurtured and encouraged to grow into leadership, and yet because their accent is strong, because the structure of their preaching isn't so easy to listen to because they might tend to ramble a bit, then you get complaints. And the complaints aren't just from the white people, they're from all the different communities.

A combination of deference to white leadership, perception of ministry as economically inadequate, and experience of prejudice within the congregation can hinder the recruitment and development of minority leaders within a multiracial church.

When people of color are recruited to positions of church leadership, there is a risk of tokenism rather than meaningful integration. Previous research has revealed that it is common for a multiracial church to have racial minorities in leadership whilst maintaining a division of labor in which white people occupy the higher status positions (Emerson and Woo 2006; Lindsay 2019). Having a Black person leading the singing on the worship team, for example, does not mean that the church has become racially integrated. Henry reflected that when Black evangelicals are asked to speak in white spaces, what sometimes happens is that the speaker is not trusted to know his or her audience, and that the church issuing the invitation is “*wanting his color but not wanting his personality or his uniqueness*”. By this Henry meant that when a Black person is invited, there is a desire to have his or her skin tone as a visible marker of diversity in the church, but the particular perspective or experience or voice of that person is less desired. One Black evangelical pastor I interviewed reported that when he was invited to speak at an event hosted by a white-majority church,

he was asked to “*please don’t use street language*”. Reflecting on her experience as a trainee minister as a Black woman in the 1990s, Angela said:

But the sense that I experienced as a BME person — ‘We quite like one of those, but we don’t really want you sort of too involved....So yes, we got a lovely Black, person of color here in our parish, she can connect with others, other people of color.’ But I didn’t feel I had the same freedoms and enjoyment to flourish.

The treatment Angela describes reflects an *instrumental* approach to racial diversity in church. Like other people of color recruited to ministry positions, Angela felt that her church leadership expected her to minister to other people of color but not to take on greater responsibility within the wider church. Angela felt that she was trusted to lead minorities within the church but not trusted to lead white people.

This idea of not being fully trusted or taken seriously surfaced numerous times in interviews with evangelicals of color. Monica said, “*Sometimes you feel in some of these organizations are engaging people just for the sake of it rather than doing it because they trust in the individual as well, because people have the same skills.*” Monica, a Black British woman who has held senior financial positions within church structures, commented that in her experience:

People will trivialize what you do. So for example, you tell them that I’m a finance manager, finance director, or finance whatever. ‘Oh, yeah, you count the coins.’...I find that middle-aged Englishmen, they won’t have a normal, professional conversation with you. But what they’ll do, they’ll move onto silly questions like ‘Where are you from?’ What they mean is ‘Where in the world are you from?’ Not ‘where in London.’

Monica, who has attained a higher leadership position, continues to face prejudice within her role in mainstream church contexts. She has had a number of experiences in which white people have assumed that she has been recruited to fulfill a diversity aim and have therefore treated her in a tokenistic way.

Thus, there are significant barriers to racial minority integration into mainstream evangelical church leadership because of challenges in recruitment, training, and mentorship, as well as tokenistic and prejudicial treatment. Addressing these challenges requires the willingness to tackle structural challenges in curriculum, faculty, and recruitment and retention practices. Some interlocutors hypothesize that there is inadequate political will within the church, particularly the Church of England, to meaningfully promote the inclusion and leadership of ethnic minorities. Naved reflects:

When they wanted women to be bishops, they had pushed women into those positions, as soon as they passed, they could have made them bishops, promoted them to senior [roles]. In Church of England, where is the pipeline for the ethnic minority people to move them forward into the right places so when the time comes, they can be promoted? Church of England doesn't have that. Church of England is not quite serious yet about ethnic minorities. If they are, there are plenty of people within the ethnic minority community who can.

From Naved's perspective, the Church of England got to the point of generating political will to fast-track women into leadership positions.³ However, he does not see the same level of institutional commitment to advance the leadership of ethnic minorities. This sug-

³The Church of England did not ordain female clergy until 1994. The first female bishop was appointed in 2014.

gests that a significant proportion of church leadership may hold the *irrelevance* frame, seeing the training and promotion of racial minorities as a low priority for the mission of the church. Here it is worth noting that for ethnic minority Christians in the UK, the established denominations (Anglicanism, Methodism, Catholicism, Presbyterianism, Baptist churches) are not the only denominations in which to pursue church leadership. Recent pockets of church growth in the UK are driven primarily by immigrant and/or Pentecostal churches, most notably the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), which is an evangelical Pentecostal denomination based in Nigeria that has planted 800 churches in the UK over the last 30 years. Churches like RCCG offer people alternative pathways to church leadership within ethnic enclaves where they do not have to navigate the struggles that Jill and Henry described above. RCCG has seen considerable growth in Britain, almost exclusively amongst first- and second-generation British Nigerians. Though RCCG is a member of the UK Evangelical Alliance, it operates largely independently of mainstream British evangelical institutions, with its own training college in London and funding from Nigeria and Nigerian diaspora networks (Adedibu 2016; Brierley 2019).

COLONIAL LEGACIES

The challenges of ignorance about race and barriers to minority leadership are both rooted in deeper cultural and economic realities shaped by hundreds of years of British Empire. The nature, duration, and power of the empire has had a profound impact on the British church and the degree to which it is able to integrate racial minorities today. As liberation theologian Robert Beckford reminded his audience at the 2019 Justice Conference in London, the church was inside of empire (*“Sorry if you’re Anglican here”*). Margaret, who

works for the Church of England, reminded me in our conversation that the narratives that emerged around early interactions between Blacks and whites — of Blacks as “heathens” and morally inferior — were crafted and carried by the church. In so doing, she gestures towards the large sociological literature demonstrating the role of the church in the modern construction of racial categories (Fredrickson 2002; Desmond and Emirbayer 2010; Feagin 2014).

Blackness and spiritual alienation

One of the implications of the lengthy period of colonialism on the church is the tight linkage between Christianity and whiteness. This is of course embedded in the material culture of the British church, as it is across Europe. Stained glass windows and other artistic renderings of biblical figures and early church leaders typically depict them as European in skin tone and features. Several Black respondents commented on the “*blond-haired, blue-eyed guy in a long nightie*” often featured in churches as being a reflection of an engrained association of Christianity with a Euro-centric worldview. The linkage within material culture reflects a deeper perception that Christianity is for white people and is a tool of oppression against minorities.

Jill reflected on her own experience as a Black Christian who grew up in 1970s Britain and has chosen to stay within the mainstream church:

I think there's a real tension in the Black community about mission seen as something that was imposed upon a race of people in colonial times...Yeah, I think that there is a perception that the Church of England kind of imposes negativity and it's quite a

negative place and it's not a spirit-filled place, and it's not a place that is welcoming. I think that's from experience in the sixties people were not welcomed in the churches.

Here Jill points out that because Christianity was used as a tool of control over colonial subjects, there is a lingering negative association that people within the Black community have with the church. Compounded with the experience of overt exclusion from mainstream British churches in the 1960s, these associations create a social and psychological gulf between the mainstream church and Black Christians. Jeff, now a pastor, recalls about his younger self and his perception of Christianity: *"I was a Malcolm X Boy. I had nothing to do with Christianity. Why? Because it was a white man's religion. And Christianity? The white man took it to Africa to enslave us."* Jeff grew up in South London in the 1970s and 1980s, in a neighborhood which saw a significant number of immigrants from the Caribbean settle after the Second World War. As a young man who experienced racism, Jeff perceived Christianity to be a Euro-centric religion and an oppressive force. Gordon, who experienced childhood in the 1960s and 1970s in London, expressed a similar sentiment:

I came to the conclusion that Christianity wasn't really for me, per se. It wasn't for my color and it wasn't for my culture. It's for my parents but it wasn't for us, it just wasn't there. And I began to embrace Rastafarianism because it spoke about Blackness, it spoke about Zion, it spoke about the now: Africa is paradise, the land of the old and the young. But it also spoke about the whole being redeemed, redemption, and it told me as well that I was Black and I was proud to be Black. It affirmed and it helped me in my struggle, mental struggle, as much as my social struggles. And it gave me a strong sense of identity, whereas Christianity didn't and definitely this country didn't because I didn't belong.

Both Jeff and Gordon articulate that their experience of Christianity in Britain during their youth was one of alienation. Both men were, for a period, attracted to religious traditions they perceived to be more affirming of Black identity and experience. For a significant time in their lives, they did not see the British church as a place where they could authentically belong as Black people. Their experiences resonate with Reddie's critique that: "To belong to British society and that of the church, for a black person, necessitates a denial of one's self. To be black in Britain is to have one's experiences, history, and reality ignored, disparaged, and ridiculed" (2006:12). Such profound experiences of alienation create significant psychological barriers to wanting to participate in a mainstream evangelical congregation in Britain.

This disjuncture between Black identity and Christian identity is not limited to an older generation, but continues to pose a challenge for a younger generation of Black Britons.

Maya, a millennial of Caribbean heritage, commented:

[Among Black British youth today there remains] a massive movement towards traditional African religions, massive movement towards Islam especially in Black communities specifically, and then an acute awareness of Christianity's complicit silence and corruptive behavior in the oppression of Black people throughout centuries really. And there's no doubt that to be brown and a Christian, there's still a tension to that identity.

Henry is of a similar age to Maya and shared this view:

I think it's more of a problem now because I think Black people, Black Christians are less willing to tolerate kind of colonial mindset and somewhat turning away from Chris-

tianity for that reason either to a kind of Kemetic Egyptology or to Hebrew-Israelite-ism.

Or to Islam⁴. So they want religion that's not Euro-centric.

From Maya and Henry's perspective, the issue of Black people feeling they do not belong within mainstream churches in Britain is not a historical artifact but an ongoing reality. In their own church and social contexts, Maya and Henry observe Black people leaving the church to be part of religions that are seen as less Euro-centric and more empowering for Black people. The deep desire for a Black-affirming religious identity and experience, in response to centuries of Black identity being devalued in the church, does not easily find fulfillment in contemporary multiracial evangelical churches. The zeal of white church leaders about the biblical mandate of multiracial congregations, combined with their relative ignorance about the history and dynamics of racism, can create an environment in which Black faces are welcomed but the perspectives and experiences behind those faces are not.

The alienation of ethnic minority Christians from mainstream evangelical churches is linked not only to historic associations between Christianity and whiteness but to the persistence of colonial attitudes in church life today. One example of this is the assumption that white people should have the most authority in church. This manifests itself in lower levels of trust extended to minorities to lead things in church, and suspicion about levels of competence and orthodoxy. For example Rhonda, a Black woman on staff at an evangelical church that is intentionally multiracial, reflected on her experience working under a white pastor: *"Sometimes I feel like there's that colonial perspective still and 'it's what I say that goes and please do not question.' Or being given a responsibility but still really you're not letting go but you're like 'I still need to have a say into what you're doing' and looking over*

⁴Richard Reddie's 2009 book, *Black Muslims in Britain: Why are many young black men converting to Islam?*, explores in greater depth some of the reasons for conversions from Christianity to Islam.

your shoulder.” Rhonda gave an example of being given leadership over a church initiative, but the pastor then appointing a white person above her. *“And that really upset me and I told him like that means he doesn’t trust me, and I think at the end it he told me, ‘The decision is made.’”* Rhonda reported feeling devalued, distrusted, and excluded from decision-making processes. Simon reflected on his experience of becoming a Christian in his 20s and beginning to come to terms with his own assumptions that white people should be in the position of authority and the position of teacher:

I found when I first traveled as a Christian internationally, I found this internal monologue in my head looking around at other non-English people in the room and thinking, ‘I have so much to teach you’...Again, nothing was talked about in terms of imperialistic attitudes of the British and often the assumption to the rest of the world that ‘everyone should speak our language and dress like us, and we basically know best,’ which is so deeply embedded and so deeply embedded within the church as well, but never talked about.

Gordon, a Black British pastor, reported that when he is asked to speak in white-majority churches, he often gets the feedback, *“You’re a very good speaker, you’re a very good communicator.”* This comment betrays an underlying assumption that as a Black man he is likely to be less competent (Fiske et al. 2002) in communication and preaching, and that the person is surprised to see his skill. Gordon shares that the attitude he often feels from white evangelicals in relation to himself is *“Well he’s my brother, the Black guy, but he’s my junior brother.”* Even in evangelical church contexts where the leadership espouses the *essential* frame, ingrained paternalistic attitudes reinforce white dominance and limit the meaningful integration of racial minorities into congregational leadership. As Ammerman (1997)

observes, churches with longer histories and established patterns have a harder time adapting to change and becoming more diverse. The institutions that have shaped the cultural toolkit of British evangelicals are centuries old, and so the patterns and styles and visual images of authority are deeply ingrained and resistant to change.

Whiteness and spiritual authority

For British Asians, the ongoing impacts of colonial attitudes are significant but distinct from the impacts on Black British individuals. While every Black British Christian I interviewed reported both overt and subtle ways in which they have experienced racism in the church, my British Asian interlocutors did not report as many overt experiences of racism. However, the British Asians I spoke with did report being treated as inferior to white colleagues and being perceived as less suitable for church leadership roles. Reflecting on the different experiences of Black and Asian Christians in Britain, Naved said:

I think having colonialism and slavery are two different things. We [Asians] know it was for a time being and we moved on. But you will always get that the white people would still feel they are superior, and you get that. Even people like me get that from time to time you think, 'How on earth, it still exists?' But it does exist. From the Asian group particularly, if you hear any feeling, that is because they still experience that second-class life in some ways.

Naved himself has experience of being discriminated against in the church. He was passed over for a number of jobs for which he was qualified before starting his current position, and for several years the opportunities he was being given were largely for ministry targeted to fellow people of color, rather than ministry to the wider church. This reflects a colonial

assumption amongst church leaders that evangelicals of color may be qualified to minister to other people of color but not to white people. Naved's language also reveals a conception of Asians occupying an intermediary position in the racial hierarchy (with whites above and Blacks below), as suggested by his comment that Asians have "moved on" from colonialism while Blacks have not.

By perpetuating the idea that white people are entitled to the position of spiritual authority, British churches continue to treat racial minorities as though they are in need of the help and leadership of white Christians. Sana, a British Asian woman speaking of her experience both on the receiving end and delivery end of Christian ministry, characterized the attitude of white people in ministry: *"We don't want to bring people eye to eye, but we want to keep them a bit lower than us. We are happy to do mission to those we see as poorer/weaker/sicker, but struggle to see and treat them as our equals."* Cultural toolkits contain stories and images that shape the accompanying beliefs and practices. In the case of British evangelicalism, the beliefs and practices associated with mission are inextricable from narratives of white missionaries who traveled to the far corners of the earth to evangelize people from other nations in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. These images also reflect an ignorance of church history in Africa and Asia and the disproportionate emphasis on the European Reformation in theological colleges. Despite the fact that Britain is now receiving "reverse missionaries" from West Africa and elsewhere, the British evangelical image of mission is still dominated by white people taking the gospel to racial others. The narratives and images that place white people in authority and minorities in the role of recipient leads to the dismissal of the cultural assets and tools that minorities bring to the church. George described this prejudice as *"the devaluing of practices that are not in one's own culture, like*

seeing another culture's practice of something as inferior intrinsically." While white evangelicals may say that they value racial diversity in church, and may even take active steps to recruit minorities into church, this is often done from a position of superiority. There is a lingering and powerful assumption that white people have the knowledge, skills, power, and right to lead church mission, and that people of color should be grateful to receive and submit to the authority of white leaders.

The unequal power relations established and perpetuated by colonialism generate a variety of responses from racial minorities that have implications for the viability of multiracial congregations in Britain. One response is a deep sense of injustice and injury. Sunil and Helen, a British Asian couple, reflected on ongoing impacts of colonialism on British Asians in church:

Helen: *But I think actually even with the Asians, like you just brought up, there is a colonialism issue. I think there is deeply rooted feelings of, I don't know, injustice perhaps. Is that the right word? I'm not sure what the right word is, within many, many Asians that go back to colonialism. And again, those are areas that need to be healed up for there to be true unity within the church.*

Sunil: *I agree to some extent. No seriously, I've been on this treadmill for like 20 years. I used to do diversity talks and huge things and I must admit, there is an issue, I'm not saying there isn't an issue, I don't want to undermine. However, I've also seen the other side of it where a lot of people use it as an excuse, and I say, 'Stop playing the race card, stop playing the inferiority card. It's there, but get over it.' Now I know that sounds really rude but actually we've got to do that. And have I faced racism? Yes. Have I faced colonialism? Yes. But at the end of the day you say that is history, that's the past, draw*

the lines with God's help, let's try to make it better, but let's not kind of go over spilled milk again and again and that's what a lot of people are doing.

This dialogue highlights points of tension. On the one hand, both Helen and Sunil acknowledge that the Asian experience of British colonialism has produced an enduring sense of injustice due to the exploitation perpetrated. Sunil reports that he has been made to feel less valued and less respected because of racist and colonial attitudes held by others. On the other hand, Sunil cautions against the marshaling of historic injustices to justify what he sees as a victim mentality that can nurture a *barrier* frame towards racial diversity in the church.

Another response to the harm inflicted by colonialism is shame. Jill put it this way:

I think when you're the African, you're the Black person, you are invariably on the bottom. And that is that feeling which is why people don't want to associate, because actually you were the people that were made the slaves, you were the ones that were put down, so naturally you don't want to embrace that part. That's why it's important for you to learn that there was more to life than slavery.

Jill went on to argue that the feelings of shame generated by the legacy of colonialism and slavery can limit the aspirations of people of color to pursue leadership roles within the mainstream church, thereby hindering racial diversity and integration in the church. Jill emphasized the need to reclaim a positive history and positive identity (not being limited by slavery) for people of color to be confident in who they are and what they have to contribute in a multicultural, multiracial church context.

Colonial hierarchies internalized

Another response to the racialized power relations produced by colonialism is the internalization of racial hierarchies by people of color in the church. At Westside, the vicar Abigail refers to herself as a “*midwife of change*” — endeavoring to empower minority leaders and change the demographic composition of church leadership in the longer-term. However, she also feels that currently, she and her white husband are seen as the ones with the power to convene, reconcile, and lead the diverse range of communities within the congregation. “*Do I unify because I’m white?*” Abigail asks herself. While Abigail says she wants to be able to hand over the leadership of the congregation, she wonders whether the church would hold together if handed over to a Black or Asian leader at this stage. Other members of Abigail’s congregation have also remarked on the unique attention that Abigail and her husband Stephen receive relative to the other church leaders. For example Harriet said: “*...the fact that the vicar’s kind of expected to do everything, all of the pastoral care. They [congregants] only want to speak to them, and I think that’s a white thing.*” Harriet’s view is that church members look up to the white leaders and expect to receive care and guidance from them, despite the fact that there are a number of minorities on the leadership team who are also qualified and available to offer support. The degree of racial consciousness among Black and Asian congregants at Westside varies. On certain occasions when Abigail has insisted on nominating ethnic minorities rather than white people for leadership positions, Black and Asian members of the congregation have said to her, “*Get over it*”, or “*We should give the role to the best qualified person.*” Abigail is conflicted about how to respond to this kind of attitude. On the one hand, she wants people to be conscientized and on board with

her approach to promoting minority leadership. On the other hand, she acknowledges that her desire for people to get on board with her agenda is itself a neo-colonial attitude.

Interlocutors commented on the internalization of the colonial hierarchy both in Britain and in the sending countries of migrants to Britain. For example, Nitesh remembers observing white missionaries in India:

So, I had the privilege to go to many of these missionaries, the people that have been working with the villages and those who have been saved, and what I've seen was people took or took more emphasis on people who were from a white background. They treated them with a much more higher regard, so, that was like I was like, 'Wow, that's different and why — what made them do that? Is it the color of their skin or the way they speak?' I didn't understand that, but I did notice that people took a high regard or put a more higher value on people of a white background I guess.

Nitesh does not offer an explanation for why the people were paying higher regard to white people over Indian people, but he observes it happening. The deference to white leadership that Abigail observes from her British Asian congregants Nitesh also observes in the country of origin of many of those migrants. Deborah, a second-generation Black British professional whose parents immigrated from West Africa, also reports observing that white people continue to be treated with greater respect and greater assumed authority in church, relative to people of other races:

But I think because of oppression everyone thinks that the other cultures are different and the English culture is the norm. I think maybe because, you know, the white people have gone into other countries and have dominated and have enslaved people and stuff like

that, so you notice it when you go like in Ghana. For example if a white person comes in they're treated slightly different. And so therefore people have always put like the white people higher above everyone, and so therefore they see the white culture or the English culture as the norm and that's how cultures are.

Internalized colonialism manifests itself in subtle ways. Evaluation of orthodoxy is one such area. For example, when talking about why it is better for minorities to worship in mainstream churches rather than in ethnic-specific churches, Rehan commented that in Asian-majority settings, there is a risk of the idol of family going unchallenged and in Black-majority settings, a risk of the prosperity gospel⁵ going unchallenged. However, he did not offer any critiques of white-majority churches. This omission is noteworthy because it suggests that Rehan perceives mainstream churches to adhere to a higher standard of orthodoxy relative to ethnic-specific churches. Evaluation of status is another way in which internalized colonialism manifests. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Joseph rhetorically asked his fellow Black pastors: *"Why do you want white people in your church? For status? To show how truly multicultural you are? Or because of some internalized racism?"* Seeking status through the acquisition of white congregants undermines racial integration as it perpetuates hierarchical relationships rather than relationships of equality and mutuality.

Money

A final legacy of colonialism that reinforces racial boundaries and hinders racial integration in the church is the nature of funding flows and wealth differentials. Speaking about evangelical church plants in Black-majority neighborhoods, Maya comments that some

⁵The "prosperity gospel" refers to a form of Christian teaching that promises its adherents financial blessings and good health.

of them are funded by white donors and white-majority funding networks, perpetuating an unhelpful power dynamic: *“So there are good things happening, but with that you get a power dynamic and paternalistic attitude. You get, at least one of the criticisms of Black Christians is their acquiescence to white culture, and now that they fund you there’s a dynamic there of who pays you. A white guy pays.”* Dependency on funding from white donors and networks also means that some Black leaders feel less freedom to express their opinions and concerns within mainstream evangelical networks, for fear of losing funding. Pastor Jeff noted, *“I love and support our evangelical middle-class brothers...but when Black people in church leadership like myself, when we have our own funding, I think we’ll have more of a voice at the table.”* From Jeff’s perspective, the fact that the white leaders and churches have more money means that they have greater influence over decisions and funding flows that impact wider evangelical ministry. *“If I have an injustice against me, I’ve just got to take it on the chin,”* Jeff says. *“Why? Cause otherwise I’m just another angry Black person.”* As long as this trend continues of white-led churches accessing a disproportionate level of funding from evangelical donors, it is likely that multiracial churches will continue to be shaped disproportionately by white leaders and white cultural norms.⁶

A complicating factor within the financial realm of evangelical church planting is the push (and sometimes the requirement) for a church to become financially self-sustaining after a certain number of years. For churches who are trying to engage with a community that is both racially and socioeconomically diverse, this can be a challenge. Particularly

⁶As mentioned in the previous section, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is the fastest growing church-planting network in the UK and is led primarily by first- and second-generation Nigerian immigrants. RCCG churches are funded by affiliated institutions in Nigeria and the Nigerian diaspora and therefore do not need to access mainstream British evangelical funding structures. At present, RCCG churches have relatively little penetration beyond Nigerian and British-Nigerian communities in the UK.

within the Church of England's growth framework, financial stability is a key metric of success⁷. This works well for churches that are planting into wealthy or middle-class white neighborhoods, where people are able to tithe larger amounts. Given the overlapping realities of economic and racial inequalities, planting churches in areas of more diverse racial and economic composition may be less attractive to planters when they know they need to achieve certain financial targets within a few years. This also means that evangelicals who do endeavor to plant in more diverse areas sometimes have to deploy narratives that reinforce racial stereotypes in order to secure funding. Henry says that *"the way to attract funding is to perpetuate the stereotypes: 'Here we are working in poor inner city.'"* Despite the fact that Henry's church actually engages a significant numbers of young Black professional people, his church is often branded by white evangelical partners and donors as an "inner city church", evoking tropes of poor Black people who need assistance from the white church. Church leaders trying to engage with Asian populations also face challenges fundraising within the white-majority British evangelical world. Varun shares that it has been very difficult to sustain funding for an initiative that he leads to equip evangelical churches to engage with Asian communities. In his view, evangelical funders do not see this as a priority area, unless it is targeted at Muslims (*"Islam is where the money is"*). If funding for new churches continues to be channeled primarily to more affluent white neighborhoods, this will limit the scope for the establishment of multiracial congregations.

The cultural toolkit of British evangelicalism has been shaped by colonialism in a number of ways, including the material culture, the patterns of authority, the funding flows, and the particular performances of orthodoxy and competence. The long institutional

⁷<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-reform/funding-mission-and-growth/strategic-development-funding>. Accessed July 20 2020.

histories of the white-majority church in Britain, compared with the relatively recent establishment of Black-majority or Asian-majority churches comprised of first- and second-generation immigrants, means that the dominant subcultural toolkit remains that of white evangelicals. Within the context of multiracial congregations, then, most of which are led by white people, the various cultural repertoires that Asian, Black, and white British congregants bring to the organization are not evaluated and integrated equally. Lingering associations of Christianity with whiteness, embedded attitudes of white superiority, and financial inequalities continue to pose challenges to racial integration.

INTERSECTIONS WITH CLASS

The classism of British society intersects with race in ways that compound the challenge of building multiracial congregations. Evangelical institutions (and particularly evangelical Anglican institutions) are overwhelmingly white, male, and upper middle-class in their leadership. The structure of evangelical leadership development pathways reinforces this pattern and constrains the potential of individuals from middle- or working-class backgrounds to pursue leadership in evangelical circles. The tools of evangelical subculture are consequently dominated by white middle-class norms, including an academic approach to Scripture, limited emotional and physical expression, and narrow understandings of competence and orthodoxy. These norms and practices create further barriers to people outside of that subculture in participating in evangelical congregations, even if the leaders of those congregations espouse the value of “diversity”.

The tight linkage of class, race, and gender in evangelical leadership is in part a result of how the pathways to evangelical leadership are associated with elite institutions, starting

with schools and summer camps. The Titus Trust runs summer camps aimed at converting young men and boys who attend elite private schools. The trust and network of affiliated camps was established with the rationale that to reclaim a rapidly secularizing Britain for the Christian faith, youth who would go on to occupy positions of power within British society are a strategic target for evangelism (Barclay 1997). The trust therefore hosts camps at schools that are feeder institutions for Oxford and Cambridge, and subsequently for the elite spheres of politics and finance. The camps are effective at evangelizing schoolboys, linking up those young men at Oxford and Cambridge, and then directing them into a specific subset of evangelical training institutions. This model of evangelism and training has produced evangelical leadership cohorts that represent a narrow demographic — white British, male, upper middle-class, elite tertiary educated. The elitism of evangelical clergy is most acute within evangelical Anglicanism, where many of these men pursue ordination, given the Anglican church's ties to the establishment (Aldridge 1995). Interestingly, the institutional recruitment pathways of senior evangelical clergy parallel that of British Prime Ministers. Of the UK's fifty-four Prime Ministers, thirty-six (67%) were educated at the Clarendon schools⁸ (Reeves et al. 2017). A historical examination of the Clarendon schools' curricula indicates that these schools played a key part in promulgating the idea of Black inferiority and the rightness of empire (Tomlinson 2019) — “attitudes and beliefs [that] have continued to linger within British institutions, in part due to conveyor belt of individuals from elite schools into key positions of power across politics, law, business, culture, and the military” (Shain 2020:277). Given the challenges that minorities face accessing or succeeding within mainstream training institutions, over the years various ini-

⁸This is a set of nine elite private schools that produce a disproportionate number of leaders in elite spheres.

tiatives have been launched to support minority participation, but with limited success. For example the Aston Training Scheme was established in the early 1990s in Birmingham as a bridge program into ministry for people who did not have a university degree. However, it shut down after only a few years. One interlocutor commented that *“it was seen as second-class training. It was seen as, you know — ‘you don’t get properly prepared people from there.’”* Similar to the critiques sometimes faced by affirmative action programs in the United States, initiatives such as Aston that have been specifically set up to recruit and train minority individuals for church ministry can be stigmatized as being of lower quality.

One of the consequences of cultivating leadership from such a narrow demographic is that a significant proportion of evangelical leaders lack understanding or empathy for people who have not experienced the privileges they have had. Simon, who was himself educated in elite institutions and continues to interact with that network, reflected on this reality, saying:

A lot of the things I recognize in myself of, if you are from a white, middle-class privileged background, or if you’ve only hung out with white, middle-class privileged people like yourself in terms of schooling and university (which is very, very easy to do within the UK, particularly within the UK evangelicalism, particularly the camps of Iwerne and Titus Trust) are so strong. If you look at the church leaders, almost all of the conservative evangelical churches have got leaders from Iwerne - you look at Alpha as well, Nicky Gumbel is from Iwerne as well — so basically there’s just these embedded blind spots and embedded biases in that subculture. The evangelical church is drawing form that subculture and arguably is not sufficiently challenging that subculture so there-

fore you end up with just the natural inherited biases being applied in this theological context, because it's just what you're used to and it's easy.

Simon recognizes that evangelical leadership in the UK, particularly Anglican evangelical leadership, is deeply embedded in a white upper middle-class subculture. Later in his interview he acknowledged that the dominance of this subculture means that evangelical leaders are not equipped to see, understand, or respond to the experiences and perspectives of people outside of that subculture. Henry also commented on the impact of camp-university-ministry pipeline on evangelical leaders:

One of the negative effects of that is the people who are leading and teaching at theological college and pastoring are people who haven't experienced what life is like if you're not in this privilege. And so I think that's when you can say 'oh well, there's no use bothering about anything political, just preach the gospel.' Do you know what I mean?

Issues of inequality and racism are not salient to evangelical leaders who have had no personal exposure to them. Henry observes that such issues are dismissed as “political” by white evangelical leaders and as secondary to “the gospel”. As noted in the previous chapter, this idea is common among those holding the *irrelevance* frame.

A second consequence of the norm of church leaders being private school and university educated is the reinforcement of barriers to congregational leadership for racial minorities, given the ways that racial categories overlap with economic inequalities.

For this reason, Paul commented that:

Yeah, and I think we'll see more Indian clergy. We'll see more Chinese clergy, because they're the people who go to university. We work with people who go to university. We're

not going to see many men of Afro-Caribbean background ordained in the church even still....How far is that because they're Black issues, you have racists, how far is it we just don't work with working-class people?

Paul's point that evangelical churches have limited engagement with working-class people is related to the fact that evangelical conceptions of competence are tightly linked to (upper) middle-class status and styles. On a similar point, Michael reflected:

As a generalization, most people from Black and Asian communities have not had as academic opportunities as those from privileged white backgrounds. I mean it's just as hard if you're a white working-class person from that point of view, the training. But there's still a disproportionate number of clergy who have been to private schools, who've been to top universities. And the proportions of people from Black and Asian minorities who've been through those roots are much, much lower. And then the training, I think, favors people who've have that kind of academic very middle-class formation. I think the training is still too academic... Yeah, and I think this goes right to the heart of who writes the syllabus, and who the central church wing bodies, Church House Westminster and so on, are very white middle-class.

Michael points out that one of the problems is who writes the curriculum. Referring specifically to Anglican training, he notes that the central bodies responsible for curriculum development are in Church House in Westminster, staffed almost exclusively by white middle-class people. Consequently, the educational norms, styles, assessment methods, and subject matter built into clergy education reflects white middle-class assumptions, experiences, and practices.

The relative lack of racial and socioeconomic minority individuals in leadership positions then reinforces amongst congregation members the perception that competent leaders are of a particular mold. Janice, a lay leader at Eastside, observes that while the lay leadership team in her church is not exclusively white, it is exclusively middle-class:

But they couldn't be more like me if they tried. They are not white middle-class, but they are middle-class. They are professionals. We need professional skills to a certain degree, but there is something around, they might look superficially representative, but they are not. How do we make sure we hear from other voices?

Because there are three people on the leadership team at Janice's church who have skin that is not white, the vicar has declared the team to be "diverse." However, these individuals are all highly paid professionals and first-generation immigrants, who do not fully represent the racial and socioeconomic diversity of the wider congregation and neighborhood. One evening I was in a café chatting with Ben, a young white professional who also attends Eastside. Ben recognizes that ethnic minority representation in Eastside leadership is very low, but he is also quick to say that the Oxford-educated members of the team are "*exceptional*" people who do their job really well. Partway through our conversation he remembers the case of a young Black woman who had left his church due to feeling marginalized, but he does not reflect on what might have contributed to her feelings of marginalization. I interviewed this lady, Chioma, on a separate occasion, and heard from her several accounts of feeling like her particular leadership and teaching skills were not recognized or appreciated by the white leadership of the church. She observed that Oxbridge-educated individuals were given the most senior leadership positions in the church, while she and other church

members outside the Oxbridge mold were granted lower status responsibilities like serving tea and coffee or helping with children's work. The perception of leadership competence as embodied within middle-class norms can then be internalized by minorities in the congregation. For example at Westside, where most of the white members are middle-class and most of the ethnic minority members are working-class, minority congregants are less likely to put themselves forward for leadership, partly because they do not see themselves matching the particular leadership style being displayed by the white middle-class leaders. Of the minority individuals who are in leadership positions, most are upwardly mobile and in middle-class professions. This has led Harriet, a member of the leadership team, to comment that the church is "*multicultural but it's not indigenous*", meaning that while the leadership team does have variation in skin tone and culture, it does not yet fully represent the diversity of its local congregants.

In addition to perceptions of competency, perceptions of orthodoxy are also shaped by the intersection of classism and racism in ways that limit churches from becoming more diverse. One area where this is apparent is how people evaluate preaching, which is a central concern to evangelicals. Michael reflected on white evangelicals' reaction to Bishop Michael Curry's sermon at the royal wedding:

Say Bishop Michael Curry's sermon at the Royal Wedding — people, the public loved it, I know evangelicals who hated it. And why? Because he was Black, not ethnically, but culturally, and that's what came through. And it was a bit too emotional, and it didn't go into the text in enough detail, and it made sweeping generalizations. Well, I'm sorry, so did Martin Luther King.

A close examination of the text of Bishop Curry's sermon reveals that there is not anything in its content that could be identified as heterodox from a mainstream evangelical theological perspective. However, the style in which it was delivered caused white evangelicals to assume that it was heterodox. Bishop Curry's style — which was characterized by greater display of emotion, the use of stories, and language of “liberation” and “power” — is more familiar in Black and working-class Christian subcultures than in white middle-class evangelical subcultures. Michael argues that Bishop Curry's preaching style is therefore evaluated by white evangelicals as less valuable, less sophisticated, and less orthodox⁹. Michael went on to reflect:

A: But I think there's a bit of a problem within evangelicalism on this in that I think evangelicalism in the UK has defined itself, and including Anglican evangelicalism as a subset, in certain ways that are almost sub-cultural rather than theological.

Q: What could those be?

A: Well, again it's partly - there is within parts of the evangelical world there's a big sort of subculture around public school¹⁰ and Oxbridge. And certain churches. And the tradition of expository preaching, where you preach the Bible in a certain way with very long sermons that are quite detailed and exegetical, and culturally that may work for a small subset of educated English culture. But actually, does that work for people from

⁹Another reason Bishop Curry's sermon may have been disparaged by evangelicals is that they consider him to be theologically heterodox on sexual ethics and therefore treat any sermon of his with suspicion. However, the content of the sermon did not refer to sexuality, and Michael's observations about stylistic biases also carry weight.

¹⁰In the UK, the term “public school” refers to an independent, fee-charging private school with an endowment. These schools were and are “public” in the sense that their admissions are open to students regardless of geography or religion. In practice, these are the most selective and elite schools in the country. Elsewhere in the text I have referred to these schools as “elite private schools” because that term is more familiar to American readers.

other cultures? I don't think it does.... [Commenting on an evangelical church that he had been part of in earlier years:] *Emotion was frowned upon. And I kind of thought, 'okay, well Timothy's been a great leader in some ways, but in other ways actually he's not allowing the cultural diversity that there is in his church to flourish. Because he's trying to squeeze it into a sort of very enlightenment, educated, English mold.'*

Evangelical institutions like the Proclamation Trust and associated camps, conferences, and churches, practice the style of preaching that Michael describes above — lengthy, exegetical, and academic. This style is consequently seen as the norm and the standard for “good” preaching. Deviation from this style — with more emotional content, shorter length, or a less linear argument — is seen as substandard practice. Chioma commented that she found the sermons at the large evangelical church she formerly attended “*just really dull*”. Linda, a second-generation British Asian who had previously attended that same church observed “*the teaching is quite sort of university lecture like. Like theology and all that sort of stuff.*” This is consistent with Emerson and Woo’s observation that “white worship styles and musical forms typically reflect the ascendancy of mind over body. Sermons, homilies, and other forms of presenting religious messages are expected to be cerebral” (2006:136). The implication for multiracial churches is that the cultural toolkits of Black or Asian evangelicals, which may include a more narrative style of preaching or emotional expression or application to social issues, are judged to be deficient by white leaders and white members, and therefore are unlikely to be integrated into the congregational culture.

A lack of emotional engagement is a feature of evangelical leadership that extends beyond sermons and has further consequences for the inclusion of people outside of white middle-class subculture. Hilary, a second-generation British Asian who worships at West-

side, hypothesizes that the fact that evangelical sermons tend to be intellectual and have limited emotional engagement is related to the elite private school socialization that many evangelical leaders have experienced:

I mean a lot of the leadership and a lot of the white the Anglican Church and the rest of the England, from people that I have spoken to are training and have been to different places in England I mean they are predominantly of certain type and class predominantly private school educated men, white men and that's where it is. And I think that because that has had benefits in terms of the teaching and the kind of intellectual gravitas, but then it doesn't open it up...it's predominantly there is a certain type of person that is part of the hierarchy, and you think well it's not that you are knocking the Archbishop or anybody out for having had a private school education but it does give you a certain confidence even though, you might have had not as much emotional input from your parents, or you might not have that, which is often said people who go to private school, they are like boarding schools in England anyway I don't know about anywhere else, but they are emotionally on a different — they are needy in the way because it's been very dry and focused on external, you know. And so I — but equally you don't want to knock that because that still has a place, but it's like how do you make place for the rest of everybody else, in terms of mirror, it's really the clergy should be a mirror of the society it serves, do you know what I'm saying?

Here Hilary suggests that while the elite private school and university training has equipped evangelical Anglican leaders with “*intellectual gravitas*”, it has limited their emotional, relational, and cultural development. She argues that the elite boarding school environment trains people to focus on external evaluation rather than internal development, and that

this then produces leaders who are emotionally “*needy*” but perhaps unable to recognize those needs in themselves or others. Emotional display is perceived as a sign of weakness and lower competency within this subculture. This lack of emotional engagement poses serious challenges for diversity and integration in the church for several reasons. First, the process of integration requires emotional intelligence and the ability to empathize with the struggles of others. Secondly, the existing literature reveals that more expressive, charismatic worship is correlated with the successful building of multiracial congregations (Emerson and Woo 2006; Dougherty and Huyser 2008). British theologian Robert Beckford describes his tradition of Black Pentecostal worship as “mind, body and spirit working as one expressive unit in the worship of God” (1998:10) and observes that “the unification of body, mind and soul expressed in Black liturgies has not been mobilised to breathe life into the overtly cerebral focus of many Eurocentric liturgies” (p. 35). Emotional and physical expressiveness are important elements of the cultural toolkits of Black-majority churches (Beckford 1998; Edwards 2009), and so the white evangelical detachment from emotion and body inhibits this holistic worship experience. The extreme elevation of the mind in British evangelicalism alienates those who have not had access to the privileged education of evangelical clergy and cultivates an environment of exclusion. As it demotes the emotions and the body, it also subtly reinforcing colonial stereotypes of whites as intellectually superior and entitled to power, and racial others as inferior and in need of the civilizing influence of white people (Feagin 2014).

The dominance of white middle-class norms in evangelical leadership and church culture raises the question of whether people must become middle-class in order to be fully

integrated into evangelical congregations. Gordon reflected on his own experience of feeling distant from his working-class background after being a Christian for several years:

And it was interesting because I remember I had this reflection and I suddenly realized that after some years, six years, I wasn't really associating with my people. And I realized that church, Christianity makes you turn, if you're not middle-class, it turns you into middle-class. You begin to speak differently and you begin to think differently, your aspirations are different. It does. There's good and there's bad in it. And I had to work that through and it was somewhere along that line I began to remember where God brought me from and began to think about I need to get back to talk to people about the grace and the power and salvation of God.

For Gordon, both his racial identification and class location initially constituted barriers to participation in mainstream British church. Now that he is a fully integrated member and leader of a large evangelical church, he recognizes the social distance he has traveled and is morally ambivalent about how that reflects on him and on the wider church. Middle-class norms around time-orientation, autonomy, speech, dress, etc., tend to dominate in evangelical churches. This raises a question about whether people must become middle-class in order to fully participate in church, or whether churches can integrate poor or working-class people without demanding assimilation.

Thus, the ways in which class privilege intersects with racism exacerbate the challenge of cultivating congregations and church leadership teams that are racially diverse. The pathways to evangelical leadership, from youth summer camps targeting private schools to elite universities to a small subset of ministry training institutions, produce cohorts of leaders who are racially homogeneous and class privileged. Because of their privilege

and narrow social and cultural exposure, these leaders are inadequately equipped to understand or engage with people from racial minorities or lower-class backgrounds. This homogeneous and elitist leadership then shapes a church subculture characterized by an academic approach to Scripture, limited emotional or embodied engagement, a posture of superiority, and narrow conceptions of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Together, these sub-cultural traits form barriers to the inclusion of people from minority socioeconomic or racial backgrounds. Combined with colonial legacies of white supremacy and racialized economic inequality, the class structure of British evangelicalism perpetuates homogeneous churches and poses significant challenges for the pursuit of racially and economically diverse churches.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored some of the factors that harden racial boundaries and hinder racial integration in the British evangelical church. These factors include ignorance about race and racism, gaps in recruitment and support of minority leaders in the church, legacies of colonialism, and entrenched classism. While the *essential* frame examined in the first chapter provides a number of ideological and discursive tools for the erasure of symbolic boundaries between white and minority Christians, the factors investigated in this chapter limit the degree to which those symbolic boundaries can be erased, and certainly the degree to which social boundaries can be shifted. The lack of education about race (beginning in primary and secondary school and continuing through ministry training) contributes to a gap in knowledge and understanding about the origins and implications of race, leaving even well-intentioned Christians with limited intellectual tools to facilitate racial diversity

and integration in church. The institutional patterns around recruitment and training of evangelical leaders, and the dominance of the homophily principle therein, lead to a serious imbalance of power along racial lines. These challenges are rooted in and perpetuated by colonial hierarchies that have been internalized by whites and minorities. The class structure of evangelicalism, and specifically the fact that the senior leadership are recruited from elite institutions, further alienates economic and racial minorities from the church and reinforces the dominance of a white middle-class cultural toolkit within multiracial congregations. The next chapter will consider organizational practices that a subset of evangelical churches have adopted in an effort to overcome these barriers.

3

Facilitating Racial Integration: Practices

“Good theology is good, but it’s not good enough.” After a conference session on theological principles underpinning racial diversity in the church, a Black pastor of a large evangelical church transitioned to addressing the practical realities of making diversity real and meaningful. *“What am I giving up or sacrificing to be truly living this?”* Pastor James asked the crowd. It’s all well and good to mobilize biblical ideas and narratives in shaping an attrac-

tive discourse around diversity, but if that discourse is not lived out in practice, then it is rendered meaningless, he preached. Pastor James emphasized that racial diversity in the context of a church congregation is costly and requires sacrifices from all individual members and groups. As Garces-Foley (2007b) notes, racially integrated churches are highly unusual and “are interesting sociologically because they challenge a well-entrenched social pattern of separation along ethnic lines” (p. 219). In the first chapter of this dissertation I explored how racial diversity is *framed* by the British evangelicals I interviewed and interacted with. In the second chapter I examined the institutional and cultural *barriers* to achieving racial diversity in churches, which include ignorance about race, lack of racial minority representation in church leadership, ingrained colonial hierarchies, and classism. This third chapter explores the organizational *practices* that churches deploy in an effort to overcome some of those barriers.

Before exploring the practices that facilitate racial integration in the context of a local congregation, it is worth pausing to say what I mean by “racial integration”. “Integration” goes beyond “diversity”, which could be defined as the co-presence of multiple racial groups within a church congregation. Integration is not a static state but a process of mutual learning and change, the formation of relationships, and the redistribution of power and resources. Naved described racial integration in church as follows:

How do you describe integration? Is it that you just want two groups to come together or different groups to come together and they keep their identity, they stay as they are, and they just exist and coexist — is that integration? Or is integration that they come together, they both bring part of themselves and they create a third culture — is that integration? What is integration?...But I suppose integration is what I feel when people

are coming together, they are bringing something to, and they are going to obviously in the process lose something of themselves, but they are going to gain something new. It gives them a new experience. It gives them a new in some ways an identity together and that works well.

Here Naved articulates that integration is not merely about co-presence but about each group changing by both giving something up and gaining something. Thus integration is distinct from classical “assimilation”, which denotes a process in which racial and cultural minorities shed their distinctive traits and progressively dissolve into the mainstream (Warner and Srole 1945; Gordon 1964). The concept of assimilation is strongly tied to the ideal of Anglo-conformity and the belief that complete acculturation is the desired and inevitable goal of all minority groups. Integration is also different from the type of “multiculturalism” in which multiple groups come together but remain distinct from each other, without the expectation of significantly changing or adapting to the other groups (Kymlicka 2011). Integration is a two-way process of change. It has a cultural dimension, in which majority and minority groups both retain unique aspects of their identities and practices while also appreciating and incorporating aspects of each other’s cultural toolkits. It also has a material and political dimension, manifested in the distribution of resources and power across majority and minority groups.

This chapter explores five sets of practices that churches deploy in an effort to facilitate racial integration in their congregations: learning about racial and cultural groups different to oneself, diversifying church leadership, integrating elements of broader cultural toolkits into Sunday services, cultivating bridging social ties, and emphasizing the practices of repentance and forgiveness. The ethnographic site of primary focus is Westside parish, in

light of the fact that the leadership of Westside have been testing out and institutionalizing practices to advance racial integration over a period of nearly forty years. As I consider each of these practices, I examine how and to what extent each practice is able to challenge racial hierarchies. I find that these practices can, to an extent, decenter whiteness within the congregational culture. However, these congregational practices have limited potential to address the wider cultural and institutional barriers to racial integration within British evangelicalism described in the previous chapter.

LEARNING: PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL INVESTMENT

As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the challenges to the cultivation of multiracial congregations is ignorance about race and the histories and cultures of people of other ethnoracial identities. This ignorance perpetuates white normativity, white transparency, and white structural advantage (Edwards 2008a). An institutional commitment to learning is one of the organizational practices I observed that some churches take up to combat this challenge. This is typically initiated and modeled by the lead pastor/vicar and then institutionalized in the form of sermons, formal small group discussions, and other organizational practices. The commitment to learning requires intentionality, time, and willingness to engage with challenge. At Westside, where a number of congregants are of South Asian origin, several of the staff team have spent extended time in India and Pakistan. This has given them some insight into the liturgical styles of Indian and Pakistani congregations, norms around authority and decision-making, and some of the social and psychological impacts of colonialism and Partition. These insights are then institutionalized in church through sermon topics and illustrations, the approach to training up British Asian congregants in

leadership, and smaller matters including the clothing choices of the staff team and the types of food served at church events. These practices will be explored in greater depth later in the chapter. An example in another multiracial church is Gordon, of Caribbean heritage, who took on the pastorate of a church in a racially and culturally diverse neighborhood. Because his neighborhood and church had a high proportion of people from West African descent, he decided to spend time in Nigeria and Ghana so that he could better understand the cultural roots of some of the people in his congregation. During his travels, Gordon paid particular attention to preaching styles, historical narratives, and forms of music and dance that he saw and heard. When he came back to his church in London, Gordon started to incorporate some of the practices he had experienced in West Africa into his church services, and observed that the inclusion of West African musical styles brought “*new life*” into the congregation. He also started preaching and teaching explicitly about racism between Africans and Caribbeans, tribal prejudices between Africans, fears about interracial marriage held by white people, and other uncomfortable topics. Ultimately the church grew from about 150 to 800 people — of Caribbean, African, white, and Asian backgrounds. However, a significant number of white people were uncomfortable with the changes and left. Gordon recalls: “*I knew I was gonna have a white flight. I said ‘I’m gonna probably lose 50%’, and sure enough, people said, ‘Pastor, look, I’m finding the journey a bit difficult,’ and ‘blab, blab, blab.’ I said, ‘No problem.’ It was difficult.*” Gordon reflects that his commitment to learning about the diversity of his congregation and taking steps to incorporate his learning in the service came at a cost in the form of white people leaving. However, he stands by his decision and attributes the racially diverse growth of the church

to his willingness to acknowledge his own ignorance, invest in learning from people different from himself, and take criticism.

The evangelicals I engaged in my fieldwork emphasized to me that the process of learning requires both humility and willingness to take risks. This is consistent with the emphasis on qualitative spiritual growth that a number of respondents articulated in relation to the *essential* frame. Varun, a man of South Asian heritage who encourages white-majority churches to engage with South Asian residents in their neighborhoods, reflected on this often bumpy learning process:

So having talked about awareness and bridge-building, focus then on how do you cross the cultural divide. How do you cross-culturally communicate so that you're doing it with sensitivity? With love and without fear, because love covers a multitude of sins. You can go forward with love and people will say, 'Well he's doing it out of love.' So don't be afraid. You know, people go, 'I won't do anything; as a white church I'm not doing anything because if I do anything I run the risk of offending.'

In British middle-class culture, where privacy and tolerance are highly valued, the desire to avoid causing any kind of awkwardness or offense is strong. However, the learning process by its nature requires an admission of ignorance and an openness to getting things wrong. As Varun points out, this means that churches dominated by white middle-class British culture are often held back from learning how to cross cultural and racial divides. To combat this challenge, Varun marshals the biblical teaching that “love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8) to encourage churches to take risks from a posture of love and courage. Varun goes on to say that effective communication across racial and cultural boundaries depends

on asking a lot of questions and listening, rather than assuming things about other people's experiences or preferences. George agreed with this perspective, saying:

In humility, if you don't take that kind of hard lines on some things, but just say like 'look, this is my current conclusion on this issue. I could be wrong because I'm not God, and I've been wrong on things before.' I think that basic attitude that gives you, yeah, a lot of room to do, take risks which might be worse than by doing nothing. It might be worse than doing nothing, but I think as long as that attitude of humility is there, I feel like there isn't any mistake that's too bad.

His view is that whatever group is in the majority in a congregation — whether Asian or white or something else — will naturally assume that their way is best. Cultural arrogance is the norm. However, when members of majority and minority groups are willing to acknowledge that they might be wrong on some things, then they are more able to listen and learn and change. When a practice of humble learning is embedded in a congregation, there is potential to begin challenging the way that whiteness is centered in so many multiracial congregations (Edwards 2008a; Pitt 2010). In the case of Westside, the learning commitments of the staff team have led to significant changes in the way that decisions are made, services are structured, and different groups are represented across the life of the church.

Some church leaders are better able to initiate and model this process of learning than others. The desire of a leader to learn about the histories, cultures, and aspirations of groups different from himself or herself cannot be forced. The degree to which leaders value this kind of learning appears to be a matter of natural inclination and linked to exposure to diversity during youth. For example when I asked Paul (a white British pastor who pioneered

working with multiracial congregations in the 1960s and 1970s in London) how he ended up working in multiracial congregations, he said:

It's partly personal. In the '50s, I listened to Black American music, and that had a big impact on me. And I suppose that gave an interest and a concern. As I say at the time, civil rights movement, decolonization. My first degree was in history back in London. And I specialized in colonialism and colonial history.

While Paul was pursuing higher education part-time, he worked part-time at a factory, alongside Irish, Eastern European, Cypriot, and Caribbean co-workers. He reflects that this was a formative experience for him in gaining insight into the perspectives and experiences of a wide range of people, and crystallized his desire to work in a multiracial environment. The combination of his musical tastes, intellectual interests, and relationships with people from diverse ethnoracial backgrounds compelled Paul towards church ministry in diverse urban areas. Paul is married to a British Asian woman. He has led and grown several multiracial congregations, collaboratively developed new forms of musical worship, leadership training, and church-based racial justice activism in the process. Similarly Michael, a white British vicar who works in a highly diverse area, says he is probably unusual in his inclinations towards multiracial churches because he spent part of his childhood in India and studied history and economics at university, specializing in Gandhian politics and colonial economics in West Africa. As a young man he taught school in Bradford in a Muslim-majority neighborhood, where he decided to adapt the history syllabus to include a greater emphasis on colonial history. Enoch, a young British Asian man part of a diverse charismatic evangelical congregation, reflected that a key reason why his own (white) church leaders are able to effectively lead a multiracial congregation is that they had

spent a number of years living in South America and are fluent Spanish speakers. He says that for his pastors, *“It’s not just being exposed; it’s more about having lived the life with them [people in South America] and experienced their life.”* Enoch has observed that his pastors *“are very, very good in communication between all the different cultures and they really understand it well”* because of their personal cross-cultural experience that extends beyond mere tourism to other countries. Similar to what Emerson and Woo (2006) find about pastors in American multiracial churches, the leaders of multiracial churches I interviewed or observed in this project tended to be people who had grown up in diverse environments or were in interracial marriages or had extensive international experience. Their own life experiences have generated in these leaders a desire to understand people of other cultural and ethnic identities, to broker conversation and conflict between different groups, and to build a community that is inclusive.

After leaders have initiated and modeled a learning process, they are then better able to put into place organizational practices that facilitate learning across the wider congregation through sermons, guest speakers, small group discussions, and other structures. Emerson and Smith (2001) argue that one of the reasons why white evangelicals have difficulty understanding the realities of racial discrimination is that the majority of them live and work in white worlds, where their exposure to people of other racial identifications is limited. Thus, evangelical congregational leaders who have made the effort to learn about the histories and experiences of people from racial backgrounds different from themselves then have a burden of responsibility to transmit that learning to their congregations. However, the willingness of the congregation to participate in this process of learning and changing also depends to some degree on the ideological commitments and personal experiences of the

congregation members. In the case of Westside, when the area started to receive large numbers of immigrants after the Second World War, a large proportion of white British people moved out of the area to more affluent white-majority neighborhoods. Of the white people who have stayed long-term at Westside parish and gotten on board with the multiracial vision of the church, a significant number are people who have a specific interest in ministry in cross-cultural and multiracial contexts. For example, of the older generation of white people who stayed — people like Auntie Faith and Auntie Bess — they are mostly women who had previous experience as missionaries internationally and therefore have a particular interest and sense of “calling” to stay in Westside. As mentioned above, Gordon lost a significant number of white British people when he started to change the preaching, teaching, and music in accordance with the things he was learning about the ethnic and cultural groups in his congregation. Edwards’ (2008a) conclusion about multiracial churches is that interracial churches remain racially integrated “to the extent that they are first comfortable places for whites to attend” (p. 5). While Westside and Gordon’s church have made white people uncomfortable and have remained racially integrated, they have lost a segment of their white congregants in the process.

The churches in the study that were best able to cultivate and sustain a multiracial community were those that invested not only in learning about the individuals and groups already present in their congregation, but those who were committed to learning about the geographic place which their congregation serves. For example Gordon invested time in visiting all of the local pubs in his patch — getting to know their owners and client demographics — and visiting community organizations and cultural groups. The vicars of Westside have invested time and energy into building relationships with local schools, faith

institutions, political groups and voluntary sector organizations in order to better understand the cultural, political, and economic contexts in which their congregation members live. For example, the vicars and lay leaders of Westside serve as school governors in local schools, partner with the local Sikh gurdwara to run a neighborhood homelessness project, and work closely with the local police in preventing and responding to hate crime. The assistant vicar, Stephen, links these broader community engagement activities to the church's commitment to the Jeremiah 29:7 command to the Israelites in exile: "Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Over the years Westside has also participated in local rallies and marches against racial discrimination and racial violence. This result of this intensive and long-term commitment to the local area has resulted in more in-depth insight into local social issues and inequalities. At Eastside, by contrast, the senior leadership are much newer to the neighborhood and have fewer institutional relationships in the community and less exposure to its contemporary or historic social issues. Eastside consequently has less penetration into the community and is not as fully representative of the local demographics compared to Westside.

While I heard and observed a number of evangelicals making the effort to learn about individual people in their own congregation who are different than themselves, and in some cases to learn about their local neighborhoods, I observed less of an emphasis on learning about history, with the main exception of Westside. In both interviews and fieldwork, I rarely heard any formal or informal conversation about the history of the parish, the history of the communities present in the parish, or even church history or British history more generally. This may reflect the cultural orientation of evangelicalism towards the

future. Because evangelicalism emphasizes the urgency of evangelism in a secularizing nation, the focus is often on developing and implementing initiatives that foster quantitative growth as quickly as possible. Taking the time to study history does not therefore appear to be a priority in most white-led multiracial churches. I did come across examples of historical reflection in Black-led churches, however. For example, one white British interlocutor related that her church (Black-majority evangelical Pentecostal) hosts an annual festival when various communities in the church share their own multigenerational histories. Given the number of British Caribbeans in the church, the event features stories of the Windrush generation and the discrimination Caribbean immigrants faced upon their arrival to Britain, including in the church. The majority of my interlocutors did not mention these kinds of historical learning events, though the Westside leadership are thinking about how to build in more historical reflection in their work. Stephen is in the process of doing some archival research on the social and political history of the Westside neighborhood, with a particular focus around periods of intensified racial tension and violence.

ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES IN LEADERSHIP

As explored in the previous chapter, the lack of recruitment and retention of racial minority leaders is a significant challenge to the development of multiracial evangelical congregations. The relative absence of minority leaders within mainstream evangelical institutions, combined with the tokenistic treatment of the existing leaders, reinforces white dominance. Churches who are taking these challenges seriously go through a process of recognizing the need to diversify leadership, identifying talents within specific people, providing training and development opportunities, and giving up power.

Recognizing the value of diversifying leadership

The first stage in the process of addressing structural inequalities in church leadership is for a congregation to recognize the need to diversify its leadership. This fact tends to be quite obvious to people of ethnic minority status but less obvious to the staff of white-majority churches. As Edwards (2008b) points out, white leaders in multiracial churches are often unaware of belonging to a raced group and unaware of the ways in which they impose white culture on the leadership team and wider congregation. On one level this is about symbolic representation. Nelly articulated the symbolic dimension of diverse leadership while reflecting on the Royal Wedding:

It was nice to see at the Royal Wedding where a minister of ethnicity actually was part of the officiating. So that was nice to see. Because usually in the past, looking at a Royal Wedding you would only be just people of the Caucasian, so it was nice. I think that was really nice that was embraced. From comments that I've heard, a lot of people were happy to see that it wasn't just Harry's culture that was being reflected. I think in the same aspect as well, a lot of people, when they go to church, they would want to see people that looked like them as well, so I think in moving forward that would be a great thing to do to actually encourage a lot of — if we're calling it diverse church, then we should see diversity all across the board, that's what I think.

For Nelly, seeing a Black vicar (Bishop Curry) occupy a central role in one of the most prominent events in the country — at the heart of national and religious identity — highlighted the need for greater symbolic representation of ethnic minorities in other levels of church leadership. Her comment indicates that seeing Bishop Curry was not simply about

seeing a black face in a white-majority space, but also about valuing the cultural content and perspective that he brought into that space.

Going beyond the power of symbolic representation, Silvia, of Caribbean heritage, remarked that the Church of England must diversify its leadership in order to engage a wider range of communities and understand the unique needs of different groups:

So I think, in terms of the Church of England, it's because it's so narrow, they don't really have a handle on how, you know, what's really happening in terms of how people feel from the different ethnic backgrounds, and if they really want to grow the Church of England, if they want their numbers to grow, then they need to open up the leadership a lot more. They need, you know, people from disabled backgrounds, women, the whole equal opportunity spectrum, because by having those people there and talking about their experiences, they're then able to have a better understanding of what they need to do. But also, the people who are talking about those experiences can take it back to their communities and say, 'Actually, you know, this is what the Church of England is trying to do, and if we can get you to get more involved, and it's good to help them to do it.' You see what I'm saying? And I think it's not until they do that, and I'm not saying that they're not trying to do it, because I think they are, but it's not until they try to do that that things will change.

Silvia recognizes that unless church leadership includes people from beyond the white male middle-class subculture, the church cannot fully understand the needs of the different communities it serves, nor can it ensure the active participation of minority communities in the church. Abigail has taken this perspective of Silvia and others seriously: *"It's not about*

my own leadership, it's about birthing and being a midwife," she says. "I'm gonna intentionally make sure I've got as many different people at the front, that I've got as many young people having opportunities that they wouldn't have otherwise had, etc." As mentioned in the first chapter, from Abigail's perspective, increasing the ethnic diversity of church leadership is pragmatically necessary to facilitate the numerical growth of the church, and morally the correct thing to do from a commitment to racial justice. Of course, recognition of the need to diversify leadership is only a preliminary step towards real structural change. The senior leaders of Eastside, who are white, have publicly stated the need for greater racial diversity on their staff team, but after six years have not hired anyone who is non-white, with the exception of one short-term post.

Identifying talent

After churches have recognized the need to diversify leadership, the second stage of the leadership development process is identifying talents and gifts within specific people. As the wider literature on social capital and inequality demonstrates, there are significant barriers around recruitment, training, and promotion of ethnic minority individuals within white-majority institutions. This is due to a combination of implicit and explicit biases in operation, and the church is not immune to these biases (Pitt 2010; Barron 2016; Lindsay 2019). As mentioned in the previous chapter, conceptions of competency, orthodoxy, and leadership potential within evangelical circles are inextricably linked to a very narrow set of white, masculine, middle-class styles. Recognizing the significance of these obstacles, the leadership of Westside place considerable effort into identifying talents in their congregation — particularly in young people and ethnic minorities. At the first barbecue I at-

tended at Westside, I sat with Bartholomew, a teenager and third-generation British Asian. I learned that he had preached the previous Sunday. He told me this in a casual and confident tone, sitting next to his youth worker Alesha who nodded and affirmed that he did a great job. Throughout my fieldwork, at least once a month I saw Bartholomew singing in the worship band, gaining additional experience leading and being up front. Abigail and Alesha believe that giving young people opportunities to preach and lead is a strategic component of facilitating racial diversity and integration in the long-term, by investing in young people of color and encouraging them in their gifts. I observed this attention to investment in settings outside of youth work as well. Westside has an additional congregation — The Gathering — set up specifically to engage local people of diverse religious backgrounds. While Harriet oversees this congregation and coordinates most of the planning, it is also very much an “all hands on deck” event. One evening Harriet asked Rajesh, a recent Christian and first-generation immigrant, to facilitate the discussion around the table where I was sitting. It was clear from the slightly stilted conversation around our table that Rajesh did not yet have much facilitation experience, but I know that he is one of the people Harriet sees potential in and is gradually encouraging to take on more leadership.

While Eastside is quite a few years behind Westside in promoting ethnic minority leadership, within the last couple of years they have started to make more intentional effort, particularly through the youth ministry. Young people receive mentorship from an older member of the congregation and are encouraged to take on roles such as giving short talks at youth events, sharing their testimony in church, or helping coach younger children at the church football club. Adult newcomers to the church, such as Colleen who is mixed-race, are also encouraged to take on serving and leading roles early in their church participation,

rather than being allowed to remain passive consumers of church. Colleen says that this invitation to participate (initially through leading in children's work and later in reading Scripture during church services) is one of the reasons why she has felt motivated to stay on at Eastside, compared to previous churches she attended which did not invite her to use her gifts in that way. These investments in diverse young people and newcomers start to erode the boundaries around leadership by decoupling conceptions of competence and leadership from white middle-class styles. However, as noted above, Eastside is still a long way away from diversifying its staff. At both Eastside and Westside, the most senior positions in the staff team continue to be occupied by white British people. This manifests what Lindsay (2019) and others refer to as the "Guinness effect": a leadership structure in which there are Black and brown people in lower tier positions, while white people continue to hold the most senior posts.¹

Providing training

After churches recognize the need to diversify leadership and identify talents within individuals, the third stage in the process of diversifying leadership is providing training opportunities for those who have been identified. At Westside, a key part of this strategy has been the creation of a preaching development group. The vicars have invited a diverse set of individuals to participate in their preaching team — men and women; Black, white, and Asian; from varied economic backgrounds. The preaching team shares the responsibility of preaching across the year. Every Sunday after the service, the group meets for lunch in the vicars' home to debrief the sermon and share feedback on each other's preaching (in-

¹For non-beer drinkers: Guinness is a commonly consumed beer that is dark in color with a white head on top.

cluding on the vicars' preaching). This approach to in-house training is time-intensive for the vicars, as they take responsibility for selecting people and providing ongoing coaching and encouragement. It is also risky, as some congregation members would prefer for only the experienced preachers to preach and have less patience for the learners. However, Abigail and Stephen are committed to their decision because of the significant gap in minority leadership and because of the many negative experiences that minorities from their church have had while pursuing training in mainstream evangelical and Anglican institutions (as described in the previous chapter). While Abigail and Stephen would both say that it would be better in the long-term for mainstream institutions to reform their curriculum and approach to be more inclusive and recruit more minority faculty, they feel that their in-house training approach is necessary at least in the short-term.

Sharing power

Ultimately, increasing the racial diversity of church leadership requires white leaders to give up some of their power in the areas of decision-making, funding, and representation. In addition to preaching and teaching, power over how a church is run — strategically and financially — is a critical area in which to dismantle racial hierarchies. This is why Westside has prioritized the diversification of its Parochial Church Council (PCC). In the Church of England, PCCs are the bodies responsible for the governance of individual churches and make some of the key decisions around staffing, budgets, policies, etc. At Westside, the process of diversifying the PCC started in the 1970s with Timothy who was vicar during that time. Timothy adopted an aggressive policy of removing older white middle-class people from the PCC and promoting exclusively younger and ethnic minority church members.

This process has been continued under the current vicars, Abigail and Stephen, though they have softened Timothy's ban on white middle-class people. One interlocutor reflected on this process at Westside:

And that [church leadership] has changed now completely, in that the leadership, who does the work, who makes the decisions, who is represented, who is confident speaking up at the PCC, that is genuinely multiracial. And I think that's come both from hard work and being intentional, and it's also just come through time.

Silvia recalls how this happened from her own perspective on how the vicar encouraged her in leadership:

So he did a lot. He worked a lot, trying to get more integration and get people to be more mixed. He invited me on the PCC. He tried to break up the PCC, which was predominantly white, and, you know, very ageist, and since a lot of the people in there were in their late, late 50s, early 60s. Yeah, so it was a very — especially what you see now — I've been at Westside for 21 years. So the church you see now is very different to how it was prior to Stephen.

During my fieldwork, the church elected two additional British Asian women in their 30s, one a middle-class professional and the other a working-class woman, onto the PCC.

Given the deeply ingrained patterns of white authority, the process of white leaders giving up their power is easier said than done. Simon is part of a network of evangelical leaders endeavoring to plant churches that have a diverse leadership team and vision built in from the outset. Reflecting on the need to shift the balance of power, Simon said:

I think the fault does sit with the majority culture in the UK. Because white, British men, usually, have done their own thing and have not worked with people from Caribbean background, African, other ethnicities...I do wonder if it's bound up with ideals or idols of power as well, which one has to be prepared in those relationships to foster trust by genuinely giving away sacrificially. I can't really form a meaningful relationship all the time if I must hold the keys of power and you must be my second-class assistant.

Angela, a Black British vicar who did part of her training at Westside in the 1990s, reflected on the significance of the fact that Timothy (the white vicar) shared his power with her. She said:

A: Even as a curate — that's a training post — I think I experienced a great deal of trust in me and I can see that in colleagues as well, that he [the vicar] was able to kind of let go and let us flourish.

Q: What's an example of that? How did he do that?

A: I don't have any sort of strong memories of having my incumbent [lead vicar] hover over me or come and sort of make a different decision about something. He was there, supportive, and just really encouraging to let us become the people God had called us to be.

Angela's experience stands in stark contrast to the many accounts detailed in the previous chapter of minority leaders feeling they were not fully trusted with responsibility and were kept under white supervision. Later in her career, Angela went on to become one of the first Black British women to take on a senior leadership position within the Church of England. Angela reflected that while she was fortunate to have good mentors and encourage-

ment to develop in her leadership, there remain significant institutional and cultural barriers to the advancement of fellow racial minorities in church leadership, and changing the system will require more than one or two good mentors.

The process of recognizing the need to diversify leadership, identifying talent, providing training opportunities, and giving away power to racial minorities is rare, difficult, and requires going against many of the ingrained norms and practices of British evangelicalism. At a conference of evangelical church leaders that I attended, I listened to Sana, a second-generation British Indian theologian. Sana defies British middle-class norms, speaking her mind in a direct way and adopting a more interactive and narrative style of speaking. Sana wears a sari, remarking that *“I look like I belong more in a corner shop”* and that people often mistake her for being a lower-class, first-generation immigrant because of the way she dresses. Sana shared with the audience that *“it is empowering for me”* to be invited to speak at an evangelical conference and that still surprises her that *“when he [the conference organizer] is talking about a theologian, he’s talking about me.”* The fact that Sana feels a sense of surprise when addressed by the conference organizer as a theologian and when given a platform to speak at an evangelical conference reveals that it is still a novelty for racial minorities to have a prominent platform in that kind of space in Britain. In her role as plenary speaker, Sana says to the audience: *“I’m going to say things that I only say to family”*, by which she means that she is going to speak difficult truths with honesty to fellow evangelicals in the room. Using this familial language suggests that Sana claims equality with the conference organizers and participants and seeks to use her platform to articulate hard truths to both white and minority peers. Indeed, Sana then went on to offer some sharp critiques of the paternalism she sees ingrained in white evangelical approaches to mis-

sion. Seeing people like Sana in a prominent role in an evangelical setting is rare, and only when more people like Sana are in such roles will the evangelical church in Britain start to become more meaningfully integrated.

INCORPORATING DIVERSE CULTURAL PRACTICES: “PARTICIPATION OVER PERFECTION”

As described in chapter two, the practices and styles of evangelical churches in England — particularly those of evangelical Anglicans — reflect a white middle-class orientation. This poses a significant challenge to the inclusion of minority cultures within multiracial congregations. Churches that have become more racially integrated have therefore taken several intentional steps to decenter whiteness in the styles and practices of Sunday worship. Sunday services encapsulate and express the core values and priorities of a church. Putting together a Sunday worship service entails hundreds of decisions (conscious or unconscious) around timings, structure, aesthetics, tone, readings, prayers, message, illustrations, language, use of space, lighting, volume, physical and emotional expressiveness, and participation. Some of these decisions are driven by institutional scripts (e.g. the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*) and denominational norms (e.g. frequency of administering Holy Communion). Others are driven by explicit theological beliefs (e.g. sermon content and song lyrics). The remaining practices, habits, and styles reflect the subculture(s) in which the congregation is embedded.

One Sunday morning at Westside, Palvinder, a convert from a Sikh family and a second-generation immigrant, was at the front of the church to do the Gospel reading for the day. He was wearing jeans and a bright red hoodie and his hair was spiked with a generous amount of gel. Jill bent down slightly to hold the microphone for him in his wheelchair.

He read the passage from Matthew in a loud, confident working-class accent before wheeling back to his usual seat on the right-hand side of the sanctuary. Symbolically, the scene offered a noteworthy contrast to the typical white professional style one normally observes at the front of a British evangelical church and certainly in an Anglican evangelical church. One of the core principles behind Abigail's approach to planning the Sunday service at Westside is "*participation over perfection*". Abigail is intentional about involving people from a range of ages, genders, ethnicities, cultures, and educational levels in leading and participating in the Sunday service. While Abigail maintains the overall responsibility of planning the service, she delegates almost all of the roles to congregation members, including preaching, leading musical worship, leading prayers, reading Scripture, managing the technology, and sharing church announcements. Abigail's approach to participation differentiates Westside from many of the prominent evangelical churches in London that are known for their "slick" productions — in which the music and lighting and use of technology are managed by highly skilled professionals. Adopting the "participation over perfection" principle achieves several things. First, it recognizes that "perfection" is not a culturally neutral label and that what is typically identified as "perfect" or "excellent" in British evangelical churches is inextricable from white middle-class conceptions of beauty and order and competence. As Emerson and Woo (2006) observe, one of the ways in which power is misused in multiracial churches is by defining what is "best" in accordance with the dominant subculture. Thus, elevating participation is a way of challenging culturally-bound conceptions of perfection and making room for a wider range of expressions of beauty and order and competence. Secondly, the principle of "participation over perfection" recognizes that not all members of the congregation have had the same access to edu-

cational and training opportunities. Over the long-term, putting this principle into practice develops the confidence and capacity of people who might not ordinarily have taken on those roles. Thirdly, the practice of “participation over perfection” requires Abigail to give up some of her control as the white leader of the church to people who then have the freedom to shape those elements of the service in line with their own cultural toolkits.

Westside encourages a culture of participation even amongst people who are not yet Christians. At the Messy Church (a service geared towards families that would not ordinarily come to a traditional church service) that they run once a month, everyone is encouraged to help with the set up and set down — regulars, guests, children, and adults. This is not merely encouraged but consistently acted upon. At the end of a Messy Church session, it is not uncommon to see children fighting over who is going to mop the floor, Caribbean and Asian dads folding up tables with the vicars, and white British ladies and Asian ladies stacking up the chairs. Fostering a culture of participation around such mundane practices as stacking chairs may seem inconsequential. For the leaders at Westside, encouraging leaders and lay leaders to work alongside newcomers is a way of developing a culture of mutuality and shared investment, challenging the norm of white middle-class people acting as hosts while treating minorities as passive recipients of their benevolence. Everyone is expected to both give and receive. That being said, there remains variation in the level of giving and receiving. While the large group of volunteers who lead the various activities in Messy Church includes a mixture of ethnicities, the main organizer is white. One Britain Asian member of the congregation commented that the visibility of white leadership in outreach efforts like Messy Church can reinforce a *“hierarchy of ethnicity”*.

The fact that Sunday music plays a key role in facilitating either assimilation or integration in multiracial congregations has been observed in a number of studies on multiracial congregations (Marti 2009; Edwards et al. 2013). According to these studies, white middle-class musical styles and preferences tend to dominate in multiracial churches. The pastor of Wilcrest, the central congregation of interest in Emerson and Woo's study (2006), admitted that "it took us nearly ten years to move out of simply doing various forms of white music" (p. 69), even though the church was committed to a vision of racial inclusion. Downtown Church in Barron's study (2016) endeavored to attract multiracial membership, but only included Hillsong² arrangements in its Sunday services. Music is an area where Westside applies the "participation over perfection" principle in an effort to combat the tendency of evangelical churches to default to mainstream cosmopolitan worship music from artists like Hillsong, Bethel, or Chris Tomlin. Abigail jokingly refers to the annual Christian carols service as a "*musical disaster*" because it incorporates an eclectic set of styles and a range of ability levels, including off-key children, warbling elderly voices of the traditional choir, a gospel song or two, and Hindi songs that a subset of the congregation sing well while the others struggle. While Abigail jokes that "*sometimes we wish they [the musicians] would perfect it a bit more...*" she stands by her "participation over perfection" mantra so that the visual and audio representation in the service is genuinely shared and not required to conform to one particular style. This approach also gives children and adults the opportunity to develop their abilities who might not, if only a certain style and a particular standard were accepted in church. The Westside leadership is also investing in training for the in-

²Hillsong is a global megachurch founded in Australia that exports worship music across the world.

dividuals who have expressed interest in participating in church music, in order to build capacity across the board.

An area of contestation at Westside and in other multiracial churches is what language(s) to use as part of musical worship. Language is of course closely tied to ethnic and national identity as well as the experience of human solidarity. Garces-Foley asserts that “the strong tendency toward separatism within the multilingual church undermines its ability to embody a value espoused by all churches: unity” (2007b:213). Fostering inclusion for people of different languages, whilst also promoting unity across lines of difference, is a difficult balance to achieve. Westside has experimented with several approaches to this over the years, and the leadership admits that they are still not sure whether they have got it right. Currently, Westside holds its main service in the morning that is conducted primarily in English, and a second smaller service in the afternoon that is conducted in Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi. Abigail says this has been important for honoring first-generation immigrants, particularly those who have emigrated from countries where Christians face discrimination and persecution as a minority group. This group values having the freedom to worship in their own language within the security of the established state church. However, Westside has made significant efforts to include the participants in the afternoon service within the wider life of the church. At this point in time, a number of the individuals who participate in the Asian language service (mainly elderly people who migrated in the 1960s and 1970s) also participate in the morning English service, and many of them have children and grandchildren who come to the morning service. Within the main morning English service, Westside currently has the approach of incorporating songs beyond the English language once or twice a month in the Sunday service, and more on special occasions

(e.g. Christmas, Easter). Anita, a British Asian member of the congregation, expressed appreciation for the inclusion of non-English songs in the service: *"We sing songs that are in Hindi as well...there's a lot more of diversity now in who gets up at the front reflecting the congregation, not just sort of one white leader sort of a figure but lots of different voices about their faith experience. So that's all really positive."* However, the inclusion of Hindi and Punjabi songs to accommodate the South Asian and British Asian community caused some Caribbean British members of the church to feel alienated. For example, Jill shared with me her discomfort with the fact that Westside had held a Christian worship service in the form of a *satsang* (a traditional Hindu form), saying that she felt this was going too far to accommodate a particular group and drifting too far from Christian forms. In response to these kind of critiques, the leadership team made a greater effort to encourage gospel songs alongside other musical forms in order to recognize and respect that segment of the community, while also having periodic *satsangs* scheduled separately from Sunday services. The leadership team has also decided that while music in non-English languages is valuable to welcome first-generation migrants, they currently push mostly for English language worship as an indication of unity and in support of integration. Second- and third-generation immigrant members of the church have also expressed that they prefer to sing in English rather than in the language of their parents or grandparents. Thus, decisions around language use require ongoing negotiation, and inevitably cause discomfort for some segment of the congregation.

The use of different languages is pertinent not only in the context of musical worship but in other elements of the Sunday service, including Scripture reading, prayer, and other elements of the liturgy. Michael reflected:

There is a bias toward English language, English culture in a way that is linked to the history of this country, rather than actually saying (and this is where I get back to what I said about what we tried to do at St. Cuthbert's), to say actually here we're really — we're trying to be Anglican, but we may not be very Church of England. And so, how does an Anglican church work in Jamaica? How does an Anglican church work in Ghana? Well, how does the Church of North India church work in Amritsar? And how can we integrate some of the culture, the liturgy, the hymnody, the leadership styles into our church?

In navigating the tension between unity and diversity, one of the cultural tools available to the Church of England is its membership in the global Anglican Communion and the liturgies and styles that have been developed around the world.³ As Michael suggests above, there may be creative ways to mobilize this global toolkit to simultaneously recognize and include diverse cultural forms, while also positioning that diversity under the shared identity of Anglicanism. Jill shared this perspective, saying, *"I don't say 'the Church of England' a lot, I call it 'the Anglican Church', because I do really believe that we're part of the Anglican community."* She went on to reflect: *"There are good people in the Anglican Communion worldwide. So when I visit my parents in church in the Caribbean where they're living there, you see the Anglican Church is a vibrant, amazing church with Black people in it!"* Recognizing the weaknesses and faults of the Church of England, Jill maintains that she sees value in being part of the Anglican Communion, and that there is potential for the church to integrate the styles and practices of different kinds of people. Every week at both Westside and Eastside, congregants are encouraged to say the Lord's prayer in their native language.

³The Anglican Communion has a presence in 165 countries.

While the majority of people choose to recite it in English, hearing a subset of people say it in Hindi or Spanish or another language subjectively decenters English cultural dominance and reinforces the centrality of the Revelation 7 vision of every tribe, tongue, and nation worshipping together as part of the church. While Scripture is usually read in English, on special occasions other languages are also included. I remember one service at Westside where several Iranian asylum seekers were baptized, the Scripture passages were read by children and adults in a number of languages including Farsi. The Farsi translation was read by an elderly lady named Joy, who read in a timid voice but with a big glowing smile on her face. Abigail responded to the reading: *“Thank you so much, Joy. It’s beautiful to hear the word of God in Farsi.”*

As mentioned in the previous section on diversifying church leadership, preaching is a central element of church life, particularly in evangelical churches which place a high value on expounding what they treat as the authoritative word of God. The act of preaching is considered to carry significant spiritual authority. In preaching, working towards a genuine multiracial expression of church requires more than simply a range of skin colors present in the pulpit. It also requires attention to delivery style, structure, illustrations, language, and aesthetics. At Westside, the preaching team is diverse (as mentioned in the leadership development section above) and incorporates a broader range of styles and images than one ordinarily sees in a multiracial evangelical church. One Sunday Jill gave a sermon on “hidden talents.” Her style was informal and interactive, while commanding authority through her posture and tone. At one point in her sermon she encouraged us in the congregation: *“talk to your neighbor about your hidden talents”*. She then walked around the pews with a roving mic to hear what people learned about their neighbors’ hidden talents, which included

“roast chicken”, *“making chapattis”*, and *“cakes”*. This interactive style is more characteristic of a Black-majority church and generates energy and participation in a way that is atypical of evangelical or Anglican churches. The regular inclusion of this style in Sunday services functionally decenters the cerebral, unemotional, academic style that is the default in the majority of white-led evangelical churches (Beckford 1998; Edwards 2008a).

In addition to drawing on a more expansive cultural toolkit in shaping the preaching styles at Westside, preachers at Westside intentionally select illustrations and images to signal inclusion. This is out of recognition that the visual and material culture of Christianity in Britain has been linked to whiteness for many centuries. While Westside does not currently have the funding available to update their stained glass windows (which feature European depictions of Jesus and other biblical characters), they do have control over the people they include in the PowerPoint presentations that accompany the sermons, which are consistently of a range of ethnicities. The sermon illustrations refer to different musical styles, sports, foods, holidays, films and TV shows, and nations that extend beyond the white middle-class British experience. During the Remembrance Day service, Stephen gave special attention to the soldiers from the colonies who died in the war, including photos of diverse soldiers from the Westside neighborhood. Over our plates of samosas and biscuits after the service, a Caribbean British woman commented to me that she was struck by Stephen’s mention of those soldiers, as she did not remember learning about them in school. The incorporation of diverse sermon references and images are small but significant ways of signaling that evangelical Christianity in Britain is not a faith relevant only to white middle-class people, but that it is open to and relevant to people of all ethnicities and cultures.

Clothing matters too. When leading a service or preaching, Abigail always wears what is known as a “dog collar” (a piece of clerical clothing worn by those ordained in the Anglican church). Although her demeanor is quite informal, she wears this piece of formal clothing out of recognition that for some members of her congregation, that symbol is important and indicates respect for God, for the sacred space of church, and spiritual authority. Out of respect for her British Asian congregants, many of whom value modesty in clothing, she always wears long sleeves and occasionally a South Asian style *kurta* (long tunic shirt).

The practices embedded in the rhythms of Sunday services are not without contestation. One area of ongoing negotiation is tithing — the Christian practice of giving financially to the work of the church. The language and practice around tithing can lead to heated discussions in church leadership team meetings. One interlocutor explained, “*There’s this underlying undercurrent there that white people know how to tithe in an organized way, and Black and Asian people don’t.*” In other words, the norm when white British people are in charge of organizing the giving is to encourage weekly or monthly direct debits to the church, and to avoid talking about money explicitly during the church service. In Black-majority churches, it is more common have a collection plate that is passed around during the service and more explicit teaching and encouragement from the pulpit on giving. Asian and British Asian members of Westside tend to structure their giving around specific events and campaigns and value more direct and public encouragements of giving. At Eastside, the church leadership has adopted two different approaches to giving in the two services. At the morning service, which has a higher proportion of Black and Asian members, a collection plate is passed around. At the afternoon service, which has a higher proportion of white middle-class professionals, a collection plate is not used and money is only explicitly

mentioned at termly membership meetings or annual sermons about the biblical mandate to give. At Westside, they periodically change the approach to tithing (ranging from encouraging online giving to having envelopes at the back of the church to passing around the collection plate), as it is difficult to settle on one approach that is satisfactory to all members.

Tithing via the collection plate is one element of a wider issue around the degree to which embodiment is prioritized in the liturgical practices of the church. Again, the degree to which embodiment is prioritized tends to vary along racial lines. Physical expressiveness in music (more associated with the charismatic tradition), as well as incorporation of more formal liturgical elements (e.g. incense, vestments, spoken and sung liturgy, and weekly Holy Communion more characteristic of the Anglo-Catholic tradition) tend to feature in congregations that are more racially diverse. One vicar commented that serving a church with this blend of styles has enabled him to see of the ways in which the white-majority evangelical church in the UK is impoverished by its lack of attention to more embodied ways of connecting with God. White evangelicals in Britain tend to have an aversion to Anglo-Catholic liturgical forms, partly because of the concern that collective embodied rituals deemphasize individual intellectual engagement. Churches that are able to draw upon cultural toolkits from multiple traditions and multiple countries across the Anglican Communion are able to decenter some white British cultural norms and elitist tendencies.

The manner in which Holy Communion is administered can also be significant to cultivating racial diversity and integration. At Westside, Holy Communion takes a long time. Congregants are stewarded out of their pews and join the queue in the central aisle. As people work their way around the pews and down the aisles, there are lot of smiles and taps on

the arm and snippets of conversation. It feels highly communal. At the front of the church, the able-bodied kneel to receive the bread from the vicar or member of the leadership team. They then proceed to either side to receive the wine or juice depending on their preference. When I go up, I am addressed by the vicar by name as I receive the bread, and I hear those on either side of me also being named as they receive. This practice experientially reinforces the principle that each individual — whatever their background — is seen and known. In the Eucharistic prayer, Abigail incorporates children (again of different ethnicities) in the style of the Passover. While Holy Communion is administered, the music playing in the background will alternate between languages and styles.

A final significant practice that the current vicars of Westside have incorporated into the Sunday service is “sharing time.” This happens at the end of the service and absolutely anyone can go up front and say whatever they want. This includes children announcing their own birthdays or recent swimming competition prizes, grandmas requesting prayer for their sick grandchildren, notices about upcoming outreach events, invitations to multicultural meals, pleas for additional Messy Church volunteers, and a testimony about the goodness of God and provision of the church family. Contributions can sometimes be random or awkward, and occasionally requires the vicar to step in to moderate if the person is dragging on or saying something controversial, but typically the person sharing is allowed to take as much time as they want. *“Seeing, hearing, tasting differences. This is who we are,”* Abigail says. Sharing time gives every member of the congregation freedom to express what is important to them. The free-flowing nature of sharing time challenges the norms of rigid time management that often characterize white evangelical churches. Particularly in an Anglican church where the liturgical format of the service is shaped by larger institutional

scripts and patterns, sharing time permits the congregation to go off-script and to incorporate cultural practices of testimonials and story-telling that are not typically part of the white British middle-class style.

CULTIVATING INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS

In addition to facilitating learning about racial, ethnic, and cultural groups in the church and community; sharing power with minority leaders; and incorporating practices and styles from the cultural toolkits of a wider segment of the congregation; cultivating interpersonal relationships across racial lines is also a focus of evangelical churches with a multiracial mission. Although levels of residential segregation in England are not as high as they are in the United States, social networks are characterized by a high degree of homophily, and especially so within evangelical leadership circles, as discussed in the previous chapter. Emerson and Smith (2001) have noted the centrality of interpersonal relationships within evangelical theology and subculture. In this study, both Eastside and Westside encouraged the development of interracial relationships in order to reduce prejudice and distrust between different groups in their congregations. Discursively, through preaching and teaching, the leadership emphasized that relationships between people who are different from one another are important for reflecting the Revelation 7 vision and evidencing the power of the gospel to reconcile people. In other words, being friends with people of other races is necessary to the living out of the *essential* frame. Practically, Westside and Eastside facilitated interracial interaction through sharing food, through the reorganization of space and entrance into the spaces of others, and through bearing the burdens of other people beyond Sunday and beyond natural social groupings.

While the sharing of food may seem a very simple practice, it can be a powerful way to break down barriers between people. One interlocutor commented: *“You won’t find this written down in policies, but if you want to build relationships across ethnic and cultural backgrounds, then eating together is one of the best things you can do.”* The first time I visited Westside, the congregation was having a barbecue after the service on a sunny July day. The tables offered a fragrant mixture of burgers, sausages, kofta kebabs, and jerk chicken. Carmen announced that the elderly members of the congregation should be first in the queue (which I later realized is a signal of respect for the Asian members of the congregation, among whom deference to elders is a value). A range of chairs and picnic blankets were laid out for people to sit and chat. Among the older (65+) generation, people tended to sit within ethnic-specific groups to enjoy their food. The groups of younger people, however, were noticeably more mixed in their groups on the grass. During my fieldwork, Eastside also started the practice of bring-and-share lunches between services to encourage community across lines of difference. Anita’s biriyani, Auntie Barbara’s fried plantains, and Simon’s coronation chicken quickly became favorites and started appearing month after month. There is a risk in adopting this kind of practice that racial diversity is reduced to a matter of individual pleasure and consumption (Ahmed 2007; Bell and Hartmann 2007). For Westside and Eastside, the larger goal of the embodied practice of eating food from a range of cultures represented in the church is to facilitate conversation and relationships that lead to a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of fellow church members. Bring-and-share meals can also have an equalizing function across groups, as everyone is expected both to contribute and to benefit.

In addition to the practice of sharing food, churches that were serious about cultivating authentic interracial relationships took steps to reorganize physical space and enter into each other's spaces beyond the church walls. In the case of Westside, this involved physically taking out the historic pews of the church. Silvia remembers:

I think in the past, I remember that the Asians didn't really speak to the West Indians. The English didn't really speak to the Asians. It was — people sat in their same seats every time, and almost — if you were at the back of the church, you could see the Asians on one side, whites in the middle, and West Indians on the other side. Yeah, with sprinklings, but generally speaking, that's how it was. I think once the pews were taken away, and the space was more flexible, then that helped to integrate people. I mean, he [the vicar] did try this thing where you couldn't sit in the same place every week. But I think when you have the chairs, it took away the history of where people sat before, because yeah, because you have, then have this new space. It forced you to do things different, so you couldn't sit in the same seat, in the same pew every time, because that wasn't there anymore, and also, the space looks very different once the pews were taken out. So then I think what he did was he used that as an opportunity to integrate and to move people around.

This deliberate restructuring of the space disrupted taken-for-granted arrangements of people and facilitated new forms of interaction and relationship. Having participated in Westside Sunday services for over a year, I did not observe ethnic clustering in the seating. While there were some individuals and families who sat in the same chairs every week, these groupings did not extend to larger ethnic-specific clusters. People of Granadan, Iranian, English, and Punjabi heritage would be seated in the same row. Thus, the decision

to remove the pews and actively encourage people to sit in different seats appears to have succeeded in getting people to sit with a range of people rather than in the historic ethnic clusters that Silvia described.

Beyond getting people to sit in different seats, Westside has also cultivated a notable approach to the “passing of the peace.” Passing the peace is a standard liturgical practice in an Anglican service. It takes place after congregants have confessed their sins to God and received assurance of their forgiveness, and before the transition to the communion table. Symbolically, the passing of the peace is a time in which members of the congregation are to affirm peace amongst each other before taking the bread and wine as a unified body. In most Anglican churches, the passing of the peace takes one or two minutes and involves shaking the hands of those nearest oneself in the pews. What is noteworthy about the passing of peace at Westside is that it can extend to four or five minutes, during which all able-bodied people get up out of their seats and walk around the entire sanctuary of the church. While some extend the standard handshake to each other, these are supplemented by hugs, kisses, laughter, and brief conversations. Every week of my fieldwork I was struck by the warmth and intensity of interaction between people during the passing of the peace. The interactions crossed lines of age and ethnicity and social status.

Churches that are actively seeking to nurture relationships of depth and longevity also create relational structures that extend beyond Sunday services and church-specific spaces. Such practices include formal initiatives such as pairing programs, mid-week fellowship groups, and retreats, as well as informal practices of hospitality and mutual support. Arnold, a young Black British man who attends a large and diverse evangelical church, described the “pairs programme” initiated by the leadership in his church. In this initiative, people

in the congregation were randomly paired with another person (of the same sex) to meet up for three meals together. This was significant in building relationships between people who would perhaps not naturally gravitate towards each other. In Arnold's case, he described meeting up with a guy who was a "*very straight, very white*" accountant, and they bonded over a shared love of jazz. Mid-week Bible studies and fellowship groups are common structures in evangelical churches where people are encouraged to build closer and ongoing relationships. Previous congregational research has indicated that churches with small group structures are more likely to be racially diverse (Dougherty and Huyser 2008), as they provide regular forums for the development of more intimate bridging social ties. These groups often meet in people's homes. As remarked by Janice, a middle-aged white woman who hosts a midweek group, these are spaces where people are confronted with differences around race, class, mental health, and a range of other differences in a very personal way. The importance of hosting people and visiting other people's homes was stressed as a key way of strengthening relationships. Janice said:

So being in people's homes, eating with them, living with them I think is quite different.

So some of the people that I have had contact with at church, are very different to people that I have contact with in any other walk of life and I have really been into their homes in a way which I wouldn't have done...I think it's made me less judgmental. Otherwise, I can be incredibly judgmental and 'people should clearly be like me'.

Many people I spoke with remarked that being in people's homes, seeing how other people parent, eating homemade food, and even using other people's bathrooms, helped them to develop closer bonds with people and demystify cultural or ethnic differences. Being

together in a home creates a sense of intimacy and vulnerability, with the potential to foster more equal exchange. The vicars of both Westside and Eastside are intentional about opening their homes, for birthdays and celebrations as well as in difficult periods when they might naturally desire privacy.

In addition to mid-week groups, retreats and away days were cited by the people I spoke with as important opportunities for developing and strengthening relationships across racial lines. Silvia describes how eating meals, sharing facilities, and having conversations on a retreat in rural England changed her relationships with people in church:

It just forces you to interact more, and I think after the first retreat, that's when I really got to know a lot of the Asian people there, and then that is what started to gel, and following that, we came back into church, and there was more conversations with people, and, you know, things taking place like that.

As described above, practices of pairing congregants for meals, mid-week groups, and retreats have the potential to deepen relationships in ways that Sunday service practices cannot. An indication of the strength of these relationships is whether they then extend beyond formal, structured activities, into the everyday joys and challenges of life. During my time with members of the Westside congregation, I observed many instances of church members supporting each other in practical ways. For example, a number of the members of Westside, including the vicars, have been actively supporting a Jamaican family in which the father, Devon, has been threatened with deportation. Church members of all backgrounds have prayed, written letters on Devon's behalf, accompanied the family to legal proceedings, provided employment for family members, and offered ongoing emotional support. One Sunday during sharing time, Devon thanked the church family for their

prayer and encouragement. He specifically thanked Uncle Abraham, an elderly Indian man who has been part of the church for several decades. Devon spoke of how miracles still happen and that one has happened in his life. Meanwhile, Carmen and Jill from the back of the sanctuary were shouting: “*Come on, tell us what happened!*” Devon started to cry and handed the microphone over to his wife, who shared that Devon has finally gotten permission from the Home Office for him to stay in the UK. The congregation cheered at the news (including a few “*Amens*” and “*Hallelujahs*” from the back). Deborah, sitting next to me, teared up. The couple gave special thanks to Stephen and Abigail, who they say have helped them faithfully and intensively. After they shared, Abigail invited Uncle Abraham up to pray for them. She invited the congregation to lift up our hands to heaven in praise, which most people do during the prayer. After the prayer, Devon and his wife went around the sanctuary giving hugs to lots of people in the congregation. Devon spent part of the time pushing the wheelchair and chatting to Doris, the oldest woman in the congregation, who has also prayed consistently for Devon and his family.

Jill shared another example of the reaction of church family members to the fall of one of the elderly white women, Auntie Faith:

Auntie Faith one day, she goes to her family who live near me, and one day I saw Shweta running down the road, she was Hindu, she married a Muslim, and they are now Christians, she was running down the road, she was saying, ‘Auntie Faith has had a fall. Auntie Faith’s been mugged.’ She called her. So I went with her. It was her and this Hindu woman, this Black woman were going ‘Auntie Faith, Auntie Faith, are you okay?’ And she’s just responding very normally and naturally, and the policeman was looking very confused. Really confused. ‘Is she a foster mom?’ In the end, he’s like, ‘How

do you know her?’ We’re like, ‘We go to church together.’ But it’s that kind of very normal, very natural, you’ve just kind of grown up with people who are your sisters and brothers...

For Jill, this story served to illustrate how the church family has such strength of relationships across racial lines that members instinctively help each other in times of difficulty and use familial language to refer to each other. The terms ‘uncle’ and ‘auntie’ are very frequently used in how Black, white, and Asian congregants refer to each other at Westside. During my time at Westside, I also observed church members helping each other apply for jobs, navigate asylum claims, and visit each other in hospitals and care homes.

At Westside, experiences of shared suffering have had a powerful impact on deepening relationships between racial groups. The congregation has experienced the tragic deaths of several of its lay leaders. Reflecting on the death of a key British Asian leader in the 1980s, the previous vicar Timothy recalls:

That was the first time we ever had a multi-language, multi-racial prayer meeting in church, and we had about 50 or 60 people come from all over and we prayed in different languages about the situation. It did actually bring us together. The Asian group recognized how upset I was and there was unity.

For Timothy, as a vicar who had invested considerable energy into diversifying the leadership, the deep sadness he demonstrated at the death of Prem proved the authenticity of his commitment to the Asian members of his congregation in a way that nothing else could. Sharing the loss of Prem catalyzed a multi-racial, multi-lingual prayer gathering and built trust and friendship between Asian, white, and Black members of the congregation. As

Wuthnow (2008) and Braunstein, Fulton, and Wood (2014) have argued, collective prayer can build solidarity and generate stronger attachment to a shared identity. The practice of regular collective prayer was cited as important for developing and deepening interracial relationships in other churches as well. Gordon reflected that some of his most significant relationships are with white pastors he has met with meet on a weekly basis to pray with over the course of many years. Because prayer is an intimate form of communication with God in which vulnerabilities are exposed, the experience of praying with another person can also create intimacy and trust.

While the significance of cultivating interpersonal relationships across racial lines was repeatedly emphasized both in discourse and in practice, the people I spoke with acknowledged that it is not always an easy task. Ben, a young white man at Eastside, reflected that diversity is “*hard work*”. Talking about his mid-week small group, which has people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, Ben says that it has been more difficult to form close friendships in this setting (despite having been part of Eastside for several years) compared to more homogeneous churches that he has been a part of. He reflects that making conversation is harder work and requires more energy and patience in diverse settings, because people don’t naturally have as much in common. Harriet at Westside, who spends a significant amount of her time doing outreach in her community and building relationships with South Asian families in particular, said:

Obviously, I have quite a real passion for India, and I’m passionate for—and yet, at the church, I notice, I will, even me, I automatically go and sit with my friend who’s a white lady. My closest friendships will be with white, just because it’s more comfortable, you have more in common. You understand each other intrinsically. Whereas other

people, you have to work with a bit harder perhaps. Some of the — I mean, yeah, some Asian families here who are quite tight-knit, and I don't feel I can almost break into that. They are close because of that. I worry about that sometimes and think, 'what can I do about that?'

From the perspective of these interlocutors, nurturing relationships across racial and cultural lines requires intentionality and hard work, even for those who are committed to the idea in principle.

Collectively, the practices of sharing food, sharing physical space, and creating small-group structures for more regular and intensive interaction, did appear to facilitate relationships across racial boundaries. In many cases, these relationships were characterized by depth and commitment, demonstrated by the willingness of people to sacrifice time and energy and money to support people across racial boundaries. At Westside in particular, many of the relationships that I observed demonstrated mutuality, challenging the paternalistic norms of white middle-class people being in the position of helper or savior, and minorities being in the position of recipient. Previous research on evangelicals and evangelical congregations has observed that the emphasis on interpersonal relationships in evangelical theology limits the degree to which evangelicals are willing to engage with structural issues (Becker 1998; Emerson and Smith 2001). At Eastside, it was certainly the case that the type of personal and social support offered within the congregation was characterized by personalism (Lichterman 1995a,b), and wider advocacy or campaigning efforts were nonexistent with the exception of abortion. At Westside, the experience of Devon mentioned above, as well as that of several Iranian asylum seekers, did generate greater awareness within the congregation of the racialized inequities in the UK immigration system. How-

ever, during the course of my fieldwork, I did not observe the church's support of these individuals (which was intensive) then extending into broader efforts to challenge systemic injustices.

PRACTICING REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

Finally, a significant practice articulated and demonstrated by the participants in the study is the practice of repentance and forgiveness towards those who have caused offence or harm. At a conference I attended on racial diversity in the church, one of the speakers asserted that in interracial relationships, a dynamic of repentance and forgiveness is paramount. He addressed white people and people of color separately. To white people he said: *"We have much more to learn about other cultures than people of color do about ours. We need to recognize that whiteness is dominant and normative. We must not be quick to deny racism in our own hearts. We are called to weep with those who weep."* To people of color he said: *"Beware the Pharisaism of being a victim. The human heart never misses an opportunity for self-justification. Overcome evil with good."* To both groups he said: *"Be quick to repent and quick to forgive."*

The practices of repentance and forgiveness are core elements of the Anglican and evangelical cultural toolkits. In an Anglican liturgical context, every service includes the "confession" followed by the "absolution" prior to taking Holy Communion. The standard text from the *Book of Common Prayer* is:

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly

sorry and we humbly repent, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Evangelical churches teach that every person is sinful and in need of forgiveness. Repentance encompasses the acts of acknowledging one's sinfulness, seeking forgiveness, and committing to turn away from one's sin. Evangelicals talk about repentance and forgiveness as having both a "vertical" and "horizontal" dimension — vertical referring to the relationship between people and God, and horizontal referring to the relationship between people and each other. This idea draws upon the phrase in the Lord's Prayer: "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." A sin committed against another person is understood to also be a sin committed against God, adding spiritual weight to the offense.

At Westside, this doctrine is mobilized in support of the message that because God forgives us, we also are called to forgive others. The Westside congregation has experienced a number of conflicts between members, including financial disputes, family grudges, resistance to interracial marriages, and political rifts around Brexit and stemming all the way back to Partition. During my fieldwork, the preaching team at Westside led a four-month sermon series devoted to forgiveness, in an effort to equip and challenge congregants to live out this doctrine in their own conflicts. The doctrine is applied both to individual and collective sins. On the level of individual sins, Wendy reflected that at Westside there are frequent cases of causing harm or offence across racial and cultural lines:

So it's really complicated. And how do you, how do we, how do we care for one another and try not to cause inadvertent offence, but also how do we forgive one another for the times when we do? Because frankly when you're working with more than one culture,

not even the most culturally aware person is gonna get it right all the time. And so it's actually a real journey of having to live and work out forgiveness and grace towards one another.

Wendy describes the dynamic of repentance and forgiveness as a “*journey*” rather than a one-off experience. Because sins are likely to be repeated, confession and forgiveness are also required repeatedly. During my time at Westside and Eastside, I observed a number of conflicts that led to repentance and forgiveness. The offenses ranged from small to serious, including Asian parents disparaging Black and white parents’ approach to child discipline, white women critiquing the amount of sugar Asian women put in their tea, confidentiality being broken after a prayer session, leaders dismissing the opinions of congregation members, hurt feelings over soloist selections, and others. Some of these transgressions had a racial element, and others did not.

Repentance and forgiveness are not easy practices. As Rhonda pointed out, they involve loss and grief. Rhonda (of Kenyan heritage) is part of an evangelical church that was deliberately restructured a couple of years ago to cultivate a multiracial, multicultural community. In this process there have been a number of conflicts and damaged relationships. Reflecting on what she would have done differently when the new leadership team first formed, Rhonda said:

I mean within the team first I would take the whole thing through like a grieving process, because it's a loss. It's a loss that is happening...I think to acknowledge what you've lost and to realize you're angry about this and be able talk about that...you have to really be comfortable with counting your losses. You have to prepare to be hurt. You have prepare to disappoint people, especially with those who have been in your church long and they're

not open to some of these changes. Truly be sure what you're getting yourself into. It may sound nice and such a big vision, you're going to become part of something great, but it comes with a cost.

Rhonda is upfront about the fact that while a racially integrated church is a compelling vision, for many people the practice of it involves conflict and hurt and loss — whether around decision-making power, cultural practices, or sense of belonging and comfort. Being able to grieve these losses, repent where harm is caused across racial and cultural lines, and forgive each other is necessary for a church to move forward.

Some interlocutors also emphasized the importance of not repeating the sins of one's oppressors. For example George said:

Yes, they [ethnic minorities] might have felt very unwelcome in a stiff upper lip or middle-class church, but the alternative isn't to create an Indian-only church. The alternative is to create, okay, a Bible-centered welcoming church. So, why does the conclusion to that problem have to be 'oh, the British church is very unwelcoming, so we created an Indian church.' That may or may not be as unwelcoming to other outsiders. Are we accidentally becoming unwelcoming to the British people who might want to come?

George argues that the right response to the sin of the white British church excluding racial minorities is not for racial minorities to then withdraw and exclude British or other groups. In his interview George pushed strongly, on the basis of New Testament passages, for Christians from different ethnoracial groups to learn how to forgive and worship alongside each other. Compared to George, the Black British evangelicals I spoke with tended to emphasize that the sins of the oppressors (white British people) should not be placed

on the same level as the sins of other groups, and that they required much more in-depth self-examination, repentance, and change. In other words, the sins of promoting or being complicit in colonial exploitation, the slave trade, and the perpetuation of white supremacy are of such great magnitude that they cannot be compared to any contemporary sin.

At Westside, the need for repentance and forgiveness was applied not only to current interpersonal conflicts but also to historic and collective injustices. Reflecting on the wrongs that Caribbeans have experienced at the hands of the Anglican church, Jill said:

I know that the Church of England has its own issues with being part of owning slaves and things of the Caribbean and that kind of thing, being part of the sugar — so there was that kind of dirty legacy that the Church of England has, but I still believe that God moves wherever he wants to move...

Jill recognizes the historic sins of the Church of England, including its involvement in the slave trade. However, she is also quick to say that Caribbean people and English people are both part of the global Anglican Communion, and that the only way to move forward and bring change is to forgive and to remain within the Anglican Communion, rather than withdrawing from the institution: “...and actually what I’m here for is to live for the kingdom and if that means upsetting and disturbing things within the Church of England, which I don’t tend to do a lot, but every now and again, then that’s what I have to do.” Part of “upsetting and disturbing things” is calling out the Church of England for things it needs to repent of as an institution, from Jill’s perspective. These include justification of empire, participation in the slave trade, unwillingness to welcome migrant communities after the Second World War, and the perpetuation of a church culture that excludes minorities. Black British interlocutors in particular emphasized that while extending forgiveness from

Black British people to white British people is necessary, so is repentance from the white British church. As Ben Lindsay has argued in his recent book on race addressed to British church audiences: “For racial reconciliation to be achieved, for racial solidarity to be realized in the UK Church, Black forgiveness of white racial wrongs cannot be the only answer. White confession and repentance also need to happen” (2019:86).

For evangelicals in multiracial churches, the salience of interpersonal repentance and forgiveness is linked to the emphasis on discomfort leading to spiritual growth, as articulated in the *essential* frame. The act of confession demands that the perpetrator recognize and admit the wrong that they have done, and this can be painful or awkward. The act of forgiveness demands both a recognition of the harm experienced as well as a willingness to absolve the perpetrator of that harm. The humility required to repent, and the grace required to forgive, are marked as character traits that make people more like Jesus and therefore have great spiritual value. In her study of an Asian-majority multiracial congregation in California, Garces-Foley (2007a) refers to a “theology of discomfort” that “reframes the costs of the multiethnic church in light of the Gospel...In other words, the experience of discomfort becomes a primary source of faith development” (p. 134). I heard this thinking frequently at both Westside and Eastside. Evangelicals see their participation in the practices of confession and forgiveness as a marker of their distinction from the broader society in which they live. A number of sermons and small group conversations during my fieldwork brought up the perceived problems of “political correctness” and “cancel culture”, in which wrong speech or behavior is judged swiftly and offered no redemption. Evangelicals see the practices of repentance and forgiveness as unique to their cultural toolkit and therefore as essential to individual Christian growth and to the collective witness of the church.

How does the emphasis on confession and forgiveness relate to evangelicals' willingness to pursue racial justice? Do these practices cause evangelicals to spiritualize inequality and injustice and consequently fail to pursue the material and political dimensions of justice? Black British theologian Robert Beckford writes, "So long as the oppression continues, we can forgive but we can't afford to forget" (1998:178). Beckford suggests that while forgiveness is necessary and powerful, true repentance involves changed behavior within the person or institution that caused harm. In other words, it is not enough to stop with confession and forgiveness. As the preacher at Eastside emphasized in multiple Sunday sermons, given that the Greek word for repentance (*metanoia*) means "to turn", repentance requires people to stop perpetrating the wrongs they had done and to start doing things that are right. From that perspective, genuine repentance of racial injustice is only made manifest if it results in sharing power and resources, advocating for justice, and willingness to challenge the norms and values of the church so that it can become a space of greater equality and inclusion.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored some of the practices that can contribute to the process of racial integration within the context of the local church. These practices are learning, promoting diversity in leadership, integrating diverse practices into church gatherings, cultivating interracial friendships within a congregation, and extending grace and forgiveness. The process of learning about the experiences and cultures of people of ethnoracial identifications different from oneself can challenge white normativity, if it is done in a spirit of humility and willingness to recognize the "sins" and "idols" of one's own culture. Investing

in the process of identifying and training racial minority leaders can challenge racial hierarchies, if white leaders are willing to give up some of their power and trust minorities to lead. The integration of a broader range of cultural toolkits in the context of the Sunday service (including musical styles, approach to tithing, administration of Holy Communion, clothing styles, and usage of time and space) can begin to decenter white middle-class cultural norms that tend to dominate in multiracial churches. Cultivating interracial relationships can reduce prejudice and distrust between groups and shape a culture of greater mutuality and equality, rather than a culture of division or of paternalism. Relationships across racial boundaries can expose congregation members to the particular issues that people face on account of their race, however as previous research has shown, this exposure does not appear to translate into significant activism around structural issues. Finally, the practices of repentance and forgiveness offer a spiritual framing for dealing with racial conflict between individuals and groups. The practices of repentance and forgiveness, which are central to the global evangelical and Anglican cultural toolkits, enable evangelicals to process their experience of conflict within a framework of spiritual growth. The centrality of this practice also constitutes a key identity marker for evangelicals, which they see as a trait that makes them distinct from the broader society and its turn towards “cancel culture” and “identity politics.” Willingness to repent and forgive is deemed essential to the functioning of a multiracial congregation in the long-term.

Conclusion

I began designing this study in the wake of the EU referendum and the 2016 US presidential election. I am concluding the writing in the run up to the 2020 presidential election, as Brexit continues to be negotiated and as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement gains momentum on both sides of the Atlantic. In this tumultuous period, symbolic and social boundaries around group identity are being hotly contested. Divisions of class, region, and race have been exposed in visceral and emotive ways. With regards to race in particular, recent events have increased the salience of inequality and marginalization. In this context, institutions of all kinds — schools, universities, businesses, charities, and government bodies — are being challenged to examine how their own practices advance or hinder racial equality and inclusion. Religious institutions also play a role in shaping racial boundaries and racial inequalities. Edgell (2012) observes that examining religion in the context of social boundary processes “provides a way to think about religion as a source of cultural power — the power to categorize, to assign worth, to define objectives and rationales for action and to make claims on resources in a way that elides or hides relations of interest” (p. 257).

Religious narratives and practices provide powerful tools for the categorization and organization of groups, which in turn have implications for processes of racial integration.

The present study has examined the religious institution of evangelical Christianity in Britain. As the established religion, the church holds a privileged position in articulating and enacting boundaries of belonging and the ways in which race, faith, and nationality interact in shaping those boundaries. The evangelical wing of the church, which has a missional mandate for growth in the context of a rapidly secularizing and pluralizing Britain, has a particular incentive to be inclusive across ethnic and racial lines. Consequently, during the last 5-10 years there has been a rising interest in “diversity” in the church, evidenced by the establishment of the Evangelical Alliance One People Commission in 2013, the addition of ethnic diversity panels to church-planting conference programs, and the publication of *We Need to Talk about Race: Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority Churches* (Lindsay 2019). There is a growing recognition that the mission of the evangelical church needs to include the increasing number of ethnic and racial minorities in Britain, but only an embryonic conversation about how to do that and what the implications are for church strategy and culture and leadership. This exploratory study investigated the following questions: How do evangelicals *frame* racial diversity, as it relates to the mission of the church? What are the cultural and institutional *barriers* to achieving greater racial diversity in the church? What are the organizational *practices* that churches are deploying in an effort to overcome some of those barriers and facilitate greater diversity? And how do these beliefs and practices harden or erode racial boundaries? Engaging the literatures on religion, race, and integration, my dissertation has shed light on how evangelicals draw upon their cultural toolkits to frame and act upon racial diversity in the context of congre-

gations, and how the content and usage of those toolkits is shaped by wider institutional participation and structural location.

Through my interviews and ethnographic work, I found that evangelicals frame racial diversity in four primary ways: as *essential*, *instrumental*, *irrelevant*, or a *barrier* to the mission of the church. Evangelicals draw on a range of cultural repertoires as they articulate their framing of racial diversity. These include biblical narratives and images, scripts common to conservative evangelical and Pentecostal subculture, institutional growth strategies, progressive discourse around racial justice, and personal experience. Which tools people deploy depends on what scripts are salient within their own congregations and the nature of interaction they have had with people racially distinct from themselves in other spheres of life. In the two primary congregations where I undertook fieldwork, Westside and Eastside, the *essential* frame is discursively prominent in the mission statements, website content, and sermons of the churches. The individuals who attend these churches endorse the *essential* frame, though with some exceptions. One of the noteworthy features of the *essential* frame is that it treats racial and ethnic differences as God-ordained. The implications of this belief for the advancement of racial integration are mixed. On the one hand, emphasizing the God-ordained nature of racial diversity mitigates the risk of adopting a colorblind approach to race because it asserts that racial distinctions have some kind of meaning and purpose. On the other hand, churches espousing the *essential* frame can reduce racial differences to matters of individual identities or cultural traits, thereby failing to appreciate the structural and oppressive realities of race. By assigning spiritual value to racial diversity, evangelical churches advocating the *essential* frame are likely to promote diversity as something to be celebrated, but less equipped to critically challenge racial hierarchies.

Having explored the ways that evangelicals frame racial diversity, I then turned to consider some of the institutional and cultural barriers to the vision for multiracial congregations becoming a reality. These include a lack of education about race, barriers to the recruitment of minority leadership, lingering impacts of colonialism, and intersections with class. I examined how these factors contribute to serious gaps in knowledge, disparities in power between white and minority evangelicals, feelings of alienation among people of color, and a cerebral religiosity that leaves little room for emotional or embodied engagement. In this analysis, there are a few features that emerge that are distinct from the American context. One is the content of the primary, secondary, and tertiary educational curriculum. While there is undoubtedly a white-centric bias to the American public school curriculum and many gaps, it appears that the British school curriculum prepares students even worse for understanding the histories, experiences and contributions of ethnoracial minorities in Britain. Another noteworthy feature of British evangelicalism that is distinct from American evangelicalism is its class structure. The dominant pathway of evangelical leadership development, starting at elite private schools and continuing to elite universities, produces cohorts of leaders who are accustomed to privilege and far removed from the lived experience of the vast majority of their congregants. “Diversity” is an abstract term for leaders trained through this elite pathway, and they are not accustomed to learning from or sharing power with people who do not look and sound like themselves. Within the most influential evangelical congregations, the dominant styles of leadership, preaching, and social interaction, as well as perceptions of competence, are shaped by the norms of this elite group. American evangelicalism (and American Protestantism more generally) is highly entrepreneurial and decentralized, which allows for the proliferation of styles and subcultures

and pathways to leadership. By contrast, British evangelicalism, which constitutes a smaller proportion of the population and is more tightly controlled by a smaller set of institutions and networks, does not allow for the same kind of diverse and rapid proliferation. This means that it is more difficult to penetrate the boundaries around evangelical leadership for people who do not share that particular subculture. The ways in which racism and classism intersect create significant barriers for the integration of racial minorities into mainstream evangelical churches and institutions.

Having considered the cultural and institutional obstacles to racial integration in the evangelical church, in the third chapter I focused on the organizational practices that churches deploy in an effort to tackle some of those barriers. These practices include investing in learning about racial and cultural groups different to oneself, diversifying church leadership, integrating the practices and styles of a broader cultural toolkit, cultivating interracial relationships, and extending grace and forgiveness. For each of these practices, I examined how and to what extent they are able to challenge racial hierarchies. Identifying, supporting, and giving space to ethnic minority leaders is one of the most significant practices churches can undertake to contest racial hierarchies. While the previous chapter highlighted that Anglicanism faces an integration challenge because of its close links to the establishment and the elitism of its clergy, one of the integration assets available to it is its membership in the global Anglican Communion. Westside, along with a couple of other churches engaged in the study, are endeavoring to tap into this identity as “Anglican” rather than “Church of England” and thereby to broaden the cultural toolkit of the congregation to include some of the styles, languages, and musical forms of fellow Anglicans across the world. This is one way of decentering Englishness and whiteness from their con-

gregational worship practices. While Anglican liturgical forms tend to be highly structured (and arguably thereby constrain freedom of expression), they do contain a number of rituals that can be significant for fostering integration on a physical, psychological, and social level. Perhaps most important among these are Holy Communion and the passing of the peace. These two practices reinforce a sense of equality (a reminder that all people are sinful yet all are welcome together around the table of God), mutuality, and social and spiritual solidarity. The parish structure of Anglicanism (in contrast to the gathered model of most evangelical churches) also incentivizes church leaders to invest in personal and institutional relationships within their own geographic patch. This local geographic focus can mitigate the homophily tendency to a greater degree than the gathered model of church, if the local area is diverse.

A final set of practices that emerged as significant in my fieldwork was repentance and forgiveness. These practices are embedded in the weekly Anglican liturgy and were preached about extensively during my fieldwork. The necessity of grace and forgiveness also surfaced repeatedly in interviews, typically in the context of what makes participation in a multiracial congregation difficult. White, Asian, and Black respondents talked about forgiveness as way to deal with racial conflict, and framed the experience as an essential part of spiritual growth. This particular tool in the evangelical cultural toolkit can strengthen integration on the level of interpersonal relationships, as it requires a demonstration of vulnerability and humility between the wronged person and the wrongdoer. However, the practice of forgiveness in evangelical churches has limited capacity to facilitate integration on a material or political level, as this would require the admission of collective and/or historic wrongs. While a number of the Black Christians I interviewed talked about the need for

the white church to collectively repent of its sins against people of color and change institutional behavior around leadership and resources, I did not hear this as much from white respondents. This is in part because collective sins and collective forgiveness are not part of the white evangelical toolkit. As a generalization, white evangelicalism is highly individualistic in its theology and also future-oriented. By contrast, the cultural toolkits of Black evangelicalism (and to a certain extent South Asian evangelicalism), place a greater emphasis on collective identities of family or race or institution, and incorporate historical narratives into their preaching and teaching more than white evangelicals do. Compared to white-majority evangelical churches, Black-majority churches tend to draw more on Old Testament texts, in which collective identities and God's deliverance from unjust human structures are prominent. White-majority evangelical churches tend to emphasize personal sin and personal holiness in their preaching, paying minimal attention to corporate identity or responsibility. Consequently, while all evangelicals would agree that "repentance and forgiveness" is an essential part of racial reconciliation and integration, they attach different meanings to the phrase. For white evangelicals, they feel they have done enough if they apologize to a Black friend for making an insensitive comment and receive forgiveness from that friend. For evangelicals of color, there is an understanding that repentance and forgiveness must also encompass collective and structural evils, compelling action that impacts the social and material world rather than just an individual spiritual act.

ASSIMILATION AND INTEGRATION

The dynamics I have observed in this study also lead me to reflect on processes of assimilation and integration. Churches are interested in maintaining participation of entire fam-

ilies over multiple generations. This means that the existence of demographic diversity in a church will necessarily contribute to some sort of process of assimilation or integration over time. The direction and nature of these processes of assimilation or integration is one of the areas of debate within the literature on multiracial churches (Pitt 2010; Barron 2016). Do multiracial churches necessitate assimilation? Is this good or bad? The answer to these questions depends in part on how assimilation is defined. Classical assimilation theories (Warner and Srole 1945; Gordon 1964) assumed that complete acculturation and Anglo-conformity were the desired and inevitable endpoints of assimilation. Normatively, this conception is obviously problematic because it assumes a social Darwinian racial hierarchy with Blacks at the bottom and whites at the top. However, more recent theorists (Portes and Zhou 1993; Brubaker 2001; Alba and Nee 2003) have attempted to modify the theory, discarding the normative commitment to Anglo-conformity and accounting for empirical variations between groups. Because of the Anglo-centric baggage linked to the term “assimilation”, I prefer to use the term “integration”. Integration is a two-way process in which members of minority groups and majority groups change. Harkening back to Gordon (1964), there is value in treating integration as a multidimensional process that is not limited to acculturation. I maintain that integration has four dimensions: discursive, social, identificational, and political. By “discursive” I mean what people are explicitly taught about who “we” are and who “they” are. These are the symbolic boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002; Wimmer 2008) articulated by groups to define themselves in relation to others. The social dimension of racial integration refers to bridging social ties in the form of acquaintances, friendships and marriages/partnerships. The identificational

dimension refers to a subjective sense of belonging and linked fate. And the political dimension refers to how power and resources are distributed.

What do my findings show about the degree to which evangelical cultural toolkits can facilitate racial integration across these various dimensions? Discursively, as I explored in the first chapter, the evangelical toolkit offers a number of images and ideas that can facilitate integration at the level of conceptual understanding. The contexts of this discourse include sermons, Bible studies, books, and conferences. In terms of the doctrinal toolkit, this includes the beliefs that all people are made in the image of God, that God created diversity within humanity to reflect the diversity of his own nature, and that heaven will preserve group identities. The Revelation 7:9 text of “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” provides a compelling image that makes room for racial and cultural diversity within the boundaries of the people of God. Given the context in the UK (and the US) of polarization and racial upheaval, normatively we are in need of discursive tools to expand the boundaries of belonging. One of the risks for evangelical churches, however, is that they become so focused on drawing the boundaries between themselves and other kinds of churches (e.g. “‘we’ are a racially integrated church but ‘they’ are a less mature mono-racial church”) that they undermine their own efforts to model this kind of discursive integration to the wider communities they serve. It is worth observing that this preoccupation with boundary-drawing between those deemed to be adequately or inadequately “progressive” is also a risk for other types of institutions.

In terms of social integration, the ethnographic data from Westside and Eastside suggests that multiracial congregations are places where bridging social ties form. This is per-

haps not surprising, given the significant emphasis that evangelicals place on interpersonal relationships. Structures such as pairing programs, weekly small group meetings, and retreats foster the development of relationships across lines of race. In a number of cases, the friendships formed in the context appear to be characterized by trust, vulnerability, and mutuality. At Westside, a number of interracial marriages have resulted from relationships developed in the context of congregational life. Given what we know about the benefits of social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988) and bridging social capital in particular (Frank and Yasumoto 1998; Paxton 1999; Wuthnow 2002), the acquiring of bridging social ties in a congregational context has the potential to generate social and economic benefits outside congregational life.

In the process of identificational integration, there is a tension between promoting a transcendent corporate identity and recognizing and reinforcing individual-level and group-level distinctions. As mentioned in the introduction, in the literature on multiracial congregations one of the points of debate is whether churches are able to achieve identificational integration of members without erasing individual and group identities. Marti (2010) argues that “ethnic transcendence” and identity reinforcement are at work simultaneously among African Americans in the multiracial church that he studied. Garces-Foley (2007b), on the other hand, argues that embracing “ethnic transcendence” requires the erasure of race and is therefore effectively colorblind. Garces-Foley also argues that evangelical Protestants are the most likely to push for ethnic transcendence and against identity reinforcement. She argues that while Catholics welcome the “gift” of Catholics from different ethnoracial identities, and liberal Protestant churches use the language of “celebration of

diversity”, evangelical Protestant churches tend towards assimilation because they associate “diversity” with secular liberals. According to Garces-Foley:

The absence of multicultural language also reflects, however, the importance of the ‘born again’ experience for evangelicals. If ethnic identity and cultural heritage are valued from an evangelical perspective, it is not because such differences are in themselves praiseworthy, but because they have been redeemed through Christ. (P. 217)

What I observed at Eastside and Westside was a bit different from Garces-Foley’s observations. The evangelicals I interviewed and observed do use the language of diversity, mobilizing biblical narratives and ideas to formulate the concept. Westside in particular, through its explicit discourse and its organizational practices, demonstrates that cultural differences have value because they are reflections of God’s character, and because Revelation depicts the maintenance of cultural differences. At Westside, examples of ethnic reinforcement include the use of native languages beyond English, the maintenance of ethnic dress, having longer services, incorporating story-telling into sermons and “sharing time” and other elements of church life, showing deference to elders in the congregation, and explicit recognition of the histories and contributions of minority groups to the church and neighborhood. At the same time, both Westside and Eastside preach that Christian identity should transcend every other identity (age, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, class, political party, etc.). In other words, commitment to God and to the church should supersede loyalty to any other identity or group to which a person is affiliated. These two churches also frequently preach that all cultures have been corrupted by human sin. Within this framework, every culture has features that reflect God’s character and should be celebrated, and every culture has elements that have been distorted by sin and need to be redeemed. Thus, the

cultural toolkits deployed in Westside and (to a lesser extent) Eastside make space for identity reinforcement alongside ethnic transcendence. In other words, individuals experience identificational integration into the congregation while also reinforcing other identities (race, ethnicity, nationality). It should be repeated, however, that Westside has been intentionally fostering this form of integration for four decades, and is not representative of evangelical churches as a whole.

The political dimension is perhaps the most contested dimension of integration in the British evangelical church, and arguably the one in which the most work is needed. One of the elements of the evangelical cultural toolkit that hinders progress in this area is the tendency to spiritualize material conditions (including racial inequality) and to frame material challenges as opportunities for spiritual growth rather than things to challenge or dismantle. This tendency is particularly prominent in white-majority conservative evangelical churches, which go to great lengths to distance themselves from anything they perceive to be theologically liberal. Historically, white evangelicals in both the US and the UK sought to differentiate their theology from the “social gospel”, which they perceived as wrongfully elevating material concerns above personal salvation (Wuthnow 1988; Barclay 1997). Black evangelicals, and to a lesser extent British Asian evangelicals, tend to attach greater significance to material conditions and to highlight in Scripture themes of God’s justice, preference for the poor, and desire to deliver people from harmful material (as well as spiritual) conditions. At a place like Westside, which has significant Black and Asian communities in the congregation, there is evidence that a more expansive biblical toolkit (including themes of justice and challenging oppression in this world) is at work in the preaching and practices of the church. This is manifest in the sharing of leadership across ethnic and racial

groups and in the church's social justice activities in the wider community. Whether the growth of the Black and Asian segments of evangelicalism in Britain can challenge the evangelical culture beyond individual congregations like Westside is yet to be seen. As of now, the ingrained legacies of colonialism, entrenched classism, and individualistic spiritual focus of the white evangelical toolkit limit its scope for facilitating integration in the dimensions of power and resources, either within or beyond the church. Whether the increasing momentum of the BLM movement in the UK following the death of George Floyd can catalyze institutional change in the church is a topic for further research.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHURCHES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

What are the practical implications of this study for churches seeking to become more diverse? The findings of this study suggest that churches first need to consider the difference between “diversity” and “integration”. Churches that are striving for diversity rather than integration are likely to fall into the *instrumental* frame, treating minorities in a tokenistic fashion and failing to address issues of participation and power. Based on the evidence from Eastside and particularly from Westside, having a clear vision for racial integration as essential to gospel witness in a diversifying and secularizing society has been a critical part of their journeys towards racial integration. This vision has both a theological grounding and a strategic missional purpose, both of which are important to disseminate across the leadership team and congregation to ensure wider buy in. Because evangelicals value biblical authority very highly and see their adherence to Scripture as a key boundary marker that differentiates them both from wider society and from other churches, making the biblical case for racial integration is an important to generating a sense of alignment with

evangelical identity. As Garces-Foley writes, “[f]rom a theological standpoint, multicultural churches must take a stance on the significance of ethnicity and culture within the Christian community. Are ethnicity and culture affirmed in the church’s theology, or are they erased by the transcendent identifications as Christians?” (2007b:217).

After a clear vision is in place, investing the time to listen to members of the congregation from diverse backgrounds and experiences, as well as investing the time to understand the local parish and the history of the various communities in that parish, is worth prioritizing for church leaders. Developing ways to disseminate this learning to the wider congregation and institutionalize it are also necessary to cultivating a more informed and inclusive congregation over the long-term. Material culture and practices such as iconography and church photo displays, church history or story-telling events, interviews with church members or members of the community during church services, etc. can contribute to this process. When it comes to decentering whiteness from the Sunday services, some of the initial practices for churches to consider are doing an audit of the songs, sermon illustrations, liturgical styles, book recommendations, and guest speakers that have featured over the last year. This can give an initial view into racial representation across these areas and where changes may need to be made. To facilitate integration in the political realm, it is essential for churches to prioritize the hiring of people of color from the outset. It is much more difficult for a church to become multiracial if it starts with an all-white staff team than if it starts with a more diverse staff team. Willingness to genuinely share power and have people of color in high status positions, rather than reproduce the “Guinness effect” is critical. To facilitate social and identificational integration, building in activities such as small groups, retreats, and bring-and-share meals are valuable. Perhaps the most challeng-

ing area for churches, particularly for evangelical churches, is being willing to recognize structural inequalities and make the effort to tackle racial injustice. This involves equipping the church with a deeper understanding of inequality, listening to voices of those with lived experience and expertise, and broadening the cultural toolkit to include the elements of the Black and Asian toolkits around the reality of collective and structural sins and the mandate to take action to redress those wrongs. This requires an application of sin, repentance, and forgiveness that extends beyond interpersonal relationships to groups and structures. Finally, it is necessary for churches to recognize that this process takes time. Evangelical churches place a significant emphasis on growth. This is understandable in the British context, where levels of affiliation with Christianity are plummeting and evangelical churches feel an urgency to grow as quickly as possible. However, efficient quantitative growth and advancing racial justice are sometimes in tension with each other. Numerical growth is faster and easier when the Homogeneous Unit Principle is employed and when difficult conflicts are avoided. The pursuit of racial integration and racial justice requires listening, reading, reflecting, repenting, and fundamentally changing structures and processes and cultures. This is a time-consuming process, requiring humility from the dominant group to put the needs of others above their own. However, if churches are serious about both quantitative and qualitative growth that is sustained, then they need to be willing to make these sacrifices.

While this study has focused on the institution of the church, a number of these insights are also relevant to other institutions that are endeavoring to become more racially diverse. As mentioned in the first chapter, universities are institutions where conversations about diversity are highly salient. Beginning with affirmative action programs in the 1960s and

continuing into the present with a range of outreach programs and financial aid initiatives, universities have played a significant role in promoting and implementing diversity policies. Yet despite several decades of investment, racial disparities in higher education access and outcomes remain (Bhopal 2017). As Jack (2019) highlights in his recent work, *The Privileged Poor*, there is a big difference between access and inclusion. He writes: “Citizenship in any community, however, means more than just being physically present in a certain place. It is about a feeling of belonging in that place, a feeling that shapes your sense of who you are...Diversity must be continually cultivated” (p. 182). I would argue that the four frames I discuss in chapter 1 (*essential*, *instrumental*, *irrelevance*, and *barrier*) are worth consideration by university administrators and policy makers. In our current political environment, there is a risk of universities and other institutions jumping on the diversity bandwagon without critically examining what they mean by “diversity”, why they are promoting it, and how they move from access to inclusion. Without regular reminders of the moral and ideological foundations of promoting diversity, it is easy to slip into an instrumental mode. For universities, the *instrumental* frame is linked to concerns about maintaining global competitiveness in an increasingly crowded market, and the pressure to cultivate an image of being “progressive” without always having the institutional culture in place to legitimate that image. Thus, regular reflection on why cultivating diversity is essential to the mission of the university, as well as further action to address the material and cultural barriers to meaningful integration are needed. In my research, as in Jack’s (2019) work on universities, class emerges as a barrier that merits further attention both in churches and universities. For individuals who experience the intersection of racial discrimination and class disadvantage,

churches and universities must work much harder to tackle the specific unspoken cultural norms that can hinder inclusion and a full sense of belonging.

LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The British evangelical church's engagement with racial integration is much more recent than that of American evangelicals. This dissertation is an exploratory study into the ways that British evangelicals think about and act in relation to racial diversity. More quantitative and qualitative research is needed to understand how racial diversity is being pursued in other contexts in the UK. On a basic quantitative level, we do not currently know what percentage of congregations are multiracial. Gathering this data is important to generate a baseline from which change can be assessed over time. The degree of integration of minority clergy into evangelical churches also requires further investigation. While the Church of England collects demographic data on its ordinands (clergy in training) and clergy, it is difficult to access these statistics for other denominations in order to gain a more accurate picture of how representative clergy are of the congregations and communities they serve. Because newer denominations and Pentecostal churches are seeing some of the highest rates of growth in the UK, gaining further insight into the demographics and recruitment patterns of their leadership will be important to understanding patterns of racial integration moving forward. As noted in the introduction, much of the existing research on racial integration in the church focuses on the Black/white binary. In the UK, where Asians constitute the largest minority group (6.8% of the population, compared to 3.4% categorized as Black), it is particularly important to understand the experience and

trajectory of British Asians in mainstream evangelical congregations. In this study I have taken a step towards addressing this gap, but more work is needed.

My study was also focused on London, which is the most cosmopolitan city in the UK. In other regions of the UK, where levels of ethnic diversity are lower or where levels of racial segregation are higher (e.g. Bradford), the way in which churches frame and respond to issues of diversity and integration are likely to vary from the dynamics I observed in London. In the months and years ahead, it will also be valuable to track how churches, among other social institutions, continue to respond to the momentum of the BLM movement. While a number of churches and organizations have issued statements and made speeches and pledges in response to BLM, it will be important to assess how and to what extent responses to racial injustice are institutionalized in policies, practices, and organizational routines and styles. Whether the church fulfills its mandate to be an agent of justice and reconciliation during this tumultuous period will shape its impact and its moral authority for generations ahead.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Background and faith identity

To begin, I'd love to hear a bit about your life and background.

1. How did you get to where you are today? [probes below, as needed]
 - (a) Where were you born?
 - (b) Where did you grow up? Tell me about your neighborhood(s) growing up.
 - (c) Tell me about your primary school experience.
 - (d) Tell me about your secondary school experience.
 - (e) How did you end up in your current job?
2. Tell me about your family growing up — how was faith a part of your upbringing?
3. Some Christians describe themselves as “evangelical”. Would you use that word to describe yourself? What does that mean to you?
 - (a) *Probe*: How has the meaning of “evangelical” changed for you over time?
 - (b) How do you think the wider British public thinks about the label “evangelical”?

Church experience

1. As a Christian, how would you describe the mission of the church?
 - (a) *Probe*: What does the mission of the church entail?
2. What would you say are the top three social issues that churches should engage with as part of their mission?
3. Tell me a bit about your current church. How did you end up there?

4. On a weekly or monthly basis, what activities do you do that are connected to your church?
5. What kinds of people attend your church?
 - (a) Would you describe your church as “diverse”? In what ways?
 - (b) *Probe*: Demographics of church (age, gender, race and ethnicity, class, immigrant generations)

Evaluations of diversity in church

1. Some Christians think it’s good for churches to specialize in reaching a particular cultural, ethnic, or racial group, while other Christians think it’s good for churches to reach a diverse range of people. What do you think?
2. What would you say to another Christian who disagreed with you?
3. From your perspective, how does racial or ethnic diversity affect the life of a church?
4. How do you think racial or ethnic diversity can enhance the life of a church?
 - (a) *Probe*: Can you share an example of where you have seen or experienced diversity benefitting a church?
5. What challenges can racial or ethnic diversity bring to a church?
 - (a) *Probe*: Can you share an example of where you have seen or experienced diversity create a challenge for a church?

Conceptions of race

1. Tell me about the first time you became aware of race.
2. From what you can remember, how did your school teach about race?
 - (a) *Probe*: Topics of colonialism and slavery, biology, culture
3. What does the Bible teach about race and ethnicity?
4. If you had to give a definition for the concept of “race”, what would you say?
 - (a) *Probe*: Biological, cultural, social constructivist ideas

5. Why are there differences between racial groups?

(a) *Probe*: Biological, cultural, structural, historical, theological explanations

Racial inequality in the church

1. In your experience, how does the topic of race or ethnicity come up in church settings?

(a) *Probe*: Can you give me an example of a time it came up? Sermon? Small group discussion? Leadership team meeting?

2. Would you say that racism is a problem at all in British churches?

If yes: Can you give me an example of where you've seen or heard about racism in the church?

If no: Do you think racism is a problem in churches in other countries?

3. As of 2015, BME people made up about 15% of the UK's population and about 25% of the evangelical population, but only 3.4% of Church of England clergy. What are some possible explanations for that discrepancy? What could be done to address this difference?

Conclusion

Thanks for answering all my questions so far. We're coming to the end now and I just have a few quick questions about your background.

1. What year were you born?

2. What part of the country are you originally from?

3. How do you usually describe yourself in terms of race or ethnicity?

4. And how would you describe your political leanings?

5. Is there anything else you'd like to add? A comment on a previous question or maybe something that we haven't touched on?

6. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?